

QUESTIONS BROUGHT TO CUSG MEETING ON MON 20th MAY 2019 BY THE USERS OF THECUMBRIANS.NET FORUM

- No Group is made/forced to answer any question and does so at their own behest.
- Some Groups have answered both their own specific questions and the ones that were marked 'All in attendance', others have answered just their own specific questions.
- If a Group hasn't answered their questions, a simple 'No answer received' has been written. This is in the interests of clarity within the CUSG Group.
- TheCumbrians.net would like to thank all those who replied on behalf of those who submitted questions.

QUESTION FOR ALL GROUPS INCLUDING CUFC:

Hearing on the "grapevine" there were grumbles about the number of questions/probing questions/complaints asked recently from messageboarders. Therefore what is your groups opinion on the questions submitted? Does your group find the questions to be an annoyance or something positive?

Club (NC) - No issues with questions. I suggested to try and engage the fans using the forum who might not feel they have a route to have their voices heard via other existing groups and methods. Clearly they are passionate fans, I hope questions continue. We can't respond to every rumour, but if answers clarify things and explain and give the club view on major issues then that has to be a step forward. I accept not all the answers will be what fans want to hear or agree with but we must be honest in what we say. That is want fans tell me they want and how I answer.

CUSAT - I've answered CUSAT questions previously, I note none this time, no problem with questions on genuine issues at all, and reading the current batch directed at the Club and CUOSC they seem fair and balanced and fans do warrant answers, particularly I think about whether the Club is actually up for sale or not. Just my opinion, Keith.

London Branch - As an open and democratic organisation the London Branch does not have a problem in answering supporters questions providing they are asked in good faith and that the purpose of the questions is to generate a positive and constructive debate. As a constituent member of GUSG the London Branch welcomes the opportunity to interact with other supporters in the hope of moving the football club forward and in providing as good a match day experience for supporters as is possible.

TheCumbrians.net – We've been pro-active in asking users for any questions since we started attending CUSG Meetings. We think the Meetings are a good avenue to ask both the Club, who we'll add have never shirked any questions we take, and other Supporters Groups anything they feel needs raised. We know we bring by far the most questions of the Groups, but we're open about the whole process, and whilst some of them are maybe better suited to direct contact with the relevant Group we feel our users trust us to collate and send them. It's disappointing when some aren't answered, but it's not for us to question why this happens.

Scottish Branch - On the whole there are certain questions that need to be asked as most folk are thinking it. And they are obviously for specific groups who have the answers eg is club for sale. We are all fans and want whats best for our club so this is why we are here. Personally for example if i wanted to know how many members are on the forum or CUSAT or LB, I would ask them directly and save the questions for the nitty gritty of it all. Eg are we for sale, what is happening with the

scoreboard, what is happening with EWM and can you tell us about the squad situation. That's just me though.

CUOSC - Positive. We will always attempt to answer provided they are not abusive.

QUESTIONS FOR CUFC: NOTE – ANSWERS PROVIDED BY NIGEL CLIBBINS.

Thank you to NC for answering the questions. Although I personally don't agree with the answers I see the questions/answers from the club to be a positive thing and has helped quell rumours and started discussions.

Football is about opinions so I accept everyone has their own point of view.

The answer regarding there being no check/log sheet on walk arounds was disappointing to read considering the number of complaints and things being missed. Can I suggest a log/check sheet to be implemented on walk arounds as currently it seems people are walking around like headless chickens without knowing what to look for or any responsibility.

My answer is misunderstood. I wasn't clear enough. Apologies

We do have a "log" of all issues/reports/complaints after every game and as arising each day – sourced either directly (from complaints/reports/feedback to the club from fans or groups or staff or stewards) or indirectly (eg from social media and the forum - sometimes are discussed/highlighted but not reported directly the club).

These are then prioritised, allocated and addressed by groundstaff/ other staff/ contractors and cleared off the list as soon as we can.

We don't have a log that counts how many times each staff member walks round the ground and their area of responsibility checking. They have their responsibilities and are expected fulfil them diligently.

Since Mr Pattinson made the claim to a supporter in a forum that "there's no need putting a newspaper article out to sell the club as those in the football world know it's for sale" how many enquiries has the club had? How many offers has there been? - Happy for the messageboard reps to remove this question if they deem fit, as Clibbens answered this recently as 2

One more since my last answer. Again nothing beyond initial fact finding.

