HARTLEPOOL UNITED SUPPORTERS PANEL MINUTES OF MEETING 19.10.26

DATE: 19th October 2026

VENUE: The Boardroom, Victoria Park

TIME: 6:00pm

ATTENDEES: John Pearson (Chair of Supporters Panel), Sarah Rowntree (HUFC SLO), Ben Forbes (South East Poolies), Jill Simmonds (Her Game Too) Donna Buckley (Hartlepool United Supporters Association) Darren Hutchinson (HUDSA) Paul Shears (HOOC) Julia Newton (HUST), Alistair Shepherd (HUST), Neil Nottingham (HUFC Season ticket holder/United for the Community Trustee), Andy Stuart (HUWFC)

APOLOGIES: Liam Wright (NWC)

1. **Approval of minutes of meeting.**

   JP Asked if all were happy to approve minutes of previous meeting.

   ALL Agreed.

2. **Update on previous actions**

   HUFC to consider options for additional seating and catering and bar facilities behind the Neale Cooper Stand
   3 additional picnic benches should have been placed in that area; these are from the HOOC benches outside the 1908 bar.
   Will also consider the feasibility of a shelf/ledge around fence for drinks/food etc.

   HUFC to arrange for CB to attend next meeting
   Unfortunately, CB was unable to attend tonight.

   HOOC to continue to liaise with HUFC regarding projects
   At the last meeting HOOC discussed supporting with benches behind the Neale Cooper stand, this has been done.
   TVs for the Centenary bar is still progressing.
   Capping at the end of the stands have been pressure jetted and cleaned.
   The memorial garden which was put on hold and is now back on the agenda. This will be created at the back of the 1908 next to the former We Buy Any Car with the chance for fans to buy memorial plates for loved ones.
   A mural for the back wall of the 1908 bar is also under consideration.
   Covered shelter behind the CK stand is also being investigated.

   NN to provide update on HUCSF at next meeting

   The foundation was relaunched in July with a new name.
   Since then, things have been positive.

The next big piece of work is around the social value of our work in the Community. We also need to look at what we want to do? What do the fans want us to do? In the past we have been quite reactive and gone after the funding but need to have a set goal.

We will be relaunching Playing for Success in November where schools will send pupils to spend a week at the Club and be educated on site but with a basis around football to encourage non engagers. We are also launching H'Angus Class Acts which aims to improve school attendance.

New Media Manager is a lot more active in promoting the work we do and will have our own website soon.

The Poolies Matter Day which was an NHS initiative was well received and supported by all fans.
There are other similar awareness activities in the pipeline, i.e. Restart a Heart and Prostate Cancer awareness day.

HUFC to look at replacing seats in Rink End

As mentioned previously, the cost of repairs is not currently justified by the increase in the attendance it would create. There are hardly any clubs that would require full capacity.

SR has since checked with DB who confirmed that some of the parts for these seats are now obsolete.
There around 200 that would need fully replacing.

HUFC to post updated pitch photographs on socials. Done.

HUFC to look at installing toilet roll dispensers in all outside toilets Done

Stewarding remains a priority of the Club and it is being reviewed. Ongoing.

HUFC to look at matchday reporting app

Aim is to have this built into new Club app. Also look at a text service on matchdays.

HUFC to arrange for Safety Officer to attend supporters panel Ongoing

HUFC to confirm policy on smoking/vaping and ensure stewards are aware of and enforce

FA Ground Regulations prohibit the use of cigarettes and electronic cigarettes. Action can and will be taken when users can be identified.

Club to consider a Q&A session

Club to ensure fan consultation on any permanent changes to the Club crest and approval from IFR.

Car park barrier behind Neale Cooper Stand still being left up and unmanned on matchdays – club to ensure it is staffed.

Once the turnstiles open on matchdays the barrier is now locked in the down position and access through this route will no longer be available. This is purely for safety and operational reasons while the stadium is in use, helping us to ensure the safety of supporters, staff, contractors and visitors.

Following the conclusion of the match, egress will be facilitated as soon as it is safe to do so, once the crowd has sufficiently dispersed and it is appropriate to reopen the route.

Hot water issues – Action: - as previously documented, it is all linked to the water pressure – club continue to look at ways to resolve.

Boiler in main building has now been replaced to reinstate hot water in this area.

SEND provision - Several fans have asked about SEND provision whilst planning for the HGT day. Action: - It's an important issue in itself, so could have an awareness day next season. This is something the club are very passionate about. The Club have a few ongoing events, activities, awareness days, and will continue to expand on these going forward. Ongoing

Do we still have an Audio Loop for blind fans – Action: - The Club used to offer this service and will investigate it. Ongoing

3. **Food in Town End (or lack of it) and Facilities**

The catering facilities in the Town End seem to be getting worse when all other stands are seeing improvements. Lack of choice, not all cabins open and selling out by half time.

The kiosk catering and bars were outsourced during the close season, and a few teething problems were probably inevitable, but the club have met with them recently to let it be known that the current service and facilities in this area is not acceptable.

Make sure fans are all aware of the food cabin behind the control cabin.

There are some capex needs for the food kiosk behind the stand.

Asked if fans could go between the Neale Cooper and Town End to use bars and catering there?

This has been raised before and was rejected by the Safety Officer. It was mentioned that nearly all other clubs in this division allow movement between stands and this should be feasible.

Actions: to continue to look at ways to improve refreshment offering in Town End

4. **Matchday Timings – The Corner Flag**

Asked why The Corner Flag wasn't included in the Clubs matchday timings graphic.

The aim is to drive revenue and build atmosphere for the Club and within its own bars.

