

# Tony Goodall Fans' Conference

Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> February – 5:30pm



## **Attended:**

Andrew Cullen, Tony Brown, Anna Mitchell, Johnny Moore (PFC).

Barry Dewing (Pompey Independent Supporters' Association), Donald Vass (TGFC Secretary & Chichester Portsmouth Supporters' Club), Ian Marshall (Chimes Lounge), Jeff Harris (Armed Forces & Services Club), Mike Fulcher (TGFC Chair & Social Media Groups), Mike Whittle (Pompey History Society), Pam Wilkins (Pompey Disabled Supporters' Association), Roy Gregory (Central Branch Supporters' Club), Simon Colebrook (Portsmouth Supporters' Trust) & Steve Tovey (Legends Lounge).

## **Apologies:**

Gemma Raggett (London Supporters' Club), John Brindley (North Stand) & John Cannings (Northern Blues).

## **1. January Transfer Window / First Team Squad**

**Q: When Danny Cowley first took over, it was said that we'd need three transfer windows to truly build his side. What's your assessment of our progress after two windows, and how do you reflect on our January business?**

**Q: Reviewing the transfer window with BBC Solent, Danny Cowley said "we've done the best with what we've had available". Has the manager been sufficiently backed to achieve our goals?**

**Q: The club has stated its goal of signing younger players who can both make an immediate impact in the first team but also grow and develop over several years. Arguably only Denver Hume fits this criterion amongst the January signings, with the other four arrivals all on short term deals. Why were we not able to pursue this strategy more?**

AC: Let's begin by setting out the context of the broader strategy. We don't want to be a club that chops and changes and be diverted from where we ultimately want to get to. There is a need for alignment and focus on a longer-term player recruitment strategy.

Long term strategy always has to start with a consideration and review of the current status. Last summer saw the confirmation of a brand new manager, who wanted to adopt a change of identity and playing style, with time to work towards it. The agreed objectives were to build a squad not just for one or two windows, but for the long term. We understood that towards the end of Kenny Jackett's tenure there was some disillusionment from some supporters on the type of football being played despite the manager's successful win ratio. It was deemed by some not to be entertaining enough, and that's why we're all here – to entertain the supporters. Danny is wedded to a fast, energetic style of football. That identity continues to evolve and whilst it may not be

evident in each individual match, it very much represents the principles for how he wants football to be played.



A further objective is to turn around an underperforming academy in terms of player productivity to the first team. In terms of overall club investment, we are towards the top of Category 3 academies, but in the bottom quartile for player productivity. The Academy under Greg Miller's leadership is implementing a transformational change in culture and standards. We all want to see better delivery of players from the Academy to the first team, but that outcome will only be achieved if the right standards and culture are in place. People are key to that change. We have had a huge amount of staff turnover this year and we now have several new staff, in position, who will play a big part in taking the Academy forward.

The Club has been through a difficult period with huge uncertainty as to what Covid meant for finances. We went into May and June thinking we'd not have fans back in the ground for some time but nevertheless the budget was maintained despite the massive trading losses we were facing with potentially no matchday income. In July, the outlook changed with confirmation that crowds could return. We flexed the budget upwards in August to account for this.

Tony Brown has completed a paper, researching the club's recent recruitment strategy over the last five years. This has shown a bias towards recruiting players from the Premier League and the Championship whereas many of our assets in the squad were recruited from the lower leagues. Going back further, the club created value through transfers like Jamal Lowe from outside the Premier League and Championship and we need to look more at these markets to improve our transfer business.

The development of the strategic plan will provide clarity and outline the conditions for success, defining the type of recruitment we want going forward. We need to create value in the squad to become more sustainable. We aim to switch the recruitment bias in favour of players on the rise, who come to Portsmouth and have the opportunity to further their own careers. We may not keep them, they may go on to play in the Premier League, but we get to enjoy the benefits of that.

The first evidence of recruitment and fees paid for a younger players was Denver Hume. There were other young players we looked at in January, but there is better value to be had in the summer, when the same players may well be available in July for less.

The strategy recommends the employment of a banding structure to optimise the playing budget. You can't just think about reviewing the spend of budget over one window without taking regard of the implications for the future. The banding structure breaks players into different categories: players who define the quality of the squad; players who would play 40 games a season; a third band of squad players who can be called on at any time; then a band of emerging talent.

Underneath that, you're looking at players from the academy or young development players. Having that strategic framework helps you look beyond the current window and plan pathways for your squad. Loans could come into any of those bandings – ideally coming into the first or second.