My opinion, but the club not advertising anywhere that its for sale to me means it isn't. Why does the club have this firm policy of not advertising it anywhere?

Explained previously.

Other clubs that have confirmed they are for sale have had offers/sales.

Yes – other clubs have confirmed they are "for sale" and reported offers via media . I am not aware of any of those advertising (placing media adverts as some fans have suggested we should), which is the point being debated.

The club, in particular David Holdsworth, have been outspokenly critical of Keith Curle's player contracts in that it damaged the club financially. Surely Keith Curle's position was football manager and any contracts offered/sanctioned were done by the owners/directors/CEO and authorised by them.

All deals were assessed and fully considered and approved by directors in line with the club's policies (last month I explained how approvals and authorisation of deals operates in the club).

As you would expect every club has their own way of negotiating contracts and approving player deals (I negotiated nearly all player contracts and transfers for nearly eight years at my prior club, supported by a Director of Football but in very close collaboration with its owner – as he paid the bills and wanted the CEO not the DoF or manager to do it – every club has its own way). These change over time and with different people involved.

In my view there should always be collective responsibility on agreeing deals with everyone involved in the process playing their part, working together, to try make sure means good contract decisions are made.

Under Keith, he selected players (rightly so) and controlled his own budget by negotiating player terms himself and recommended financial deals for approval, he knew what he had to spend and decided on the value for money based on who he wanted the options and what they brought to the club. He dealt very closely with Andrew and John Nixon. This has all been covered before. At the time the club was content with this approach and it improved us.

With a Director of Football now in place, the manager still selects players but now David negotiates player terms and recommends financial deals and controls the player budget. He deals with the financial terms and value for money (not the manager alone). There is a change of responsibilities, accountability and segregation of duties. We believe this is better suited for the club and the situation now.

As you would expect, player contracts are the biggest risk to the club so it is right each contract is finally approved by the those who carry the financial risk to fund them (because we need that certainty of funds as we make losses). This is done by setting budgets and again approving any changes. This is normal and proper.

So our authorisation limits and processes (described last month) , mean the Holdings board have the final say but if it comes to it, the number of Holdings voting shares decide.

They determine the player budget based on funding available, how far to go in supporting any manager's requests for players (or more budget) and they accept finance terms – that's unchanged in the last 3 years no matter the manager. Financial and football information is provided considered, balanced and specific circumstances factored in and judgements are then made with the best interests of the club at heart.

I don't understand why the owners/directors/CEO are without criticism on this as there are the people with the financial info and sanctioned the deals, therefore the only ones to receive criticism should be those people and not the football manager.

At the time, there were concerns and questions about the level of financial support being provided by the board and whether it was sufficient, where our budget ranked in L2 and how

increased spending could help us get better players and help us succeed, (including crowd funding to provide even more money).

Now with hindsight, there are questions (like this one) about how the support that was given actually overstretched us and who is responsible.

Questions have been and are raised all the time and people have opinions – that's football. No problem. That is why I have explained and provided more information about our finances.

As I said above the board has the final responsibility and all those involved in making the decisions carry collective responsibility.

I hope that clears it up.

Circumstances change and the approach that was considered right at that time is not appropriate now – so has changed.

The focus needs to be on what we can influence and that is the future.

We are looking forward optimistically and are excited about the new season.

To the owners for once could you try something new by officially put the club for sale and see what responses you get just saying.

I respect the view but the club's approach is unchanged as explained.

What ambitions they have for the club long term?

"Ambition" is a very emotive word in football and personalit mean different things to different people. Is it what is the ultimate dream? something to aspire to? Or a realistic attainable target?

Our ambition is to be a successful and sustainable club that we are all proud of.

That links to on a host of other specific things on and off the field.

Football is the top priority. The immediate football ambition is promotion to L1. We want to get back to Wembley to win the EFL Trophy. Then build to compete at the top of L1 and make it to the Championship.

After that who knows....

What do they think their reputation is like in the city and county?

Don't understand question.

QUESTIONS FOR CUOSC:

Why hasn't your website been updated in months?

Our focus has been on our weekly email briefing and on social media for updates. We are looking for help to launch a new web-site. Any volunteers out there?

Why is there no response to questions asked on Twitter/Facebook?

