



TIM ALLISON

FROM THE BOARD

The time since our last home fixture has clearly been a difficult one for the Club. The events of last Saturday proved to be the catalyst for deep reflection across the Board resulting in a number of meetings lasting several hours.

Whilst the announced outcome became public knowledge on Tuesday morning it is important to set the context of that decision. The job of a football manager is clearly a difficult one, but the success of any club goes well beyond the leader of the team on the pitch.

The reality of the manager's position is it comes with public and immediate short term scrutiny on its success. We are all guilty of using the updated league table every Saturday evening, together with our team's result that day, to judge how well, or not, our team and the manager, and by implication our club, is doing.

Whilst league tables never lie, they are in truth just relative snapshots of what is trying to be achieved. Perhaps fortunately many of the other leaders within a club don't have that degree of scrutiny, but it was rightly recognised by the Board that a deeper reflection of where the Club was at was required, and not just a knee jerk reaction to a single, awful though it was, result.

Whilst Matt's result table was already published, and obvious visible comparisons were being made, a sober reflection was taking place across the Board on where we were, and how far we had travelled since that wonderful day in May as we got promoted to the ranks of the professional ranks of English football.

Whilst, like Matt, there had been numerous successes and things to be proud of, there remained a reality the Club had a long way to go to be matching our peers. Our stadium capacity is 91st in the EFL for instance. Only three clubs in our division have an average attendance lower than ours this season.

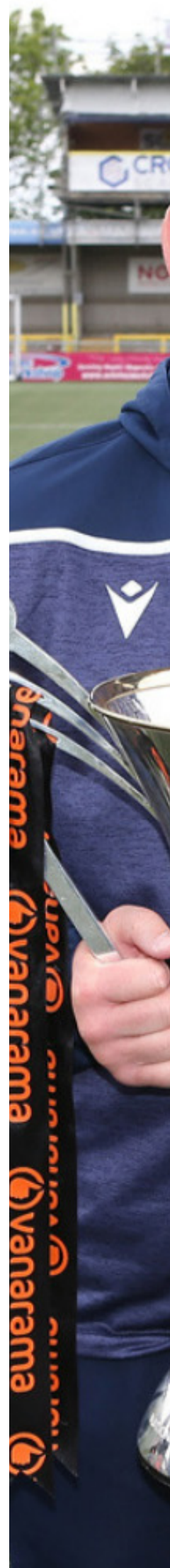
The EFL undertakes supporter surveys to assess relative performance of delivery of what fans want from their clubs on matchdays. We sit in just 20th position in Division 2. Responsibility for this ultimately sits with the Board of Directors of this Club, and the management team that reports to it. Were we to be subject to the same degree of scrutiny as a manager or a team we too would be concerned about comments of "relegation". Rightly, much of our time this week was spent in introspection as we marked our own homework before assessing other's.

Of course both ours, and Matt's, performance comes with a context. We are new to the league, and have by definition come a long way in doing so. Our crowds, and finances are up significantly from those pre-Covid days in the National League. There is a longer term perspective on how we continue that progress to match our peers and go beyond them.

Whilst information isn't publicly available, we know through internal studies and mutually agreed access across the EFL what our income streams are, and how they compare with those peers. It is unlikely to come as a surprise we are towards the bottom end on most measures. Similarly it would be difficult to imagine the availability of funds for playing budgets, and other support to our teams, can be divorced from that commercial reality. In the main they are outside the control and influence of any first team manager, even though how that budget is spent is.

Hopefully this gives the context to how successful, in the main, Matt has been throughout his tenure with us. He has consistently outperformed his peers, bringing us not just promotion to the EFL of an unfavoured non-league team, but a trip to Wembley, an 8th place finish in our first season as an EFL club, as well as a host of other over-achievements and simply wonderful memories.

Matt leaves us with his head held high knowing he has brought enormous joy to every Sutton United supporter and a legacy of which to be, justifiably, enormously proud. The reality though is sport, rightly or wrongly, is a results business and a judgement





was needed on the likely future path, not the successful past, in making decisions around management. Much like a manager will be assessing current players against potential replacements. Matt himself had to make difficult decisions regarding some of the squad that got us promoted, or who were part of that trip to Wembley in that first season, for example.

With that decision made the Board now has the responsibility of deciding who will be part of that leadership towards our future. We will undertake a selection process of both internal and external candidates and not be rushed whilst we review. The January transfer window, and the opportunity for further changes, will soon be upon us, so there is a degree of urgency here, but we can be proud of the recent history of longevity of our managers.

Paul Doswell brought us great successes over 11 years, and Matt too was with us for approaching 5. We clearly have form in getting things right, but can't rest on those laurels as we make the next considered call. Before that though we welcome Jason who has displayed (as expected) considerable maturity and professionalism to steady the ship to prepare and lead our team against our visitors Mansfield Town. I am sure our supporters will equally be fully behind him as we continue our season through what is a busy period of fixtures.

Whilst the football table doesn't lie, and clearly a lot of work remains to be undertaken to ensure come the end of the season that isn't where we find ourselves, we as a Board are keen to ensure our relative rankings on some of those unpublished tables also rise.

We also want to ensure the things that we are rightly proud of, and have taken us so far on this journey over the 125 years, aren't lost whilst that transition occurs. We might be 92nd of the 92 football wise this afternoon, but I struggle to find an

alternative club above us on rankings such as accessibility of supporters to the Board, and individual directors. My door is open to all every day of the week. On matchdays numerous fans will speak to not just me, but Adrian, Bruce, Dominic and others - an openness adopted equally by Matt of course.

Our journey continues this afternoon, and we will have our homework ultimately judged by our supporters, and as a business by our stakeholders, owners and suppliers. If we are genuinely committed to flourishing and succeeding as a professional football club, and I am convinced we are, then we must embrace the necessary changes that allow us to match and go beyond our peers.

The Board has already adopted a 5 year plan and mission statement and will support all of our teams, be committed to our Women's and Academy sections, and the community teams within our Foundation too. The depth of our engagement within our community, and the relationship with the London Borough of Sutton, is the best it has ever been.

However there is so much more to do. All of us, from Board to Players to Supporters can push this Club further. We have plans in place to meet the required league's capacity membership criteria which are to provide 2,000 seats by the end of the season. This will lift our capacity further when delivered. We have many other plans in our pipeline and fully intend the delivery of these to lift us up those less scrutinised tables referred to earlier of capacity, attendances and supporter satisfaction.

Difficult times necessitate not just hard work but togetherness. We are all in this together.

#ForeverAmber

Tim



Tim Allison, Chief Operating Officer and Club Secretary