That enables you to get high quality players available at a lower cost than you might otherwise pay.

The size of the squad is ultimately up to the manager. If the manager wants to go for quantity over quality, or the other way round, that's up to him. It's for him to decide how to utilise the budget. In these early two windows, Danny's opted for quality, and that is understandable, meaning he's been able to fast-track the change of playing style he wants to bring in by defining the players who can best fit that identity.

The club set itself a number of key objectives for January and everyone will naturally make their own judgements as to how successful we've been. The club must measure success against our long-term strategic aims.

January's objectives were firstly to do business as early as possible. That's not easy, particularly in terms of moving players out, as buying clubs may want to wait and see if they can get a bargain near the end of the window when desperation might set in .

Secondly, we wanted to create early headroom by moving on some of our higher earners who were not necessarily going to be offered new contracts in the summer. We managed to move on John Marquis, Ellis Harrison and Paul Downing, early in the window. That was key to releasing further funds. We wanted not to overly impact our spending power in the Summer. Tyler Walker was highly in demand and we really pushed the boat out for him, but there is no commitment beyond the summer. That keeps financial fluidity going forward.

Thirdly, we identified the key positions to recruit to improve us between now and the end of the season, namely a left wing back, a right-sided centre half and a forward, which we did.

Fourthly, we wanted to protect our assets – if bids came in for our players, we had to get a high value. We held firm in that respect.

Next, we were keen to find a loan for Alex Bass as that's important for his development. We would love to keep Gavin Bazunu next season, but unless we get there, then Gavin is highly likely to be in at least the Championship, maybe even in the Premier League either on a loan or as part of Manchester City's squad. So, we wanted to get Alex some first team experience.

I read a report saying next year's playing budget would be lowered to £1.8m – that's not true at all. There will be challenges next year, with a big increase in employer National Insurance contributions and a huge increase in the cost of energy, as well as higher costs in several other areas of our cost base, but we will have a really competitive budget once again. Although some high earners have moved on, we now have others, but they're impacting and playing. We're not going to be scared to invest – we want those younger, up and coming talents even if it takes a fee.

TB: We have regular monthly recruitment meetings analysing player targets and budgets together and assess implications on next year's budget to optimise football strategy. We initially maintained the playing budget this season despite the impact of significant financial operating losses from Covid in the past two years. The player wage budget was then increased in August to

accommodate additional signings, as was the transfer fund with the transfer purchase of players and both budgets were further increased in January.



**Q: The club has fewer first team players at the end of the window than it had at the start. Have we left ourselves too short going into the second half of the season?**

AC: The issue of numbers is a fair and reasonable concern, especially if we suffer a bad run of injuries. That was a discussion we have had several times throughout the season. Danny has been keen to go for high quality players in this early transition phase. Some of the 'outs' were not contributing in terms of league starts, and we've been bringing in players who are. Though eight players left, apart from John Marquis and Lee Brown, six of those who moved on either permanently or on loan had ten league starts between them. The five who've come in will contribute far more starts. We've now got greater competition for places. If we have a run of injuries, we will need to draft academy players to the bench, but that's a short-term issue

**Q: The club moved on several high earning players whose deals were due to expire in the summer. Have we needed to pay up some contracts, or continue contributing to the wages of these players?**

TB: We did some good business early in the Transfer Window and all the money saved on these players went back into the playing budget on the players who came in later in the month.

AC: It was really useful moving players out early as that helped us get the recruitment, we wanted in. The impact of having players leave on permanent deals rather than loans was also useful, as it means we avoid having to pay their July salaries as severance payment as well. If a player is out of contract at the end of June and you don't offer them a new contract, you're also liable for their shortfall of salaries in July.

**Q: It was reported on deadline day that a deal to sign Lewis Wing from Middlesbrough fell through because it proved too complicated to complete. However, Wycombe Wanderers were able to reach an agreement and complete the signing. What went wrong?**

AC: When Lee Brown went, that all came about very quickly. I got a call from Neil Allen early on Thursday morning, prior to the window closing, asking if we had received an approach from any club for Lee, which we had not. A call then came in from AFC Wimbledon, the same day at 2pm. Lee was keen to do it and we were able to get a deal done very quickly after that. Having already bought Denver Hume in, and having already got Connor Ogilvie who can also play in the left-wing back position, that allowed us to sign someone else higher up the pitch. Danny Cowley wanted to go for Aiden O'Brien and we got that one over the line. Meanwhile, we got an approach for another of our players, but the figure offered was too low. We had to be mindful though that if that bid had been increased, we may have been in a situation where we needed to get a replacement. We had to be prepared for all options. In total, we looked at a number of players over the last few days of the window, all as contingency options.