Following on from the above question, a tweet was unanswered for days from a supporter asking about help for disabled supporters/disabled issue. I know this isn't your area, but surely you could have helped/pointed in the right direction. Now sorted as I spotted it, but the @cuosc should surely be monitored regularly.

Answered together - We have a presence on Facebook/Twitter. But it is not round the clock. We try to respond to what we see - again provided it is not abusive.

Why does the trust feel the need to compare the club to failing clubs, rather than successful ones?

As far as our members are concerned 'There is only one United'. But you cannot fail to notice what has happened to the likes of Bury and Bolton.

Who writes the supporter briefings?

Our members get a weekly briefing usually written by our secretary.

What exactly does financial sobriety mean?

A realistic outlook on the club's financial situation.

Trust could you tell us what you bring to the board ie: Cash injections etc

The aim is to give supporters a voice in the boardroom. We hope it gives us an opportunity to work with current and future owners for the good of the club and most importantly to challenge them.

Have the trust sought to dilute any of their shares?

We have always been clear we would be prepared to dilute in the interests of the well-being of the club.

Wtf does This mean, care to expand on why you can't raise funds?

"Being a part owner of the Club makes it virtually impossible to raise meaningful amounts of money at this point in time."

As an addendum (To the previous question), I would ask "Does the trust mean because of fans' opinions on the other co-owners this is the case?"

Answered together - It has been difficult for CUOSC to get financial backing from local businesses in recent times because of succession of ownership issues. Obviously, the more members we have the more money we can raise.

Someone on the message board recently complained about not receiving a reply from Jim. He was then told there was some technical problems with emails from Jim going to spam folders, but he checked his spam and confirmed he had still not received the email. If the Trust maintain that they sent it, but he maintains he did not receive it, are you saying that messageboarder is lying?

As our Chair John Kukuc previously stated on the Messageboard – we don't.

If no to the above question, how do you explain why he didn't receive a reply?

We can't. However the most likely explanation is that the receiving ISP, in this case BT, blocked the message due to it being from a suspected spam source.

Technical problems do happen from time to time and if that's all it was then fair enough. But in the current climate of fans feeling they are being ignored, people are going to wonder if this was just another excuse to avoid answering questions.

One of our members asked for Jim's comments which he provided, promptly, in his response. He wasn't answering a question.

If you aren't accusing the messageboarder of lying but you insist you did send him a reply then only remaining explanation is that there must be some unresolved technical problem. Will you look into this along with whoever provides your email hosting, and provide us with a proper detailed explanation of exactly what the problem is?

This is not necessarily Jim's IT problem. Jim doesn't generally experience any problems regarding receipt of his outgoing emails. See above answer for most likely explanation for this extremely rare event.

Does the Trust have a data protection policy? The person on the message board mentioned that Jim sent them a reply from his personal email account. If data is being moved between official trust email accounts and personal email accounts what safeguards are taken to adequately protect that data?

CUOSC has uploaded its data protection policy to its website. Link:
<http://www.cuosc.org.uk/downloads/privacy/policy.pdf>

Emails sent to our board rep Jim are forwarded automatically by our domain hosting service to Jim's personal email, from where he replies. CUOSC restricts access to members' emails to board members or officers only, unless they have permission from the member concerned.

QUESTION FOR DISABLED GROUP:

What are the general thoughts from members on the overall disabled facilities at the club?

Hiya Richard, thank you for your question.

We haven't sent out a questionnaire about the disabled facilities at Brunton Park to our members, so at best I can only give you my thoughts on the above, and my general take on what fans have said to me.

I think we all feel that some of the disabled facilities are not first class at Brunton park, to be fair this applies to facilities for able bodied fans as well. The ground was built a long time ago and lacks many of the facilities we would take for granted in a new build.

In general fans accept this. The much used statement "It is what it is" very much applies at Brunton Park. We have made improvements over the last few years and will continue to do so as time and money allows, but we know we will not be able to bring our facilities up to the standard of a new build stadium.

QUESTION FOR LONDON BRANCH:

How much money do the London Branch put into the Club, and how much have they contributed in the last three years?

The London Branch do not inject cash into the club. Specific projects/items are identified by the branch and the club, and the branch then fund part or all of that project/item. Over the last three years the branch has contributed approximately £20,000 in funding. Contributions have been made towards training equipment, improving facilities for disabled supporters, sponsoring players, crowdfunding and tickets for schoolchildren for the MK Dons game.