



Manchester United Supporters Club Plymouth Branch

2019-20 Annual General Meeting

Draft Minutes



Date: Sunday 23rd August 2020

Venue: Virtual (Zoom) Meeting

Time: 19:00

Attendance

In attendance were committee members Mark Wyatt (Chair and Membership Secretary), Dave Price (Secretary), Donella Bone (Treasurer), Chris Wyatt (Minutes Secretary) and Alex Bullard, plus the following three branch members: J Voaden, A Smith, and N Parmenter.

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from P Stear and C Harper.

Welcome Address

Mark Wyatt (Chairman) welcomed attendees to the meeting and gave his thanks for them taking their time to attend and also for sticking with the Branch through a difficult period due to the pandemic. He reflected on a difficult season with regards to the pandemic's impact both on society and the Branch with regards to the ongoing suffering, difficulties and uncertainty that arose from it. On a more positive note, he commented on a successful season overall, finishing third in the Premier League, ensuring Champions League football for next season, but maybe a disappointment in getting to three semi-finals, but not managing to lift a trophy. He also praised the optimism Ole has installed in the team and its supporters with the return of the entertaining football that is true to United's history and DNA plus the fact that they now have the youngest squad in the Premier League with an average age of twenty four.

He went on to thank the Committee for their incredible hard work, especially adapting to the new challenges they have faced regarding the pandemic. He then informed the members that the Committee will endeavour to rise to the challenges ahead in order to maintain the future of the Branch for years to come. Whilst the current uncertainty is likely to make the next season a difficult one, it was the Branch's intentions to remain organisationally and financially healthy in order to push on next season and also to be fully prepared for when current ticket allocation, seating and transportation restrictions are lifted.

Acceptance of Minutes of 2019 AGM

Acceptance of 2019 AGM minutes was proposed by N Parmenter and seconded by A Smith. The minutes were then agreed and accepted by the meeting.

Secretary's Report

The Secretary added his welcome to members in attendance and recorded his thanks to other members of the Committee for their assistance during last season. He stated that this year his report will be shorter than usual due to the ongoing uncertainty created by the current pandemic.

Ticket allocations and travel 2019-2020

In total, 72 branch members applied for and received tickets for the various matches. This was eight less than the previous season and is partly explained by the fact that we were unable to attend the final four Premier matches due to the pandemic. Another change last season was in the number of matches that people attended. Of members who attended matches, 75% went to between one and three games with only 25% going to four or more. This latter figure is a reduction down from 40% during the previous season. Again, these figures can partly be attributed to the effects of the pandemic.

For the seventh season in succession, the Branch gave a discounted coach fare for those members who went on more than five coach trips. With fewer coach trips, only six members benefited from this. The main aim of the discount scheme was to encourage more people to travel regularly on coaches, but this has not been successful.

Last season the Branch ran only seven coach trips to Old Trafford for Premier League games. Three coach trips for games towards the end of the season had to be cancelled due to the pandemic. Additionally, various members made use of Branch season tickets to attend some of the European matches. For a good number of years, the Branch has received a specified number of tickets for "A" games, plus, for practical purposes, an unlimited amount of tickets for the other Premier League games. For those latter games, it meant that we were able to guarantee members a ticket provided they applied before deadlines. Last season, for these other games, all our applications to United were again 100% successful.

Recently, for several successive years, the Branch has lost money on tickets and coach travel, a position not sustainable in the long term. However, pleasingly last season, ticket and travel income more or less matched expenditure with a deficit of just £9. Profits on five of the seven coach trips helped offset the losses incurred by the mandatory season ticket purchases of tickets for cup and European games. The biggest loss was £400 for the Man City coach trip. Restricted ticket numbers for "A" games means that the financial situation regarding coach trips for these "A" games is always a concern.

Ticket allocations and travel 2019-2020

Normally, during July United would have informed supporters' club branches of the arrangements regarding ticket allocations and so on for the coming season. At the AGM, the Secretary would then outline the Branch procedures for members to make ticket applications and arrangements for coach travel.

As members will no doubt be aware, at this point in time, there is no definitive information about entry to grounds for matches in the coming season. What does seem certain is that when this eventually happens, ground capacity will initially be much reduced. At United, with more than 53,000 season ticket holders, it is unclear which season tickets holders will be able to attend and on what basis. We do not have any further information from United about this at present.