**Q: Looking ahead, there are a number of players who remain at the club who are out of contract this summer, including Marcus Harness, Michael Jacobs and Sean Raggett. How many are likely to be retained, and when will the club open talks with some of these players over new deals?**

AC: We're in constant dialogue, as you'd expect. There are a number of players where we have extension options in our favour. We've got to do everything carefully and at the right time, though. We're constantly looking to improve the squad – Danny was at a League Two match on Tuesday, Nicky was at a non-league game, and the rest of our scouting team were all on assignments as well. Everyone is working really hard to complete due diligence on each identified player to ensure they fit the recruitment strategy.

**Q: What will be the priorities for the club in the Summer transfer window?**

AC: The forward areas will be a key priority, and that area of the pitch naturally costs money. In terms of overall recruitment whilst our focus is to invest in young players, we will need to balance that up with experience. We're lucky to have some experienced pros in good positions already contracted beyond next summer. But we're definitely targeting a number of young players on the way up. That's what we'd like to do. We want to see more progressive signings.

## **2. Matchday experience / Ticketing**

**Q: Saturday's fixture saw local brewery Staggeringly Good supply beer at the stadium for the first time. Was this a successful launch?**

AM: Saturday's launch went really well – They've been able to set up a temporary stand in the Victory Bar. The purpose is to help cater for a wider audience. Some fans will want real ale, some will want a Budweiser, some will want a craft IPA, and this will help mean that a large group can come to the bar and will all be happy. Greene King hold the pouring rights at the stadium, and we can't encroach on that, which is why the Staggeringly Good beer has to be poured through their own equipment.

AC: It was a win-win on Saturday, as we had better takings all round. Having the Staggeringly Good taps didn't take any sales away from the main bar – we actually sold more. We'll be fine-tuning it and making it a presence, hopefully extending this to other parts of the stadium.

**Q: Ex-players sometimes make appearances in the Victory Bar. Could these be announced in advance with timings, to allow fans to make the most of this?**

AM: We want to build on the experience and make the Victory Bar an attractive destination before and after the match. As well as bringing ex-players back, when Covid protocols allow we'd like to have current players in, perhaps having the Man Of The Match in post-game for example. But we want the venue right first, and that's a big job. The Victory Bar needs a refurbishment, as the sound system, TVs and projectors are all approaching the end of their usable lifespan. We want to improve every lounge but will start with the Victory Bar.



**Q: Are there any plans to further enhance the pre-match experience for supporters? Is there a suitable location for a 'fan zone' at the stadium?**

AC: I've been in dialogue with the Pompey Supporters' Trust about setting up a working group to look at the matchday experience, which we're hoping to launch soon. As for the fan zone, we're looking at possible locations. I understand we already have a willing DJ lined up!

AM: For the Fleetwood fixture, where we're doing 'kids for a quid' tickets, we'll have Pompey In The Community doing events around the stadium and in the family zone. There will be football goals, face painters, and branded flags to give out. We want to improve the matchday experience. We're looking at how we could potentially use the space currently behind the Pompey shop, which could be a location for fans pre-game. We'd like to have fans arrive earlier and stay later at Fratton Park.

**Q: This season has seen a number of Saturday fixtures moved to midweek. Can anything be done for season ticket holders who cannot make re-arranged evening fixtures? Could the ticketing exchange function return?**

AM: Tuesday night games are proving really difficult. 4,000 season ticket holders didn't turn up for the Doncaster game. There's lots of reasons for that – it could be team performance, people self-isolating, difficulty getting there after work, the road network and so on. I spoke to a fan recently who finds it impossible to get home from Tuesday matches because their bus timetable finishes before the game does. It's tough. For us, want to work on bus services and transport options, offering fans different ways to get here. We've previously used the ticket exchange for sold out games – that's worked really well. It would hit the club financially if we began offering the service for games with empty seats however.

**Q: Could the club organise a dedicated park and ride service on matchdays to help with these transport issues, particularly for midweek fixtures?**

AC: I had a meeting with Portsmouth Council on Tuesday. At the moment, they're looking to greatly increase the number of parking spaces at their Tipnor park and ride site from 650 to more than 2,500, aiming to create a better integrated transport hub. The initial planning application was refused but goes back to the planning committee next Wednesday. We've lent the club's support on that, as it would be critical to improving transport links to Fratton Park. The park and ride doesn't currently take you to the stadium, but that would be a possibility under the new plans.

