

YOUR VOICE

HALIFAX TOWN SUPPORTERS' TRUST

**MARCH
2009**

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FA Cup coming to Town!

You may have read recently that the Halifax Town Supporters' Trust has scored a major coup – the genuine FA Cup trophy is coming to Halifax on March 14 as part of our 'Charity of the Year' programme.

We have worked closely with the Football Association and a number of local organisations to ensure as many people as possible, both young and old, have the opportunity to see the iconic trophy. For a small fee they will be able to walk away with a photograph of themselves with the cup, and half of all proceeds will be donated to Overgate Hospice, our nominated charity for 2009.

Halifax Town Centre of Excellence

9am – 10am
Cedar Court Hotel

Saturday Morning Disability Sports Club

10.30am – 11.15am
North Bridge Leisure Centre

Tesco Supermarket

11.30pm – 1.30pm
Aachen Way, King Cross

Children's Ward

1.45pm – 2.30pm
Calderdale Royal Hospital

Hipperholme & Lightcliffe Sports College

2.45pm – 4.00pm
Stoney Lane, Lightcliffe

Charity of the Year, Overgate Hospice

4.30pm – 5.30pm
Hullnedge Road, Elland

Chair's Report

You may be surprised to learn that the Shay is not one of the venues on our FA Cup itinerary even though Halifax Town have a home game on the same day. I had emailed the club on January 15 – when we knew for sure that the Cup would be coming to Calderdale – inviting them to work with us to make this a special day for football in the town. On 19th January I spoke to a couple of club employees who informed me that they 'did not feel it appropriate' on this occasion to have it at the Shay.

As the Cup had made a low-key appearance a couple of years earlier – which was deemed a flop by the club –

the value of it returning has not been appreciated. The club also 'has a number of other things going on'.

With a little bit of imagination we have created an opportunity that would have been fantastic for the club to promote itself out in the community, using the FA Cup as a focal point. Unfortunately the club could only come up with a number of half-hearted excuses as to why they did not want to get involved.

Possibly the most disappointing thing was that we never got to discuss our ideas with the club before dismissing the occasion, though that should not really come as any surprise.

It was July 17 2008 that I wrote to David Bosomworth thanking him and his colleagues for securing the future of senior football in Halifax through the formation of Halifax Town. In that letter I stressed how keen we were as an organisation – and as individual supporters – to give as much help and support to the new club as we could. This was followed up on July 31 with an email proposing an 'informal chat' prior to the friendly at Ashton; a perfect opportunity to introduce ourselves and lay foundations for our future working relationship. A reply was received with the suggestion that the Board were happy to meet with us and promised they would get back to us shortly.

On August 19, another email was sent, asking if the Board was any closer to meeting with HTST. No reply was received although I had a 30-second chat with David Bosomworth outside the Weavers following a match where I was promised a phone call to me was imminent. On October 6 a letter was sent inviting the club to launch a joint 'Charity of the Year', as the first combined effort between the new club and the Trust. We were told that the club already had other things in mind so would not join with us on this initiative which we appreciated and accepted.

On November 3, an email was sent to Pam Burton, as head of the Community Committee, asking whether HTST could be represented in this group so that we could offer support and seek grant funding for the club's community activities. This was something we were extremely keen to get involved in given that a not-for-profit organisation such as ours, has opportunities to apply for grants where a commercial organisation cant. Once again we received a 'thanks, but no thanks', this



coming the day following the Supporters Club meeting where David Bosomworth had called for all supporters to unite and work together in the name of Halifax Town. This was the same meeting where Mr Bosomworth apologised to the Trust for having not yet met with us.

On December 1 I sent another email to the club's Chairman, once again asking when a meeting could be held. I also asked for clarification about the reply received from Pam Burton which contradicted the plea for 'everyone to work together'. No response was received.

The Board should consider that they are ignoring the organisation whose members voted to transfer its shareholding in the previous club – valued at close to £300k – for £1 to help facilitate their take over of Halifax Town AFC. This was a massive leap of faith for our members as at the time there was no communication from the consortium, as they were then known, other than what came through the Trust. I personally believe the Trust, and its members, deserve more.

A possible explanation for this could be the inclusion of former Trust Society Board members within the club's 'inner sanctum' who could be muddying the name of the Trust to the current Board.

