

MINUTES

Meeting of the Disabled Supporters Association

15th July 2024 at 4.30pm

Zoom

In attendance:

Bryan Martin (Chair of Seagulls Disabled Supporters Association); Gillian Martin (Fan Advisory Board Liaison); Niraj Haria (Disabled Supporters' Liaison); Nicola Gibson (Secretary); John Jory (Travel & Membership Coordinator); Eric Williams (Special Advisor); Mark Butler (Social Media Coordinator)

Apologies:

None

	Agenda Item
	<u>Welcome</u> BM welcomed everyone to the group.
1	<u>Introductions & an explanation of current projects</u> <u>Gill Martin – Treasurer</u> Gill had been Chair of the initial Fans Advisory Board but relinquished the role to someone else whilst staying on an extra year to offer some support. Gill has now been appointed treasurer of the Disabled Supporters' Association. Gill is a Chartered Accountant. <u>Niraj – Disabled Supporter Liaison</u> Niraj had been a member of the FAB for 2 years & has since also relinquished his role there. He joined the Albion as an able-bodied season ticket holder but following an accident has since moved to the wheelchair section of the stadium. GM and he had talked about creating a DSA & brought BM on board too. His current principle project is creating a travel guide for disabled fans for both home & away games with a view to hopefully encouraging them to attend more games. <u>Nicola Gibson – Secretary</u> Nicola has a background in disability advocacy, teaching & admin. Her youngest child has a learning disability & is a season ticket holder at the Albion. <u>John Jory – Travel and Membership Coordinator</u> John Jory sits on the committee of the North West Sussex Seagulls (NWSS) & organises transport for fans across NW Sussex to the Amex. He also manages membership & the membership database. John has kindly offered to help set up the DSA membership database. He is a lifelong Albion supporter & takes his grandson with him to matches.

	<u>Eric Williams – Special Advisor</u> Eric was asked to be a special advisor to the DSA which he has happily agreed to do. Following an accident, Eric is now tetraplegic & works hard to rehabilitate. Having been a supporter since 1976 & ticket holder since the 80s, Eric has just moved to the East Stand North which allows him to bring a carer with him to matches. He is looking forward to the new season & will report back to the steering committee about this. Eric also expressed a particular need to review parking concerns for disabled supporters as he thinks that ideally there could be more disabled bays. He suggested that any members with issues or concerns, to please contact him & he would do his best to investigate & resolve. <u>Mark Butler – Social Media Coordinator</u> Mark Butler has been an Albion supporter for 10 years & season ticket holder for both men & women's football. Mark is an ambulant wheelchair user & holds a seat in the Upper East Stand. He works for a tech company & is experienced in sales, customer service & social media management. He has already assisted BG with the DSA flag design & the home domain. He would be very happy to advise on communication with relevant communities & is thoroughly looking forward to his new role within the DSA. Mark also has a daughter with Cerebral Palsy. BG asked if MB would help educate the steering committee on the role of social media & the implications of using it. BG commented on how fantastic it was to have the team all together for the first time & thanked everyone for attending.
2	<u>Appointment of the Chair</u> This appointment had not been confirmed at the first meeting of the Steering Committee as there were only three members at that point. BM was keen to formalise the appointment & seek a mandate from the whole steering committee. NH proposed BG as Chair with the rest of the committee in agreement. NH commented on how the experience of working with BM to date had been nothing short of fantastic.
3	<u>Update on DSA bank account and donations</u> GM announced that the very first donation of £400 to the DSA had been received from the NWSS. She thanked JJ for this kind gift which would go towards the web domain design, flag & Member MoJo. It had proved a challenge to set up a bank account but this was now in place with online banking & a debit card with the Bank of Scotland. GM had also researched tax implications & as long as the DSA were to remain a Not-for-Profit organisation, there would not be any tax issues. The account was currently also awaiting a further £400 gift from the Brighton & Hove Supporters' Club. GM will submit an end-of-year financial report to the committee & update at each meeting. Currently there was a balance of £410 & therefore a strong financial position.