**Q: Supporter groups ordering away tickets for their members have been told they now have to provide a name and postcode for each ticket, reportedly as a result of problems at recent away games. What's caused this, and will this be a requirement from now on?**

AM: That's linked to our loyalty point scheme, to help ensure we can log their points going forward. It means everyone's account is correctly updated, rather than just the lead booker. That means that when we need to use loyalty points for the allocation of away tickets, we can correctly reward fans who go regularly.



### **3. The Academy**

**Q: Has Greg Miller completed his review of the academy? What were his findings, and what are some of the changes he's implemented? What still needs to be improved?**

AC: Greg's done an immense amount of work whilst having to implement a huge amount of change to standards and culture. Those were things Greg immediately identified that needed to be addressed. We can't allow complacency or allow people to become too comfortable – this has to be a high performance elite environment. We all want to see players come into first team from the youth setup. To get there, you have to have these basic factors embedded into the Academy - standards and culture.

We've had a vast turnover of staff. Some have moved on for career moves, others left for other reasons. A hard-working culture has been established and that will provide the conditions for success. We're also working hard to align everything to the first team, for example the strength and conditioning facilities are now the same ones used by the first team. It's a single entity in terms of those departments. We've invested in a new GPS system, providing live information, so we can track data and use it in real time.. Now, it enables us to educate players better while training, to inform their training load and help to reduce injury risk.

We've also been able to utilise our link with Portsmouth University more. We've got three strength and conditioning interns and three analyst interns, with the possibility of more from their Sports Psychology department. We are really using that special relationship to our benefit.

One big issue identified was pitch availability, particularly on Tuesday and Thursday evenings, because the more established local men's clubs tend to train on those particular evenings. We've created a 7-a-side pitch on the Play Football astroturf allowing more games to be played there. We're being more proactive now about securing facilities for next season, rather than waiting for the summer.

Another important thing we've improved is our scouting staff. Some of our competitors are quite aggressive in the Portsmouth area, so we've increased the number of paid scouts this year, and will look at how we can add more for next season.

Our new Head Of Academy Coaching, James Barlow, started on Monday. That appointment process took some time. Greg's got a young, dynamic team, which will be best for Portsmouth over time.

Our investment in the academy isn't reflected by the output at the moment, and that has to change. We won't start producing players overnight, but we are creating the conditions to be in a good position moving forward.

TB: Everyone has been really impressed with Greg at the club. He's got a football family background and understands integration between the first team and academy from his time at Barnsley. Tanya Robins has also played a key role behind the scenes in addressing a lot of

operational issues in the Academy and both have worked together on improving the overall culture.



**Q: When Tornante pitched their potential ownership of the club to fans five years ago, the academy was central to their vision. Does it remain a priority for them?**

TB: We've doubled our investment into the academy over the last four years [of their ownership] which hopefully will bear fruit soon, but we need to recognise that there's always going to be a lag period.

We've funded a significant number of non-mandatory roles such as full-time head of recruitment, physios, psychological staff, matchday co-ordinators and many more new positions.

AC: There's been other areas of investment too. We had to cancel some games last year due to a lack of medically qualified staff. Previously, many medical staff had left the club for a role in the NHS or to higher category clubs. To compete with the NHS, we've had to improve salaries for these roles. We're also funding training courses to develop their skills and provide greater confidence to players and parents in the area of medical provision.

**Q: There's a big jump from playing for the youth academy to playing in the first team. What's the pathway for our youngsters? Do we have any aspirations to make an U23s side, or is experience of men's football via the loan system best for their development?**

AC: The playing pathway is key for youngsters' development. In terms of whether that should be via an U23 side or loans into men's football, it's all about the games programme. Though the Category 1 sides get a decent standard of U23 games, there aren't many Cat 2 Academies or U23 sides amongst Category 3 academies, so no real games programme, so your fixtures are on an ad-hoc basis. Instead, we're looking to give our youngsters an experience of competitive men's football in the second half of their scholarship and that will also be a consideration for first and second year pros to enable them to make the transition to first team league football. A major part of our strategy will be to develop links with clubs at all levels from League 2 to the Conference and below. We are establishing a productive relationship with Bognor Regis, and we recently had Harry Jewitt-White at Havant and Waterlooville.

