

## Preston North End And Preston Supporters Collective



### Minutes of scheduled meeting held on Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2023 at 6pm in the Sir Tom Finney Lounge at Deepdale

**Attendees:** Ben Rhodes, (PNE), Ben Astley, Charlie Winyard and Jim Beattie (PSC), Jack Gayne (Sodexo).

**Apologies:** None.

#### 1. Review Of Minutes From Last Meeting

BA asked if there was an update from the query Jo Harwood raised at the last meeting about water and facilities in the Gentry Bar. BR said he would get an answer to this (subsequently, post meeting, he was able to confirm water has now been organised in the Gentry Bar, along with a sink facility, as requested). BA also asked about a 'pop-up' shop on the opposite side of the ground. BR confirmed this has been raised with Castore and he said he would chase this with the club's main contact. BA also asked about the women's games being advertised at the end of first team games. BR confirmed this was and would continue to be on the script for the tannoy operators at each home fixture. BA also asked about whether the women's team would get the opportunity to play a game at Deepdale in 2023/24. BR said he would speak to the Community Trust about the fixtures and look if there was an opportunity towards the end of the season.

#### 2. Merchandising Update

BR started with an update, explaining that the club had been delighted with the quality from Castore and some of the shortages had been down to the huge demand; with sales as high as they have ever been. He confirmed that 8,000 units had been delivered the weekend prior to the meeting, with hats and scarves due shortly after and a further 6,500 replica kits due imminently across the range of colours and sizes, including children, and the calendar was due on sale that day. He also explained that the club had provided Castore with the last three years' sales figures when they started and they based their orders on this, so the exponential growth in demand had surprised both parties, but would provide excellent information for orders going forward. He also explained that Peter Ridsdale and he had spoken to the owners at Castore to ensure the supply issues were not encountered again. BR also explained the kit order process, saying the 2024/25 kit, training and travel wear had already been signed off (October 1<sup>st</sup>) and that the re-order, due for delivery, could not just be called off a shelf of a warehouse, it needed to be made, in the factory in Turkey and they shipped over. BR finally added that the store had been so busy since the stock arrived, that it had been outselling all other Castore club stores in the same period. BA asked that the above be shared in the minutes to allow supporters to understand the processes.

#### 3. Catering Update

Jack Gayne from Sodexo joined the meeting and BA began by saying that PSC had received lots of positive feedback about service times, both before the game and at half-time. JG explained he had spent a lot of time on the concourses at the recent fixtures and found one

proper queue and that was in the away end. JB said that in the Sir Tom Finney Stand he was seeing a big difference. JG said there was still more to do in terms of queue management, but Sodexo were happy with how things were. CW said the curry had been good, but perhaps needed advertising more as a few people thought it had sold out. JG said the 'special' was being continued in one unit in every home stand. BA asked it be included in the pre-match briefing on the website, which BR said he would speak to the media department about. JG also said they had changed to Rollover Hotdogs, as they had not been getting a good feedback on the previous supplier. He explained it was a better product with a normal and spicy one. He said the price had remained the same but the product and the equipment to make them was much better. JG continued by saying that there had been a huge shift in buying of beer to the premium products. JG also referenced that BR and the club had started getting feedback from people making their first visit to Deepdale that season and he had been pleased with the rating that the catering had received so far and that it was improving game by game. PSC asked about whether this surveying of fans could be extended further and BR said he would look into a season card holder survey in the near future for those opted in to receive communications. JG finished by asking PSC to survey their membership about games the fanzone could open for away games, to allow those going to go in before getting on the coaches. BA said they would speak to their membership and revert back.

#### **4. Fanzone Update**

JG and BR confirmed that the club were engaged with a third party to assist with the application to extend the fanzone to include the outside areas and that this was progressing. BA also asked about further enhancing the outside catering to include different types of options and JG said he would speak to the providers about this. BA asked if more soft furnishings could be added to the fanzone. BR explained that the council had recently done an assessment of the Gentry Bar and that the capacity had been reduced from what it initially was to 380 and that any further soft furnishings would reduce this further. JG left the meeting at this point.

