

The Silkmen Supporters' Trust.



TRUST OPEN MEETING

HELD ON 9TH DECEMBER 2019

COMMITTEE PRESENT: **Andy Worth (Chair)**
 John Abbott (Treasurer)
 Myra Clark (Treasurer)
 Jon Smart
 Chrissie Thompson
 Bernie Rickman
 Marie Grundy

APOLOGIES: **Andy Mellor** **Steve Mundy**

IN ATTENDANCE: **Julie Mitchell** **BM Bell**
 Bill Milligan **Margaret Milligan**
 Clive Westbury **Chris Ainley**
 Richard Ainley **Andy Lloyd**
 Patrick Birch **Michael Clark**
 John Crook **Gareth White**
 Julian Jones **Mike Rance**
 Rob Wilson **Richard Patrick**
 Graham Brinkhurst **Steve Littler**
 Steve Caulcott **Sue Caulcott**
 Caroline Harrop **Bob Trafford**
 Roger Marrow **David Smith**
 Ian Edy **Brian Melling**
 Bryan Brown **Trevor Goodey**
 P Spencer

1. Andy Worth welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained the rationale for having an open meeting was in relation to the current state of the Macclesfield Football Club and to inform members of the work that the Silkmen Supporters Trust (SST) have been carrying out to support the Club and fans.
2. Andy took the opportunity to thank Bob Trafford for his tireless efforts in providing a link between the SST and the club and invited Bob to say a few words.

Bob explained his role and the difficulties he has encountered. Bob spoke of how he was aware that both the Trust and he have received criticism from fans but highlighted the importance of everyone sticking together during these turbulent times. Bob subsequently highlighted the sincere gratitude of the players and backroom staff for the setting up of the 'hardship fund'. This has proved invaluable to the morale and mental health of staff/players during the periods when they haven't been paid. Bob spoke of how staff have been questioned over social media as to why they stay and appear to bolster what many see as a corrupt regime. Bob went on to say that the support given via the 'hardship fund' and the continued incredible support of fans provides clear indication as to why they remain at the club.

A question from the floor – *Are the team playing against Crewe Alexandra on Saturday?* Bob explained as things stood the game would be going ahead. A short-term training ground has been identified and the SST will be paying for this and food for the players following training. The temporary arrangement for the team to use Carrington is no longer an option. Bob stressed that the groundsman was doing his best with the pitch, but the team had been training on this in recent weeks which made his job very difficult. Richard Pattrick thanked Bob for being the link and Bob explained that he like to get information out accurately and in the right way.

A Question from the floor – *Have the English Football League (EFL) helped staff other than the players?* Bob has asked the EFL to clarify their statement about staff mental health, and subsequently requested that supporters only read the official site as there are lots of other media stories being circulated which can be misleading.

A question from the floor – *How well are negotiations going regarding a potential takeover?* Bob confirmed that Joe Sealy's report of putting money into an account as a mark of goodwill and mediators have been spoken to. The amount of debt is not fully known. Joe Sealy has used social media to report issues, but these cannot be confirmed as accurate at this time.

A question from the floor – *How often do the club receive the pot of money from the EFL?* Bob indicated that he was not aware of how this is paid. However, a source advised the meeting that the club get 2 large payments during the year and a monthly sum on the 15th of each month.

A question from the floor – *Have the Trust had direct contact with the EFL?* Andy reported that regular contact has been maintained with the Supporters Direct who have brokered a meeting with the EFL this week and 3 members of the SST board including Andy will be attending the meeting. Michael Clark wanted it placed on record that Jon Smart was very diplomatic in his interviews with the press which place the SST in a very good light to a much wider audience.

A question from the floor – *How confident can we be that the money from gate admissions goes to the paying of the players?* Bob explained that as far as he was aware money was not ring fenced so couldn't say where the money went. However, he did stress that he understood why some supporters/volunteers had withdrawn their support at home matches. Bob went on to say that from the perspective of the players and backroom staff in these difficult times, there is no better way of supporting them than by attending the

matches. The morale boosts the players get from coming out of the tunnel and hearing the roar of the crowd is immeasurable.

A question from the floor – *How is money apportioned from away matches?* It was reported that each club keeps the gate receipts from home matches.

