



Manchester United Supporters Club Plymouth Branch
2021-22 Annual General Meeting
Draft Minutes



Date: Sunday 24th July 2022
Venue: Virtual (Zoom) Meeting
Time: 19:15

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from D Attwater, D Bone, K Keller and J Voaden.

Welcome Address

Mark Wyatt (Chairman) welcomed attendees to the meeting and gave his thanks for them taking their time to attend and for their continued support of the Branch.

He briefly spoke of a difficult 2021/2022 season on the pitch, and hoped that Erik's arrival would offer the calibre of football the United faithful had been brought up on. The majority of his address referred to the difficulties experienced by the Branch last season involving problems involving United's new ticketing system and United's microsite for supporters club branches. He also expressed his disappointment regarding issues the Branch, especially the Secretary and Treasurer, experienced last season with many late cancellations of tickets and failure by some members to pay for the tickets they had ordered. The sheer numbers involved meant many additional voluntary hours of work for the Branch Secretary and Treasurer. He told the meeting that measures, temporarily used throughout the pandemic, for online payment for tickets via the Branch account will no longer be available for the new season. Payment for tickets will primarily be by cheque or cash as a last resort.

He went on to thank the Committee for their incredible hard work, especially for the many additional voluntary hours of work they had to put in last season, and for their dedication as all had accepted the challenges of a new season.

He stated that the Branch faced a tough season ahead, but it was the Branch's intention to remain organisationally and financial healthy in difficult times to again deliver for our members in this, our 27th year.

He reiterated that the future of the Branch requires its members to work in tandem with the Committee, and stated the issues of last season regarding late cancellations and payment failures will not be tolerated during the new season. He was optimistic that if members acted promptly in requesting and paying for tickets within the required time frames, this will

allow the Branch to obtain tickets and coaches early, and that the new season can be one to look forward to with a renewed enthusiasm.

Acceptance of Minutes of 2020-21 AGM

Acceptance of the minutes from the 2020-21 AGM was proposed by N Parmenter and seconded by A Smith. The minutes were then agreed and accepted by the meeting.

Secretary's Report

The Branch Secretary added his welcome to members in attendance. He then recorded his thanks to other members of the Committee for their assistance during last season.

Online ticketing

The Secretary recalled that at the AGM last year he had stated "ticket arrangements for the coming season were not yet in place because United were moving to a paperless online system for tickets. Although for individual members the system looked fine, there were still some issues to resolve regarding supporters clubs". That proved to be an understatement. Throughout the season there were ongoing issues, one of which was only resolved this week (the microsite). During the first three months of the season especially, this caused a huge increase in workload for the Secretary and Treasurer in particular. That workload increased further due to members cancelling their tickets after they had already been ordered from United and paid for by the Branch.

Ticket allocations and travel 2021-2022

Although the pandemic is still with us, last season saw an easing of restrictions and a resumption of live games. In total, 127 Branch members applied for and received tickets for various matches. This is a record for the Branch and is 36% higher than our previous peak in 2016-17. However, individuals went to fewer games. The percentage of members who attended between one and three games was 82.7% (up from 60% pre-pandemic), with 15% going to 4-9 games, and 2.3% attending 10 or more.

Last season the Branch ran 10 coach trips to Old Trafford for Premier League games. This is just one less than in the pre-pandemic 2019-20 season. Additionally, various members made use of Branch season tickets to attend a number of the European matches. For a good number of years, the Branch has received a specified number of tickets for "A" games based on membership numbers, 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 virtually guarantee members a ticket provided they applied before deadlines. Last season, for these other games, all our applications were 100% successful.

For the seventh season in succession, the Branch gave a discounted coach fare for those members who went on more than five coach trips. Originally, the main aim of the discount scheme was to encourage more people to travel regularly on coaches. Although that aim was not achieved, the Branch intends to continue the discount scheme for the coming

season, as described in the *Terms and Conditions of Membership* and the *Ticket and Travel Ordering Procedures*.

Last season was the 6th season in succession where the Branch has lost money on tickets and travel. Once again, I mention in my report that this is not sustainable. The answer is to have more members who apply for more tickets for more games and with more “travel only” people on the coach. The tickets and travel loss last season was £973, and yet just two more people on each of our 10 coach trips would have eliminated that loss.

Ticket allocations and travel 2022-2023

The Secretary informed the meeting that all the ticket and travel details are available on the Branch website. All related documentation, including match application forms, can be downloaded from the website at www.plymouthreds.com

As is usual, the Secretary made his annual plea to all members who wish to apply for tickets to (a) apply early (see later), and (b) to ensure that all sections of the form are completed, including their preferred coach boarding point. Most of the applications received so far for next season have been completed correctly, but there are a few with missing details. Applications completed correctly saves a lot of time and effort chasing up those missing details. It also means that your applications for tickets are processed promptly, and without any delay. Thanks to all of you who follow the correct procedures – it really does make the Secretary’s life a lot easier.

For the coming season, United have informed us that ticketing arrangements will generally be the same as last season. However, for “A” games we now require 18 members for one ticket. The Secretary would encourage members to apply for more of the non-“A” games. Members can be confident about obtaining tickets, and these games give the Branch an opportunity to run coaches at a slight profit to offset losses elsewhere. Deadlines for ticket applications are set by United. Tickets allocated by United shortly after the deadlines have to be purchased by the Branch within a few days or the tickets are lost.

Of course, this season the World Cup will interrupt the schedule of fixtures. Prior to the World Cup, we intend running coach trips to Old Trafford for the games against Brighton, Arsenal, Leeds United, and West Ham United. Branch season tickets will be available for those members who wish to make their own travel arrangements to see the Europa League matches.