#### **5. Fan Engagement Future Proposals**

BA said that the government had included the football governance bill in the King's Speech and asked if there was any update on the club's plans for further enhancing its fan engagement plans. BR explained that research had been done, looking at best practice from other clubs and he hoped to share the ideas at the next meeting.

#### **6. Ticketing**

BR started with an update, saying that half season cards were on sale, with 147 already sold at the time of the meeting (191 in total having been sold in 2022), he said they would remain on sale until close of business on Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> December, with the cards available for collection from week commencing 18<sup>th</sup> December. He also updated on all home and away games on sale and said that Leeds already had sales of over 18,500 for Boxing Day. He confirmed that reciprocal pricing deals had been done with Leeds and Watford (planned Gentry Day), which BA said these had been well-received and said he thought both games would sell out.

#### **7. Stadium And Facilities Update**

BR provided an update from Jonathan Counce saying that he and groundsman Peter Ashworth had been exploring areas for a memorial garden and this was ongoing. BR also updated that JC was looking at a permanent engraved covering to go around the Splash statue to include the names on the bricks, as these were seven years past their ten-year warranty and that more work was ongoing with this. JC had also provided an update that the old Pavilion gate was currently being repaired for display and that some recent works had been undertaken to repair sections of the Sir Tom Finney Stand roof. BA asked about the floodlights and BR confirmed that JC had put together quotes for this to be upgraded in the summer of 2024 and this would be discussed alongside the 2024/25 budget. BA asked again safe standing areas and BR said this would again be down to cost.

#### **8. Women's Football**

BR said that discussions had been had between the club and the PNECET to further enhance its support for the women's senior team and these discussions were ongoing.

#### **9. Community Engagement And Heritage**

BR presented their award from the North West Football Awards, with PSC congratulating the Trust on its achievements. BR went on to explain that two new blue plaques had arrived and the club and Trust would be announcing details of these and about their installation and unveiling over the coming weeks. BA said there were opportunities for more, at the likes of Fulwood Bowling Club, where Sir Tom Finney lived and more. BR also said the new heritage scheme being run by the Trust was looking at the idea of a heritage podcast. BR said he would facilitate a meeting between Michael Barrett – heading up this project – and PSC in the near future. He also explained they were running a big Diwali event at Deepdale on the following Friday night, with a lot of local people attending who had not been to the stadium before. He finished by explaining that in partnership with Dai Cornell and his family, the club were launching their Sunflower lanyards and support of this scheme at the QPR game on 1<sup>st</sup> December and they were exploring areas where a sensory room might be facilitated at Deepdale. BA asked for an update on the selection of a club mascot. BR confirmed that schools had really engaged with this and that there had been a lot of entries and the club hoped to be able to announce the results of this soon, then moving onto the phase of having a new costume made and appointing someone to take the role.

#### **10. Academy Update**

BA asked if there was any update on an indoor facility. BR reiterated that the club would still like to move to a Category 2 Academy and that all options for an indoor facility, with all potential partners, were still being explored and no door had been closed.

#### **11. Relationship With Local Stakeholders**

BA asked about the latest with the museum. BR confirmed that Peter Ridsdale and Kevin Abbott had recently met with senior figures from the NFM and dialogue was continuing to explore what opportunities there might be for further use of the space.

#### **12. AOB**

BR asked that PSC share with their members the EFL survey, that would end at 5pm on 29<sup>th</sup> November. He also provided an update from the media team explaining they were going through a review of their website offering and other media output, with a number of new

projects planned for the coming weeks and months and they had been delighted to recently add to their team with new videographer Charlie Palethorpe. BA said the likes of the Access All Areas had been well-received. BR reminded everyone about the FA Youth Cup third round tie on Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> December, with a 7pm kick-off. BA raised VAR and asked if there was any information about it from an EFL perspective. BR said the EFL were discussing and reviewing it, but that at present nothing had been put to the clubs about it.

**13. Date And Time Of Next Meeting**

The next meeting is scheduled for the new year, date and time to be confirmed.

The meeting closed at 7.05pm.