DB pointed out that if people don't frequent the Corner Flag they won't be able to pay their lease.

DB advised that members of the Corner Flag felt there was a divide between them and the Club.

SR said she was disappointed to hear this on a personal level. The committee all have contact details and are welcome to get in touch with any issues, request for assistance etc.

5. **Away End Toilets – Corner Flag**

The Corner Flag have asked if there are any plans for the toilets which are attached to their building but inside the ground and aren't currently in use.

No imminent plans. DB was asked to elaborate on this?

Not sure, maybe around needing access?

Feel free to get in touch with the Club should you ever need access.

6. **Prostate Cancer Awareness Match**

Scheduled for Southend game on 28 November in partnership with HUFC, United for the Community and HUST.

Lots going on in the run up to, and on the day.

7. **Donation on Season Tickets to provide for community groups.**

HUST regularly donate tickets to local community groups which the Club matches. Wondered if there was a way that people could make a voluntary donation on their season tickets which could go towards purchasing tickets?

SR advised she would speak with the ticketing provider to see if this is possible.

Also happy to help any local groups, charities or organisations. We have donated season tickets to Hartlepool Carers, The Sanctuary and Changing Futures North East this season for them to use for the young people they engage with as well as matchday tickets for groups like Down Syndrome North East, CLIP and Daisy Chain who we work with closely for awareness days each year.

Actions: SR to see if possible, to add a donation button to the ticketing website

8. **Fan Survey Update**

We received 1242 responses, the majority of which were season ticket holders and over 65s. The main areas for concern were with repairing the relationship between the fans and the Club, more communication, more content involving the players, improved matchday experience and improvement on facilities.

Asked if the Club intended to publish the results?

Actions: the Club to look at publishing results of the fan survey

9. Charge on ground

There is still an outstanding charge on the ground under previous owner which has not yet been satisfied.
There is an agreement in place as part of the takeover, and this is not unusual or concerning.

Discussion around definition of "fixtures and fittings" when the Club doesn't own the ground and whether this charge could jeopardise the Club.

Actions: Clarify the charge relating to fixtures and fittings.

10. Master Plan Update

The drawings seen at Fanatics Fest were just a rehash of old ideas and plans, there was nothing hard or fast in the brochure.

There are ongoing talks with Hartlepool Borough Council, and these are all positive.

AS said, he hoped a consultation piece with relevant parties would happen at the right time.

Was asked if Fanatics Fest had been beneficial commercially?

Still commercial leads ongoing but the cost of attending has been recouped.

11. Thinking behind the preseason management appointment.

The Appointment of the previous manager was made by Bromby & Partners acting as Director of Football. The appointment of PW has been handled differently as Landon Smith was directly involved.

Asked if Bromby & Co were still involved. Confirmed yes, in a Director of Football capacity which continues to be reviewed and is on a rolling contract.

Asked if the owner was satisfied with performance this season?

Is anyone?

Sometimes things don't work out, everyone is disappointed, but overall fans were pleased with the signings at the time.

Post meeting note – Club are now actively recruiting for this role.

12. Define the Club's recruitment model

Clarification was provided on the first-team recruitment pipeline. It operates as a direct collaboration between Pete Wild, Chris Beach, and Chris Maxwell, with Pete Wild holding the final decision on all player acquisitions.

Club/Board structure, any CEO plans?

Question was asked as to who the owners' representatives at the Club are

Operations – Rose Stoker

Football – Bromby & Partners

The club is currently recruiting dedicated commercial staff to drive off-field revenue before finalizing the long-term governance structure of the main Board.

Clarification on Lee Rust role – The club reiterated that Lee Rust's responsibilities are strictly confined to commercial strategy, corporate partnerships, and special projects—he is not involved in first-team selection or footballing matters.

1, 2, 3 Year Plan

Three-Year Strategic Plan
JP reiterated the clubs' commitment to a Three-Year Plan aimed at achieving promotion back to the English Football League (EFL).
Year 1: Focused on operational resetting, structural alignment, and squad stabilization. The owner has provided a highly competitive operating budget for National League level. Despite a frustrating run of on-field results, leadership remains committed to providing long-term managerial stability rather than reacting impulsively.

Any other business

Is it still possible for Club hierarchy to attend future meetings? Lee Rust might be a good one?

General agreement was that when Alex Cross attended this was a beneficial meeting to show what was going on in the Academy.

The agenda could be split into two and that's where people from the Club attending is invaluable and would make a different sort of meeting, even once a year potentially.

Need to make sure that the positivity around Landon Smith is not lost in the disappointment over Bromby & Partners.

Panel members urged the club to maintain direct, transparent dialogue with the fanbase during poor runs of form. Supporters noted that communication often dries up when results drop, which can create unnecessary friction and speculation among the fan base.

JP confirmed that Landon Smith is not fazed and is as keen and as positive as ever, there was always going to be a need for a review and reset.

Communication is a big deal for the owner and JP confirmed there will be updates coming out over coming weeks.

Playing at home is hard at the moment with fans on the players back, they need some confidence. A joint statement between the supporters' groups telling fans to get behind the fans would be good.

Supporters' groups to issue joint statement re backing players

Decision to not open Neale Coooper Stand for the FA Cup game was discussed. Reasoning due to costs and staffing etc. was understood.
There was a concern that the Club do not treat certain Cup games with the importance they deserve. JP said he didn't agree with the decision to close the Neale Cooper Stand.

13. Date of Next Meeting

TBA – It is agreed meetings will be held regularly every quarter, with other meetings squeezed in if deemed necessary.
JP to try and fix something to coincide with Landon Smiths next visit, December 8th.