Members have already been informed that the Committee took the decision not to offer part use of season tickets for the coming season. Instead, it is anticipated that these will be available to all members subject to all conditions imposed by the Government and United and as determined by the 2020-21 Branch Committee. Members will be informed as information becomes available.

Player of the Year 2018-19

This is the eighth season now that the Branch has used our present system for electing our Player of the Year. After each game on the coach back to Plymouth members vote for their Man of the Match. These votes are added together and contribute towards the final score. Additionally, each member who renewed their Branch membership for this season by a specified date was entitled to a vote. These two blocks of votes are then combined to produce our Player of the Year.

This year, in third place was Bruno Fernandes (who arrived half way through the season), runner-up was Harry Maguire, and the winner was Aaron Wan-Bissaka.

Last season and the next

A very mixed season! The arrival of Bruno and the style of football in the latter half has raised all our spirits. However, semi-final defeats in three competitions and third place in the league with the lowest third place points total for more than 20 years clearly shows that we have some way to go yet. Hopefully, a few new faces in the team will accelerate that process during the coming season.

Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer, via email, had earlier provided the end of year accounts to the meeting's attendees. She explained various details of the accounts to branch members and answered questions from those present.

She also informed the meeting of the following:

- That the Branch did not have to take legal action against a former branch member for money owed as all monies were finally paid in full during November 2019.
- The Committee had agreed online payments can be made by travel only branch members and that online banking arrangements could also be used, if required, by the Treasurer to enable her to make online refunds only.

The Treasurer confirmed that whilst the accounts had been uploaded to the Branch website prior to the AGM for branch members to view, they would be removed after the AGM meeting, and should members require a copy, they are to contact the Treasurer.

Election of Committee

With no new nominees wishing to be considered to join the Committee being received, it was proposed by J Voaden and seconded by A Smith, that the current Committee were all re-elected for the coming 2020-21 season. This was accepted.

Motion for Discussion

There were two motions raised for discussion, which were sent in by branch members as follows:

“Obviously this year is a bit of a write off, but have the Branch already got plans for the 2-3 years ahead to keep the Branch sustainable or is it a case of wait and see?”

Reply

The Branch is always planning ahead regardless of a pandemic, and so, as in past 25 years, will regularly discuss this as a Committee, always actively engaging with our Members along the way. As with all unknown aspects of daily life at present, we as the Branch Committee will remain pro-active, to try and ensure that the Branch remains in the best of health for the foreseeable future.

“With a maximum of eight season tickets available, is the hire of a mini-bus physically and/or financially feasible?”

Reply

Current Government advice discourages sharing of a vehicle with those outside your household, but, if arranged, there are a number of rules to follow (face mask, ventilation, social distancing seating arrangements, etc). So whilst this could be an option in future when hopefully restrictions are lifted, for now, this is not currently being considered by the Branch for health, safety and financial grounds.

Committee member C Wyatt went on to inform the meeting of enquiries he had made on behalf of the Branch, regarding coach travel to games as the Branch's usual transport

provider had gone out of business. He had sourced several options and will continue with these enquiries in order that the Branch would have future coach transport available, once current pandemic restrictions had been lifted.

Any Other Business

Various discussions took place about possible future plans by United regarding branch allocation of tickets to their worldwide branches. Whilst uncertainty regarding future ticket allocation remains, the Branch Secretary informed the meeting that United had approved a further 23 official branches during last season and so are continuing to uphold the supporters club network.

The Chairman went on to say that membership numbers needed to increase to maintain the Branch's future and the Secretary reminded the meeting that ticket allocations from United are dependent upon membership numbers. Committee members A Bullard and C Wyatt were always engaging in ways to increase membership and would be pursuing that further in the coming weeks via social media platforms.

The Secretary also stated that more 'travel only' passengers were needed to enhance the financial viability of future Branch coach trips.

The Chairman once again thanked members for their attendance, informing them that the Committee will continue to engage with all members throughout the difficult, coming season to ensure that the Branch could remain in good shape for the challenges ahead, and looked forward to the Branch running match day trips once again.

The AGM meeting was then concluded.