**Q: Toby Steward signed a new contract with the club this week. Can we expect any other youngsters to be given professional deals?**

AC: The final decision on an award of a professional contract will rest with the Head Coach as it does at most clubs. That's why we're keen for these players to go out and get first team experience. They've all got chances and it is important for players to have a pathway to the first team. We could offer third year scholarships, but my own view is whether that is necessarily fair to the player if they're unlikely to progress into our first team. There are number of Category 1 academies who are not retaining players in their U23 squad beyond the age of 20.

**Q: Some Pompey-supporting parents report having to reluctantly take their children to the academies of other clubs. What can we do to ensure our academy set-up is more appealing?**





AC: We have to work much harder on that. One of the biggest assets we have is the fanbase and our passionate supporters – many parents in and around the city will want to push their lads here, but we have to get the standards and culture at the academy right so we don't disappoint them. We're in competition with two Category 1 academies to both the East and West, with others proactive in the area such as Chelsea. Clubs who used to go abroad and into Ireland to recruit under 18 players can no longer do so since Brexit, so competition for domestic youngsters is only going to increase. We've still got quite a lot to do here – we're not going to kid ourselves – but we've identified what the problems are and put in place things to turn that around.

#### **4. Fratton Park**

**Q: Work to improve the North Lower is well underway. Is the stadium redevelopment running to schedule? What can fans expect to see over the coming months?**

AC: The North Stand work is all on schedule and on budget. Fans will begin to see seats going in towards the end of March. Steve [Cripps, Managing Director of PMC Construction] has arranged for materials to come in early to avoid unintended delay. That won't mean we can use the area before the end of the season, but Blocks A-E should be ready in May. Having the Wigan game rescheduled to the last week of the season isn't ideal as we'll lose some extra building time, but we'll begin work on the South Lower and remaining North Lower sections straight away following the end of the campaign. We've been engaging with affected supporters through the North Lower Working Group, which has been really helpful. We'll be replicating that process with supporters from the South Lower, and already have a group of volunteers who've come forward. Part of the work on the South Stand will begin soon, relocating around 200 season ticket holder to other seats for the last 3 games of the season. The new central bar is working well in the North Lower and is an image of what will be replicated as we work our way around the ground. We've also had the roof in the North Lower nearest the Milton End enclosed to help increase milling space and reduce the impact on the queues.

TB: We're moving through the stadium works ahead of schedule and are conscious of the pressure on getting materials in on time and increasing cost pressures. Just to reiterate that before we commenced this stadium works programme, we had spent £4.8m on stadium work over the last few years which largely goes un-noticed by the fans but are vital to maintaining an operational stadium, including structural repair of all steel columns, moving the floodlights, new lighting, new sub-station, new water main infrastructure, new staircases, overhaul of safety barriers, fire compliance work, new North Stand roof, new South Stand cladding, new offices, new Scoreboard and new club shop.

We've done all that work in the climate of Covid with significant trading losses coming in the next set of accounts.

Then we got to the stadium redevelopment works commencing last summer at an additional cost of £11.5m, which will result in an enhanced Fratton Park experience for all our supporters.



**Q: Will the South Stand be ready for the start of next season?**

TB: It's unlikely to be fully completed by the start of the season, particularly with the EFL season starting earlier because of World Cup 2022 - the first league game is on July 30th.

**Q: The Tesco car park behind the Fratton End is rarely full– is there any scope to buy back any extra land?**

AM: We were not given much encouragement from our previous discussions with Tesco. When the store was built, the number of parking spaces they planned for is relevant to how big the store is. Although they're not always used, particularly on a matchday, at Christmas when the store is at maximum capacity, all of those spaces are used. We already have an agreement with them to use some of their spaces for players and officials on a matchday. It is a dialogue to re-establish

**Q: The last video with Steve Cripps (from construction company PMC) was very informative. Are there any plans for another?**

TB: Yes, he's keen to do another at the end of the month.

**Q: With safe standing trials now taking place, are there any plans to install safe standing areas into the Fratton End and Milton End should legislation change?**

AC: Marie [Stedman, Head of Safety and Stadium Operations] and I met with the Sports Grounds Safety Authority at end of January. We're in the top quartile for persistent standing in both the home and away end. One of consequences of the forthcoming safe standing trial is that if safe standing is licenced, clubs with persistent standing issues may come under pressure to install it. If you look at the Fratton End on a match day the standing issue is roughly in a 'V' shape – it's likely we would look at converting at least a third of the stand in this way. Loading in the Fratton End may not support the engineering needed for people to stand in it – it was built as a seated stand. It should be achievable but may take more planning to get there. We would also look at the away section as well, possibly in tandem with the development of that stand.