This group of people are perhaps using what happened last summer as a way of discrediting the Trust. Yet it is these same people who, whilst supposedly representing you, sat back in silence as Halifax Town AFC accrued debts which led to the death of our beloved club.

We would also like to remind members that for large parts of last summer, the club was in limbo and supporters were kept in the dark as to what was happening and whether the current Board were going to walk away.

Throughout that difficult period it was the Trust who took the mantle and kept supporters informed as to what was happening, including almost daily updates in the Courier as well as on the Trust website. It was a safety-net in many respects, but also a practical way forward as the plans of the consortium were unclear.

Some have suggested we remain patient but it is of great disappointment that eight months on since my original letter to David Bosomworth, we continue to have our offers of help declined and no meeting appears to be forthcoming. Another supporters' organisation - the Shaymen Down South – appears to be making better progress yet it has taken almost just as long.

As an organisation we have put behind us the difficult events of last summer following the demise of Halifax Town AFC and subsequent launch of FC Halifax Town. We have tried to fully engage with the Board with the aim of providing help and support in developing a bright future for the club through numerous projects. Unfortunately it doesn't seem they are quite as forgiving or willing to accept their role in events of last year.

Whilst of course we are bitterly disappointed with this attitude, we are by no means going to disappear; in fact we are still enthusiastic about working with the club but need them to share with us the desire to do so.

For 'our' club to prosper it has to be committed to living within its means, and grow not by gambling with money it hasn't got, but by weaving more fans into the club, and reaching out to the community. We all owe it to future generations to work together for the good of Halifax Town and not the best interests of individuals.

We have put together an exciting programme of events for the FA Cup visit and look forward to making it a success for both ourselves and our 'Charity of the Year'. But quite simply it could have been so much better, which is the depressing reality of the situation.

Gavin Butler

Survey Results

Back in the autumn members of the Trust were invited to take part in a nationwide survey of Supporters' Trusts to find out who joins them and why.

The research was carried out by Associa in line with the Market Research Society Code of Conduct. Participation was voluntary and all responses remain anonymous and confidential.

HTST have received the results of those specific to our Trust and the feedback is, on the whole, extremely useful and encouraging. Although there is scope for much improvement. Some of the results are easy to interpret but others gave the member the opportunity to give a more in depth opinion.

Reasons for joining

- 78% The club was in financial crisis
- 56% I wanted more supporter representation at my club
- 53% I was worried about the way the club was being run at the time
- 47% I wanted my club to be more accountable and transparent
- 42% I wanted to see the club more engaged with the community
- 11% I was concerned with the lack of success on the pitch
- 11% I wanted to acquire shares in the club as a collective group
- 6% I join all the supporters' organisations
- 3% The membership benefits on offer with the Trust

Key Trust Objectives

- 75% Be a voice of the fans
- 67% Be guardians of the future of the club

- 61% Have an elected place on the board of the club
- 61% Strengthen the bonds between the club and the community
- 47% To raise money for the club
- 28% Acquire shares in the club
- 17% Further the development of the game in the area
- 11% To assist the club to achieve promotion

Additional comments made:

- Planning for and helping bring about the day when the club is owned by the fans.
- To broadcast club news to members. This is especially true for clubs like Halifax where news is often hard to come by.

What contributed to you joining?

- 44% After seeing Trust publicity in the local press / media
- 19% I was encouraged by a friend
- 19% After seeing the Trust advertised on match day
- 19% Someone from the Trust approached me on a match day
- 0% I helped set up the Trust
- 0% I had an option to join on my season ticket

Why remain a member of the Supporters Trust?

- 67% I believe in their cause
- 14% I am impressed with the Trust
- 11% This is my first year so I have yet to renew
- 8% I have a standing order
- 3% The member benefits

Have you ever volunteered your time for the Supporters Trust?

- 75% No
- 25% Yes

Do you plan to become more involved with the Trust?

- 6% Definitely yes
- 8% Probably yes
- 20% Maybe
- 44% Probably not
- 22% Definitely not

How would you improve the way your Supporters Trust is run?

- 53% Better communication with its members
- 31% Better website
- 17% More social / fundraising events
- 14% More professionally run
- 11% Buy more shares in the club

How likely or unlikely would you recommend joining the Trust?

- 36% Very likely
- 31% Quite likely
- 16% Neither likely nor unlikely
- 11% Quite unlikely
- 6% Very unlikely

Best Trust achievement?

