

## ISC Meeting 10th May 2023 19:00 hours

**Present** Don Adams (DA-Any Old Irons), Robina Ahmed (RA-Claret Members) Steve Applebee (SA-Bondholders), Cathy Bayford (CB-DSA) Paul Christmas (PC-WHUSC present from agenda item 2.2 onwards), Andy Payne (AP-Hammers United), Apu Vyas (AV-Inclusive Irons) and Sue Watson (SW-WHUST)

**Apologies for Absence** Martin Clowes (MC-Pride of Irons) and Sara Page (SP-Away Season Ticket Holders)

### **1.0 Season Ticket Renewal**

The ISC members shared their group's survey feedback which was unanimously negative, regarding both to the magnitude of the increase and the change/implementation for senior concession age qualification. The meeting recognised the Premier League's record broadcasting rights deal £10.5bn the Club have benefited. Affordability is referenced for Bands 5 and 6 however the Club appears reluctant to provide how many season ticket holders occupy these two bands, what offset cost reductions have been explored and increased revenue by raising the attendance by 2,500 in order to reduce the increased costs to fans. Overall, all the members of the ISC present who spoke agreed the Club's season ticket increases are excessive and unjustifiable. The content of an ISC statement was agreed and subsequent to the meeting the following statement was published.

### **23/24 Season Ticket Price Increase**

The ISC has surveyed our respective fan groups and unsurprisingly the feedback has been extremely negative. ***The 8% increase applied to the 1966 and Bands 1 through 4 is considered both excessive and unjustifiable***, while the Club enjoys a second consecutive season of European success with fans attending more games and incurring the associated costs. Based on an estimated incremental revenue of £3M, the vast majority of season ticket holders will be faced with an 8% increase to generate an approximate 1.2% revenue increase for the Club's bank account. The Club marketing department continues to focus on the lower pricing of Bands 5 and 6, however the issue of ***affordability extends to all season ticket holders, regardless of price band and also applies to Claret Members and non season ticket holders***.

The Club announced an ***increase to the senior concession age qualification from 65 to 66 years of age***. While the current government state pension age is 66, this was introduced October 2020 following legislation passed in 2011. There is no legislative requirement for the Club policy to reflect or track the government state pension age and it's solely the prerogative of the Club to determine senior concession eligibility. But ***to inform hundreds of loyal 65 year old season ticket holders just 24 hours before the renewal window opened that they would not qualify for the anticipated senior concession season ticket is both insensitive and inexcusable***.

The ISC asks the Club Board to revisit these decisions and respond back to their loyal Hammers supporters, specifically

***Why is an 8% increase justified?***

***Why was it necessary to change the qualifying age for a senior concession?***

***Why implement the over 66 change with only 24 hours notice?***

WHU ISC

Responsibility SA

## **2.0 ISC/SSAG Meeting**

Further to the briefing papers circulated prior to the meeting (two emails dated 8th May 2023 refer), SA shared some further background from the latest meeting which resulted in the meeting agreeing that the ISC withdraw from the current Newham SSAG Pre-meeting process. Subsequent to the meeting the following notification was emailed to the Club. This will be in the public domain as soon as these minutes are posted on the ISC website.

The ISC has made our position clear that we feel it's incomprehensible that there's no representation of the 62,500 fans who attend games at the London Stadiums on the Newham SSAG. This is a meeting held with thirty attendees from a variety of authorities and the Club. We find it inconceivable that this committee feels it is inappropriate and rejects the ISC's offer to provide a customer focus during deliberations to maximise customer satisfaction outcomes. We will communicate SSAG related concerns through the existing Club channels but the ISC will no longer participate in the pre-meeting process, which has proved both inefficient and ineffective. However should the Newham SSAG committee feel that a fan representative is appropriate the ISC would be more than willing to attend and contribute on behalf of fellow West Ham United supporters.

### **For Information**

## **2.1 Safe Standing**

The meeting agreed that the Club had made no proposals for this project despite fans are expecting safe standing to be introduced for the 24/25 season. It was agreed that the ISC will forward it's own proposal and request the Club to advise the planning, critical path and timing milestones for safe standing implementation in the Bobby Moore lower and Sir Trevor Brooking lower for the commencement of the 24/25 season.

### **Responsibility SA**

SW to liaise Joe Cosgrove regarding concerns around the provision of saving intervention. The SGSA report highlights the findings on all the pilots of safe standing and will be shared by SW.

### **Responsibility SW**

## **2.2 Lower West Wall**

The May 2nd Newham SSAG recommended the introduction of temporary netting between the home and away supporters in the Sir Trevor Brooking Lower for the Alkmaar game. This decision illustrates that a similar solution in conjunction with a significant height reduction to the existing wall adjacent to Block 113 is feasible and a more appropriate solution than the existing oppressive wall height, introduced as part of the Lower West Stand Reconfiguration.

### **Responsibility SW**

## **2.3 Stratford Station Upgrade**

The Club has advised that an on-site meeting with Gary Ashe (TfL) and Austin Hughes will be arranged with ISC representatives to review the new station entrance currently under development.