**Q: When new seats are put into stands, will any designs be created in the seating (such as the white 'PFC' lettering in the North Lower)? Will the existing crest and Jimmy Dickinson's face be kept in the Fratton End in the future?**

AM: The camber of the seats in the South and North stand means it's difficult to achieve a design which looks good. I'd like to keep the Jimmy Dickinson design in the Fratton End if we can.

TB: We're looking at what may be possible in the Milton End. Unfortunately, it's difficult to maintain an image in any seating when safe standing is introduced.

SC: The Pompey Supporters' Trust is working with the club at the moment on another potential memorial to Jimmy Dickinson to coincide with the club's 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary next year.



**Q: The Portsmouth Local Plan lays out the potential for a hotel, conference facilities and residential housing as part of a new North Stand development, as well as improved transport links to the stadium. What more can you share with fans about the future of the stadium, beyond the current phase of redevelopment?**

AC: There's a lot of interest in that, with several recent articles in the local media. We're in dialogue with various different stakeholders about what we can do to the site, but those conversations are fairly confidential right now. In terms of needing to reach the Premier League to build a new North Stand, if the right set of circumstances come together then that would certainly override that. There are lots of conversations taking up my time at the moment – we want to keep all possibilities alive. I was on a call with the EFL today and there are lots of other clubs in the Championship finding it very hard to compete in a sustainably manner. We need a new North Stand in order to help us to do that.

## **5. Roko Gym & The Training Ground**

**Q: Are there any plans to build housing on any part of the Roko plot?**

AC: There's no current plans to build housing on the Roko site and no planning applications have been lodged. Portsmouth City Council are under pressure to build thousands more houses, so have published a plan, outlining details of where any previous discussions have taken place in the past. This does include Roko. But we're not looking to reduce our usable space - far from it, we want to maximise playing space on the site. It's a small part of the plot, referring mainly to an area of the car park. We could potentially consider it in the future, if there was the possibility, and that created more investment in the pitches, but no planning application has been lodged.

We've just invested significantly into the site. We're not here to turn ROKO into a residential development - it's our training ground. The academy has already moved into the main building, and the plan is for the first team to follow releasing the area where the Portacabins are currently sited. The main building will provide medical rooms, analysis suites and offices for the first team by utilising the wasted space in the building. We could put in a 3G pitch, which would draw additional funding if we set aside some community use. In an ideal world, it would be great to have the land behind the Roko site, but that belongs to rugby and would be extremely unlikely. If it did become available, we'd be very interested.

**Q: In his pre-match press conference today, Danny Cowley referred to the training ground pitches as needing further attention. Are there plans to improve these?**

AC: There are three pitches the first team club can use there, which is more than most sides in League One, but the pitches are soil based. Our long-term vision is for at least one sand based and one artificial pitch. The Fratton Park pitch is another priority – it looks good on the surface but as we saw during the Sunderland game the drainage is quite poor, creating problems on the sub-



structure. We've got a perfect storm of things needing our attention and capex spend – the stadium, the playing squad, the training ground, all against a backdrop of trading losses. We can't do it all in one go, so we have to prioritise all our different capital expenditure projects over the medium term and be cogniscent of the contining heavy trading losses.

TB: Everyone knows that the stadium maintenance and redevelopment has been the core problem for the club for some time. There was a real likelihood of reduced capacity if we put off the stadium work any longer so we always have to balance the changing priorities with the optimum long-term foundations for the football club. Not long ago, everyone was really terrified about getting through Covid in one piece at these meetings – and looking at the problems affecting different Championship clubs we're fortunate to have navigated through these difficult financial times when we lost so much income.

## **6. Ownership**

**Q: In a video shown at the Pompey Supporters' Trust AGM in October, Michael Eisner committed to speaking to fans more regularly. When can supporters expect to hear from him next?**

AC: There's a will to deliver on the promise for more communication. Eric's planning to do a Q&A video sooner rather than later along with some wider communications.

**Q: Do the owners have any plans to visit the UK soon?**

AC: Eric was planning to come over in December, but the Prime Minister announced the Plan B protocols the same day we drew up the itinerary, which included quarantine for travellers arriving from aboard making the trip impractical. Eric's really keen to come over and will do so soon.

## **7. AOB**

**Q: Will the Hall of Fame dinner event be returning this year?**

AM: Alan Knight is picking that up with Pompey History Society, who are bringing the Former Players' Society under their banner. They're hopeful of getting the event back on, though we're not sure yet if that will be in time for this season or next.

Minutes by Donald Vass