4	<u>Explanation on the relationships with the FAB and the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion team</u> NH reported that he had worked a lot with Sarah Gould & the Albion's Equality, Diversity & Inclusion workstream & that huge strides had been made. As well as reporting back to the FAB the aim is to now grow the membership of the DSA. GM reported that some progress had been made with the Albion but that there was still outstanding action requests from previous meetings. For example, she would like to see trained stewards wearing different bibs to the regular stewards so that they are more easily identifiable to disabled supporters. This happens very successfully at Tottenham where BM & GM both attended a Level Playing Fields seminar on disability inclusion. Katie Haines who the Disability Liaison Office was also at the Tottenham seminar. It is hoped that Katie will prove to be an effective ally for improved equality & diversity for disabled fans.
5	<u>Current Issues</u> <u>Flag for the North Stand</u> Sarah Gould asked the DSA at the end of last season if the group would like to join the Proud Seagulls and Shegulls to have a flag at the back of the North Stand. BM reported that he has been working with the recommended supplier for a flag solution to include a logo for the official supporters' club. The artwork has now been completed but some further changes need to be made. He asked for patience whilst this was undertaken. <u>Disabled Fans Forum</u> BM hoped that everyone had been informed of events & to inform him if not. There will be a Disabled Supporters' Forum event on 8th August at 5.30 at The Amex. Last year there had been about 100 members in attendance so it will be a good opportunity to promote the DSA and share issues. GM did provide an explanation of the DSA concept at this forum last year. Those present expressed overwhelming support for the creation of the DSA. BM will discuss the lack of notification with Katie. For the 13th August, the DSA have been given 4 invites to meet the new Albion manager in Dick's Bar. BM, plus adult children of NG have taken up the invites. GM will also attend on behalf of the FAB. NH asked about the size of the flag. BM explained that it is the same size as other supporter flags & acceptable to the club. He stressed how Important it would be that people see the flag on social media & that it would hopefully have a downstream marketing effect. EW asked about accessibility for the 8th August event. BM confirmed that there is a lift to Dick's Bar. He added that the bar is a good meeting venue as well as the new Foundation Hub in Freshfield Road. He had been very impressed by the latter & was interested to see if they would be installing a ramp there for power chair users.

	<u>Constitution</u> This needs to be created & made formal. BM had met with Tony Foster from the Brighton Supporters Club who has offered to help in formulating it. <u>Links with Brighton Supporters Club</u> BM talked about links with the Brighton & Hove Supporters' Club which is the most mature official supporters' club. Tony Foster is the E,D & I lead there. TF was a previous chair of the group and is keen to work with the DSA on disability issues. NH asked about work with other charities & individuals, for example collaborating with former player Guy Butters. BM has already talked with Guy who is particularly interested in sponsorship of the DSA. BM has also been in touch with Phil Broom, Disability Football Lead at the Foundation to find out what ongoing & future projects they have. <u>Website</u> BM reported that the DSA would like to have a website model based on the NWSS one. He asked if MB would explore this template further & work with committee members to identify specifically what their requirements are. <u>WhatsApp group</u> BM suggested that a Steering Committee Whatsapp Group might be helpful for informal communication. Everyone agreed that this was a good idea. JJ commented that the NWSS have specific ones for communicating with fans on matchdays. Action - BG to share spreadsheet with Steering Committee member details. MB to set up a Whatsapp group.
6	<u>AOB</u> JJ had sent BM a draft of the working database using Member Mojo. There were some minor outstanding issues which would need resolving still. JJ explained that he would sort out the basics with BM first & then share with the Steering Committee. BM acknowledged that setting up this database would have been such hard work were it not for JJ & he thanked him for his efforts in this. NH asked if there is an edit function for each of the sections of the database. JJ replied that there is & that it is very flexible. It can for example be used to email members or select groups of members. It is also easy to expand current data. GM asked if there were any Data Protection issues the group should be aware of. JJ didn't think there were & confirmed that no financial details are held on the database. BM suggested that written exemption not to register stored information with the Data Protection Office would be needed. MB added that one pre-requisite should be the option for members to request that their details are not registered. JJ explained that the NWSS database has the option for members to opt out by providing a link. BM suggested a decision be made as to whether the group has rolling membership or not. He again thanked JJ for his significant work in helping set up the DSA database & that in time, other members of the Steering Committee familiarise themselves with how the database works.

	BM reported that he had signed the terms and conditions to allow the DSA to become an official supporters club at The Albion. The document refers to expectations around members behaviour. The club has a brand & understandably wants to protect that brand. They have suggested that this document be given to every DSA member. A link to the document will be provided on the website once it is up & running. We can identify the need to read the document in a welcome letter. NH reiterated how important that link would be. BM asked members how often they would like to meet as a steering group. There was a unanimous agreement to meet once a month. NH would think about means of communicating with the Club, for example, it might be more effective for communication to be through a single member of the DSA and equally, mirrored with the Club. BM would speak to Katie to request an organisational structure map that could be shared with Steering Group members. BM concluded the meeting by announcing that he would be meeting with Sarah Gould regarding some outstanding issues. MB added that it was imperative that any work around inclusion was always done in collaboration with a person with disabilities. For example, adherence to building regs is one thing but practical fit-out is another. Steering group members expressed some of the practical accessibility issues they experience at both home & away games. BM would write Sarah to suggest that MB covers for NH whilst he is on holiday. BM also requested that Steering Group members submit to him their blackout meeting times & dates.
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Date of next meeting – Wednesday 18th September at 16:30 via zoom.

Minutes submitted by - Nicola Gibson

Minutes approved by - Subject to Approval