### **Responsibility SW**

### **3.0 FES Update & Next Steps**

The attendees discussed the Fan Engagement Standard as engagement and the following summarises the status of key topics raised to date.

**Club FAB Proposal**, SA outlined the current ISC model is to remain in place, with the following changes, the ISC will be renamed the Fan Advisory Board (FAB), incorporating representatives from WSB (Women's Supporters Board) and International Supporters and Club are required by the Premier League to have this in place for the 23/24 season. The International representative election process similar to Away and Claret Members. In addition a FAB delegate will/may be appointed to liaise directly with the JSB (Junior Supporters Board). The meeting agreed that the existing ISC/Club meeting frequency should be a mandatory requirement with a minimum of 4 ISC/Club meetings annually with at least one in person. It was noted that the current WSB co-chairs represent supporter groups already members of the ISC, so this needs to be considered to avoid an existing ISC member group having two representatives on the FAB.

**Club FAB Co Chairs R&Rs** to be defined and agreed.

**Club FAB Introduction timeline** including key milestones to be established.

**MoU, Supporters Representatives Guide, Code of Conduct, Confidentiality Agreement & Standing Orders** Club internal review of the is in progress and SA to request this is done via standard mark up so that the changes are identified. It was agreed that the ISC members will meet to review the documentation when the Club has submitted the first draft.

**FAB Meeting Schedule** a proposal has been submitted to the Club and the Club are to confirm the first meeting tentatively scheduled for Tuesday 18th July, early evening at the London Stadium.

**Fan Engagement Plan (FEP)** each Premier League Club FAB is required to establish their own FEP prior to the start of each for each season. Additional meetings with the Club will be requested as required to agree the FEP at the first FAB meeting.

**Responsibility SA**

### **4.0 Collectables Collection**

Launch timing to be advised by the Club and feedback in response to the ISC comments on the Information and FAQ communications (email dated April 17th refers). ISC to develop a 'financial health warning' for supporters.

**Responsibility SW**

### **5.0 ISC Minute Assignments Review**

#### **5.1 Catering**

The Club continues to monitor both current pricing versus the contractual agreement. The ISC will continue to follow up past suggestions including early bird offers, post match offers and children's meal offerings.

**Responsibility SW**

#### **5.2 Kit Design for 23/24 Season**

AV and PC outlined how they were invited at the last minute to take part in a photo shoot was held on Tuesday May 9th and the Club was subsequently requested to ensure the marketing team invites SP (the ISC kit representative) to next year's event.

**For Information**

### **5.3 Kit Design for 24/25 Season**

Preliminary design themes to be established by Umbro. ISC have asked for two seasons to be involved. PC noted that we were supposed to have had a meeting in February and nothing further has been forthcoming.

**For Information**

### **5.4 New Season Ticket Holders Welcome Packs**

Following a positive feedback from Karen Brady to RA's proposal at the August 2022 ISC/Club meeting, two packs are planned, one for adults and one for U18's. No detailed information has been received from the Club thus far and RA confirmed that no answers to any of her questions had been given.

**Responsibility RA**

### **5.5 ISC Social Media Development**

CB requested additional resources to accelerate the increase of the ISC social media activity. AP and RA volunteered to contribute and RA suggested 'listen up Hammers' as a strap-line for future ISC tweets.

**Responsibility CB/RA/AP**

### **5.6 Disability Parking, Seating and Shuttle Bus Provisions**

CB outlined the limited parking availability for accessibility supporters, the absence of benches during civil works on Stratford Walk and the impact of changes to Stratford Station to the shuttle bus service. These issues will be discussed through the DSA/Club channels.

**Responsibility CB**

## **6.0 AoB**

### **6.1 Champions Stones**

SA updated the meeting with the latest status. The Club has a meeting with a specialist from the factory that produces the stones and been given the approval to carry out routine maintenance. Currently waiting for supply of the specialty grout from the contractor to carry out spot repairs. Cleaning occurs pre and post matches with a deeper clean when required following inspection but generally occurs once every quarter.

**For Information**

### **6.2 Away Supporters in Home Areas**

All supporters should be encouraged to report the presence of away fans in home designated areas to the stadium control centre. It should be noted that any supporter removed from their seat will be asked to provide details of their ticket purchase. This will allow the Club to investigate the source of the ticket as part of the drive against ticketing malpractices. RA & AP mentioned that the mobile signal is not good enough inside the stadium to send a message in real time.

**For Information**

Away fans security route to be confirmed as Manchester United supporters were seen to pass through security on Bridge One and Club policy on away supporters access onto the stadium podium will be clarified. ISC to check with the Club how the stewards are briefed in terms of away supporters who are obviously away fans.

**Responsibility SW**

### **6.3 Memorial Garden**

The Memorial Garden is scheduled to reopen in July and the Club continues to liaise with Barrett and meeting family members at Rush Green.

#### **For Information**

### **6.4 Heritage**

The Club has committed to respond to ISC suggestions including the list of memorabilia during the post season break.

#### **Responsibility SW & AP**

**Meeting Closed 20:45 hours**