A question from the floor – How can we the fans encourage people to come to the games? As in the past time of adversity fans stuck together and this is the best way. Again, it was reiterated that players appreciate the number of fans attending the match which increases team moral.

Andy took the opportunity to thank Bob for his input and praised Bob for his exemplary approach towards treading what is clearly a very difficult line as both a club employee and fans liaison officer.

3. HARDSHIP FUND

John (Abbott) explained that the fund had been set up three weeks ago as it was felt that the Trust needed to do something to support the staff who were not being paid. The Trust put £3000 in to start the fund. The current total is now £11,700. John explained that we cannot use this to pay wages, but it will be used as a means of providing temporary financial support at a very difficult time. Around £2000 has been paid out to date and staff pay back to the fund when they get paid. A huge thank you was offered to all those who have paid into the fund. Once there is no need for the fund then people are at liberty to request the money back. If they are happy for the money to remain in the coffers of SST, it will be left within SST funds to support projects to improve fan experience. A Crowdfunder had been suggested but John (Abbott) explained the difficulties around setting one up. Despite this, John will investigate this option further and feedback accordingly.

It was pointed out to those present, that another way to provide help would be for people to join the lottery which has now been running for more than 4 years and was set up to raise funds for things that could help MTFC. Over the past few months due to the current situation at the Club there has been a drop in members and the lotto committee can no longer provide the amount of support that was previously

4. OTHER BUSINESS

- **A question from the floor** – *Why doesn't the Trust report more on the projects they have provided funds for etc?* Andy accepted that apart from the Trust site and the match day programme we are not very good at '**blowing our own trumpet**' and this is something that is being looked at even in the form of podcast / video interviews. Bob (Trafford) has kindly agreed to support this by publishing articles on the official website.
- **COMMUNITY SPORTS TRUST (CST)** - Mike Rance, Chair of the CST explained what their role is, and went on to speak of how an academy has been set up for young footballers and it has thus far proven to be very successful. The CST is solvent and very active within the community. They are one step from an EFL status team and could be the lifeboat for the club.

- **A question from the floor – *Who owns the ground?*** Mike spoke of how the freehold is owned by Cheshire East Council, and then provided the following information:
 1. ***As a part of the rescue of the Club in 2013, the freehold to the Moss Rose was sold to Cheshire East Council.***
 2. ***Under the freehold there are two leases:***
 - (a) ***The first of these is the Council's Lease which expires on September 29th 2102 and the second of these is the Club's lease that expires on April 1st, 2055.***
 - (b) ***Macclesfield Town Community Sports Trust played a part in the 2013 rescue, and the Club's Lease was modified to add the Community Sports Trust alongside Macclesfield Town Football Club, as a beneficiary of the Club's lease.***

As a consequence of the above even if Macclesfield Town Football Club were liquidated, the opportunity for a phoenix club to play at the Moss Rose would be highly likely.

- **A question from the floor – *Who are shareholders and how many shares to each have?***
As far as is known Amar owns over 60% and 3 other people own 10%. The CST have 50,000 shares; the SST have 42,000 and the rest are made up of small shareholders. Andy reported that discussions have been held with Andy Scott and Mark Blower, both 10% shareholders, to see if they could force an Extraordinary General Meeting. To date no more has been heard.
- **A question from the floor – *Will a new owner encourage sponsorship back into the club?***
Joe Sealy has indicated he would prioritise this if he is successful with his bid. It was further reported that should Joe purchase the club then he would be looking at an Academy model.
- **A question from the floor: *What is happening regarding Butch's Bar?*** - Andy reported on the recent attempts to get permission to look into replacing this facility on London Road as there is currently nowhere that fans can buy alcohol in the Star Lane or London Road parts of the stadium. Andy stated that this accentuates the perception from those fans housed in London Road and Star Lane End that that they receive third rate services in comparison to other parts of the ground. Andy further reported that Joe Sealey has indicated that should he be successful in buying the club, he would look to be provide a facility that honours the memory of our number 23 Richard Butcher whose Parents Gail and 'Butch. have been such fantastic supporters of the club over the last few years

Andy closed the meeting by thanking all for attending and providing a lively and productive discussion. Copies of the minutes will be put on the Star Lane End and Wraggs to Riches in addition to the official SST site.