- The formation of the Shay Stadium Trust which ultimately took the stadium development further towards completion.
- Helping the football club with financial support.
- A voice that has been heard within the club, and a credible forum for alternative views on management and progress.
- Developing a viable back-up plan in case the club went out of business over the summer.
- A safety net in case the Directors had walked away.
- It secured a seat on the Board.
- The formation of the Shay Stadium Trust.
- By being a voice for the fans, and being there to consider a Plan B in the event of the Club folding.
- Place on the Board, although this has now gone. Shay500 raised an essential amount of money at the time.
- A recognised voice of the fans.
- Keeping members closely informed of matters affecting the football club.
- Providing support to the club and a link for fans.
- Originally acquiring shares in the club – this has now gone to waste with the demise of the previous club. Whether we will be able to acquire shares in the new club remains to be seen.
- Formulating a credible back-up plan to reform the club should the current owners pull out. Encouraged debate about how the club (especially the board) interacts with the fans. This seems to have helped bring about a complete change in the way the club communicates with the fans so far – despite it being the same people in charge.
- Collecting a large chunk of the CVA money by being a body of people that other fans and businesses respected and trusted.
- Kept supporters informed about developments.
- Very little to be honest. It is no more than a glorified Supporters club.

- Had a feasible plan B if the main plan for a new Halifax Town had failed. It is reassuring to have this "in place" in case of future problems, and should always be ready to step up IF required.
- (Best) Having a seat on the board - and then (worst) allowing the club to commit financial suicide!
- Stuck around in tough times and been the reasonable voice of the fans not the hysterical one.

What is the most important thing about being in the Trust?

- Involvement in framing policy and direction.
- To help ensure the sustainable future of my club.
- Contribution to the football club and the community in the catchment area of the club. Raising awareness regarding the benefits of a thriving football club to the area (and the people and businesses in the area).
- Nothing now.
- Perhaps it is the psychological feeling that one is doing something, and also being in a position to vote if the trust gets involved in critical issues.
- The idea that as a group we can make a difference in the running of our football club and develop strong links with the community that will benefit the club.
- To give the fans a louder voice as frequently they are not heard when some clubs become the play game of those with the financial clout.
- Actually getting off my backside and trying to do something positive for FC Halifax Town.
- I feel that in a small way I am helping the club and feel involved in the running of the club.
- A sense that as a collective we can have an influence at the club to find out what's happening behind the scenes.
- Apart from being informed, it also gives the possibility of expressing my own views.
- To keep a balance.
- Small financial contribution, demonstration of commitment.
- Believing that eventually it can make a difference, and safeguard the club for future generations.
- Being part of an organisation that provides a check on the club's actions and a voice for the fans. This is particularly important for us where our old club was liquidated due to the unscrupulous actions of former owners/board members. Being part of the Trust is a way of showing that the club IS made up by the fans, and cannot exist without them.

- A good working relationship with the football club and the fans.
- Getting info about the club - hoping they help the club to survive very little to be honest. Other than it is another source of emergency funding when we inevitably find ourselves in another financial mess.
- The future of football in Halifax.
- It would be nice if there was a Supporters' Trust representative on the Board, but I don't see this as essential and I also don't see it happening at Halifax anytime soon.
- The sense that we, the fans, have a say in the future of our club.
- Being kept informed and helping keep the club going.

Suggested Trust improvements

- Happy with the way it's run.
- Communicating the message of what the trust actually is to fans. Unfortunately the trust has come under a lot of stick lately as being seen as a rival of the current board. Others see it as merely another fundraising organisation for the club.
- More trust from owners of club.
- As the HTST is entirely voluntary, I feel that no rational person can criticise unless they are prepared to give their own time "to do it better." Having said that, more updates on what's happening (via email or website) would be very welcome.
- Ensure the Trust is run openly and never becomes one person's crusade or a clique.

You can comment on these survey results online at www.htst.org.

HTST Pub Pals and Business Friends

A and G Autos (01422) 202191

Belgrave Social Club (01422) 354726

Colin's Tyre Services (01422) 381179

Furniture City (01422) 344541

Halifax Snooker Club & Electrical Bowl (01422) 360913

Holmeward Car Sales and Service Bay (01422) 345267

Pembertons Barn-Farm shop (01274) 832870

The Railway Hotel (01422) 351209

The Southdale Lounge (01422) 434239

The Star Inn (01422) 373164

Ziggy's Spice House (01422) 381381