Player of the Year 2020-21

As with last year, members were invited to give their vote for Player of the Year when renewing their Branch membership. For the first time in the history of the Branch, this year there were two joint winners: Cristiano Ronaldo and David de Gea.

Last season and the next

For the Secretary, the highlight of last season was the performance of the youngsters who won the FA Youth Cup for the 11th time (keeping us two ahead of Chelsea). Given the large number of changes in players just before the start of the season, plus a new manager, United Women also performed well in the WSL, and in the end just narrowly missed out on Champions League qualification. For the coming season, let us hope that our first team also perform like a United team that we expect, know and love. Early signs under our new manager Erik ten Hag are encouraging.

Treasurer's Report

The end of year accounts for the 2021-22 season had earlier been provided to the meeting attendees. The Chairman stated that should any other members require a copy, they are to contact the Branch Treasurer (D Bone).

The Secretary read out the statement below from the Treasurer:

“The Branch experienced problems this year with some members deciding they did not want their tickets after they were purchased. This caused additional work for Committee members as follows:

1. Constantly chasing members who requested to pay online.
2. Scanning their application forms as evidence that they did, in fact, apply for tickets.
3. Re-advertising the tickets.
4. Phoning United to cancel ticket and reissue to another member.

As a result of this, the Branch has decided all payments will be in the form of a cheque. Members who travel only can still pay online, cash or cheque”.

Election of Committee

The Branch received a request from a new nominee, A Hale, wishing to be considered for the Committee. This was proposed by A Smith and seconded by N Parmenter. The current Committee plus A Hale were all elected for the coming 2022-23 season.

Motion for Discussion

There were two motions submitted by the members to the Committee for discussion.

1. Will we go back to buying block season tickets as opposed to each game individually?

Response:

The Committee regularly reviews its arrangements in order to address both the requirements of United and those of our members. In the past, we adopted the policy of members being able to reserve and pay for a certain number of games in advance. This was achieved by making use of Branch season tickets in full accordance with the current conditions set by United (which varied between seasons). This served a purpose

to the Branch, in that we could receive monies in advance, in order to make our match ticket and coach arrangements earlier, but over time, we also realised there were a number of negative aspects to this arrangement.

For example, this previous arrangement may have benefitted members, who had more time/finances available to enjoy more games, whereas a family of maybe less availability or income would only be able to manage the one or two games a season. If tickets were already allocated, they would be unable to have that opportunity.

The Branch always wishes to encourage everyone who would like the chance to go with us to Old Trafford and to have equal opportunity to do so. As the Secretary mentioned earlier, this last season we had a record number of individuals who applied for and obtained tickets through the Branch.

The Branch always aims for total inclusivity in its arrangements for everyone to enjoy our days out, so we will not be offering the block purchase facility again for this season.

As detailed earlier, we always keep our ticketing arrangements under review, and will make changes if we believe that change is required (subject always to the conditions set by United). The Branch also recognises the loyalty of our long serving members and their commitment. That will also feature in any future discussions and decisions, so hopefully no one misses out.

2. Payment method. Instead of blank cheques maybe a deposit per ticket applied for?

Response:

Due to the pandemic, issues with the new ticketing system at United, and a subsequent delay in releasing arrangements for the 2021/2022 season, the Branch had a very limited time to get our ticket and travel arrangements in place. Consequently, we were forced to modify our payments arrangements and allow membership and match ticket payments to be paid into the Branch account in addition to the normal use of cheques. However, this caused the Branch Secretary and our Treasurer major problems throughout the whole season.

Throughout our 27 years, the Branch arrangement using blank cheques has been a major success with no issues. As with all others aspects of modern life, when purchasing tickets for anything from theatre to music concerts, we all have to pay in advance. In the case of the Branch, we also have to purchase tickets in advance as well as booking coaches. The Branch has researched the major banks and all, but a tiny amount provide cheque books, so this the main method we will be using for members to pay for their membership and match tickets for this season, plus cash as a last resort.

The Branch experienced major problems of acting in good faith on behalf of some members purchasing the tickets they had requested, only for no payment to be made to the Branch. Whilst we recognise that genuine events will occur, and we will do everything we can to resell that ticket, the range of excuses last year were not as such. We had reasons from 'I'd forgot I had requested tickets' or 'I have forgotten a family members birthday was in the same week, so now can't afford the tickets' and many, many more.

These failures to pay for tickets that members had requested meant even more additional voluntary hours of work for the Treasurer in chasing up no payments and the Branch Secretary in contacting United and re-allocating tickets. This was very demanding on the Committee members, who also have full time jobs, families to manage, and other commitments. It is not an exaggeration to say that the time taken dealing with one cancelled ticket often exceeded the total time taken to administer all the other tickets for that match.

This is not something we will not be repeating for next season, so we will be sticking with the very successful, tried and tested method of cheques or cash. In very exceptional circumstances, *ie* last minute ticket purchases, the Branch will consider payments into the Branch account. Members can contact the Branch at redseagulls@outlook.com, if they have any further payment queries.

Any Other Business

Various discussions took place regarding ways in which the Branch could look to obtain even more members, reduce any losses, *etc*. The Chairman reiterated to the meeting that the Committee constantly looks at such issues on a regular basis during its regular committee meetings, but always welcomes any suggestions its members may wish to offer.

The Chairman went on to say that membership numbers needed to increase in order to maintain the Branch's future, and that Committee members C Wyatt and A Bullard were always engaging in ways to increase membership, via social media platforms.

The Chairman once again thanked members for their attendance informing them that the Committee will continue to engage with all members throughout the coming season to ensure that the Branch could remain in good shape for the challenges ahead. He looked forward to its first trip of the season for the opening day's game against Brighton.

The AGM meeting was then concluded.