

MINUTES

Meeting of the Disabled Supporter's Association

Wednesday 4th December at 4.30

Zoom

In attendance

Gill Martin (Treasurer & FAN Advisory Board Liaison); Bryan Martin (Chair of Seagulls Disabled Supporters Association); Nicola Gibson (Secretary); Shana Pezzaro (Special Advisor); Niraj Haria (Disabled Supporter's Liaison); Eric Williams (Special Advisor)

Apologies

Mark Butler; John Jory

1	<u>Welcome & Apologies for Absence</u> Nicola opened the meeting at 4.30 & welcomed everyone to the 4th meeting of the DSA. Apologies had been received from Mark & John.
2	<u>Approval of minutes dated 2nd October 2024</u> Minutes were circulated prior to the meeting & approved by the Committee.
3	<u>Follow-up Items</u> Updates were given on the following: • Accessing the DSA Whatsapp group - Shana will need to be added - <u>MB</u> • Update on Fan Zone - Mark had taken all his input into Fan Zone which is beginning to take shape. He had been very impressed & had reported that all angles had been covered. March opening at the earliest. Another follow-up meeting to be arranged - <u>NH</u> • Setting up a Sponsorship & Finance sub committee - Bryan reported that this is on the back burner until the website is up and running. Aims to ensure very clear messaging on why people should fund the DSA. • Disseminating info re DSA raffle - Gill reported that the play they are involved in has given the DSA a Friday night raffle slot at which it was hoped at least £100 could be raised. To report back at the next meeting - <u>GM</u> • Membership database list to John - Bryan reported that some committee members had tested the Member Mojo & had given very positive feedback on this. Niraj commended that it included everything the DSA had previously discussed. Once the DSA website is functioning, Membership Mojo would be activated. Shana asked what the MM is - essentially a membership package for small to medium sized clubs.

	Usability test for website - Mark will be pursuing this. Bryan sent an Excel spreadsheet to which he has received some feedback. Request for others to also send their feedback. Bryan would be meeting Simon King to start the whole process of developing the website together. Niraj asked if, once the website was up and running, would the DSA still be able to call on Simon. Bryan explained that it would be similar to the FAB website where the actual content development would be controlled by the organisation, in this case, us. It would make sense for 2 members of the DSA Committee to have access to the website & everyone would be encouraged to send stories & news items to be uploaded.
4	<u>Appointment of Shana Pezzaro as a Special Advisor (B)</u> Prior to the meeting Niraj had met with Shana and Bryan. Bryan proposed that Shana join the Committee. This was seconded by Niraj. Shana thanked the group & gave a short introduction to herself. She felt reassured that her the group acknowledged the limitations imposed by her disability on what she would be able to do for the group. Shana is particularly interested in the use of PAs & commented on how she would not be able to access the games at all without them.
5	<u>Chair's Report</u> The report had been shared prior to the meeting & most of the points covered in the 'Follow-up items above.
6	<u>Treasurer's Report</u> This was shared ahead of the meeting. Gill reported that donations to the DSA were just over £1k with an expenditure of £200 on email registration and the DSA flag. Just over £800 would be used to establish the website & Membership Mojo. Hopefully there will be more income from funding & sponsorship in the future. Niraj thanked donors for their generosity.
7	<u>Website Update</u> Please see Item 3. It is hoped that development would begin before Xmas with a January 2025 launch.
8	<u>Visit to the WSL game at the Broadfield</u> Bryan reported that a few members of the DSA visited recently with Mark, Lucy from the FAB & Chris Cheshire from Crawley DSA. The objective was to investigate issues re security, stewarding, parking, disabled access, pitch side views & provision for autistic children. The group had talked to both stewards & fans. There had been an incidence of some aggressive stewarding by one individual but it was later discovered that the steward himself had SEND. Issues around away-coach parking were resolved through discussion. The Club had replied regarding a number of issues & would continue to work with Katie Haines. Niraj mentioned how the stadium is old & small & had not been designed with disabled people in mind. However sticking plaster solutions would need to be found until the new stadium is built. Bryan noted that although the structure of the stadium is indeed old, that Broadfield is a very friendly place where the whole atmosphere is really positive. The stadium is a very good introduction to football. Crawley DSA has packs for children & young supporters with Autism, another real positive. Gill had received very positive feedback re Millie Crowhurst & Katie Haines at Brighton.

	Niraj suggested whether the DSA could ask the Amex to ask Broadfield to test some initiatives before they are introduced to the Brighton ground, for example, the use of the Autistic children's pack. Bryan added that certainly members of the Foundation feel far more comfortable taking autistic supporters to the Broadfield & there was definitely room to utilise that stadium as a prototype NG to send details to Amaze re the pack for young supporters with Autism.
<u>9</u>	<u>Visit to the Amex & BBC Coverage</u> Niraj recounted the story of how he managed to get some media coverage of his disability journey. Following his accident, his solicitors had been very keen on adding his story to their website. This gained the attention of the Argus & then the BBC & led to Niraj visiting the Amex for an accessibility tour which the BBC filmed & broadcast on South East News. In this Niraj mentioned the DSA. A further interview was scheduled with BBC Radio Sussex who are keen to run a separate story on the DSA. Niraj was really pleased with this development & thinks it very important that people are educated about disability. Gill commented that it would be great to see DSA gain media coverage. It would also be important for the DSA to have a presence on LinkedIn. Niraj mentioned he has many contacts who might be really helpful for the organization. Bryan added that Mark was very keen to get LinkedIn up & running. MB
<u>10</u>	<u>Visit to Level Playing Field South Forum</u> Gill reported on her visit to a recent Level Playing Field event, hosted by West Ham & with a specific focus on the role of personal assistants. LPF is a national charity which links together DSAs & other sporting activities. It had been a really great day. As some of the larger clubs have begun to reduce concessions, the LPF are considering, for example, how they can prepare for the possibility of clubs withdrawing concessionary tickets for PAs. Many positive stories were told about the invaluable support offered by PAs & it would be really important to ensure that we continue to try to achieve equality in accessing games. Mention has been made of how Brentford are reconfiguring wheelchair spaces & the DSA would be encouraging the women's stadium to consider the developments at the Brentford ground. Gill reported that Katie Haines is very positive about ensuring the club meets the needs of disabled supporters. Katie also stated that the vast majority of requests for accompanying PAs were genuine & that there was hardly any abuse of the support made available by Brighton & Hove Albion.
<u>11</u>	<u>E, D & I Calendar</u> Bryan had added some special dates in the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion calendar for the Committee to consider at the next meeting. His suggestion was to possibly target one of these days & make it special in some way & by basing it around a real world event. One idea might be to do a positioning paper on some of the themes e.g. International Wheelchair Day, World Autism Day etc. This could help raise the issue of the work of the DSA who might also possibly partner with another charity e.g. Sussex Amaze which supports children & young people with special educational needs & disabilities.
<u>12</u>	<u>AOB</u> Gill reported that as a member of the FAB, she had been invited to a Zoom call with the Premier League, 'Getting to the Match'. Her involvement in this could lead possibly to the DSA officially joining. She will report back at the next meeting - <u>GM</u>

	Niraj commented that 'Getting to the Match' should include everyone but was more appropriate for people with disabilities. Date of next meeting proposed for Wednesday 5th February at 4.30pm. This meeting closed at 5.15.
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Accompanying papers & links:

Minutes of 2nd October; DSA Monthly Report; Treasurer Report; DSA Report on Tour of Broadfield Stadium