



Introduction and Proposal Document

February 2014

Introduction

TrustSTFC, the Swindon Town Supporters' Trust, was launched in August 2001, with its aim to try and raise £500k to help save the club (which at the time was losing £5k a day and on the verge of administration for a second time).

We have eight members on the Trust board; all of us supporters who work voluntarily for our mutual, not-for-profit society to benefit the aims of Swindon Town Fans, the local community and Swindon Town Football Club.

Our members are also fans who believe in the Trust's ideals and aims. We are regulated by the FSA and our parent organisation is the well-respected Supporters Direct.

We're not to be confused with the Swindon Town Supporters Club, who are a separate organisation and do a great job raising funds that are used every season to improve the club. The fundamental difference is the Trust has a legal constitution that allows it to collect money on behalf of members and invest it. This typically means that a Trust has the potential to buy shares in the football club or if the worst did happen, purchase the club.

On the assumption that the club will now go from strength to strength, it would remain the Trust's ambition to use the funds from its members to invest in the club, although no decisions would be made without first asking the views of the membership.

Historically, we've been most engaged during dark times, fighting for the survival of the club and often at loggerheads with owners. It's generally accepted that the Trust went through a quiet period during the relative calm of the Andrew Black years, however re-emerged at the time of the Jed McCrory takeover and has been very active since, engaging in several Q&A sessions and pushing several initiatives through to completion.

Throughout this year, we have made an effort to emphasise that the Trust is a positive, forward looking and collaborative organisation. As a result, we went through a rebranding exercise and launched a new website: **www.truststfc.com**

Going forwards, we have ideas to help the club, and provide positive engagement for the fans.

Some Trust History Highlights (more available on our website)

In June 2002, the Trust donated £8k to help pay for the club's Wanborough training base for the year and in February 2003 it launched (in conjunction with the Supporters' Club) the 'Red Army Fund', which was (and still is) 'ring-fenced' for the purpose of paying for improvements to the Swindon Town squad.

In February 2005, Michael Proctor became the first player to be financed through the Red Army Fund...and scored the winner on his debut!

In March 2009, TrustSTFC again used the Red Army Fund to pay for the loan of Gordon Greer, who signed permanently a few months later and was made club captain.

In January 2013, TrustSTFC offered the club the contents of the Red Army Fund to help pay for additional loan signings after manager Paolo di Canio was unable to obtain the money from the club. In the fraught circumstances of the time however the club declined the offer.

Our new SAFE motto

Earlier this year, we launched our SAFE motto clearly defining what the Trust is about:

Strengthen bonds

Strengthen the bonds between the club and community through regular, open and honest Q&A sessions between the board, Trust STFC and Swindon Town Supporters' Club.

Accountability

Encourage the football club to be fully Accountable to the fans and to take proper note of the interests of Swindon Town supporters and the community when making key decisions.

Fan representation

Promote the principle of Fan representation on the SwindonTown board of Directors, enabling supporters to have a real say in key decisions within the club.

Emergency planning

Establish Emergency plans to address any future ownership crisis that may ensue, and continue to work towards the possibility of future fan ownership of the football club.

How has the SAFE motto progressed?

We've had several Q&A sessions with the Jed McCrory regime, and these were always frosty affairs. As a result they proved counter-productive as there was very little 'trust' in place either-way.

In truth, the Q&A sessions are perhaps best held through the local media channels (i.e. BBC Wiltshire phone-in's and the Swindon Adver website), as they reach a wider audience.

Although we talk often of Fan Representation and Accountability, we realise that up to now few football club owners have been willing to concede this. We will continue however to press for this as a long term aim. In the meantime we have spent time preparing Emergency plans, i.e. a suitable plan and system to raise funds in a short space of time should the club fall into trouble, even if we are optimistic that there is no threat of this in the foreseeable future.

What next for the Trust?

We would like to build a strong and supportive relationship with Swindon Town FC, and raise funds for the progression of the club both on and off the field.

With that in mind, we would like to introduce the idea of:

Swindon Town
FANSFIRST
YOUR CLUB, YOUR VOICE, YOUR VOTE

FansFirst – what’s it all about?

It’s a democratic system that enables all fans who participate to raise funds for the club and have a say in how those funds are spent – we can listen to the club’s requirements, and also put forward our own ideas for consideration.

FansFirst is the umbrella organisation embracing both the Trust and the Supporters Club. Members will have the right to elect representatives, decide policy and vote how funds are spent so that everyone gets a say. Regular meetings between FansFirst representatives and the club will help to build the trust between club and fans and help everyone work together to make the club more successful.

How would it work?

Season tickets would have £10 added to their cost to cover Membership of FansFirst, i.e. of both the Swindon Town Supporters’ Trust and the Swindon Town Supporters’ Club. These funds will be deposited by the club into a ‘FansFirst’ bank account.

Supporters will have the right to ‘opt-out’, it’s not a compulsory membership.

All season ticket holders who remain opted-into the scheme will get allocated a ‘Fan number’ which will later be used for voting purposes.

As well as this, the members will have numerous other benefits such as discounted coach travel for away games, discount on merchandise in the superstore, club loyalty points and entry into "free draws" to win Swindon Town related prizes (e.g. tickets for hospitality at ‘FansFirst’ sponsored games, club mascot packages etc)

Money raised through FansFirst would be split in the following way:

50% to be allocated to Supporters’ Trust initiatives, to cover (amongst other things):

- Loan player registrations (players automatically sponsored by FansFirst)
- Stadium enhancements
- Long-term club benefit items

50% to go to Supporters’ Club initiatives, to cover (amongst other things):

- Youth team items
- Supporter events
- Subsidised away travel
- Improving the matchday experience

How much can we raise?

The FansFirst idea can raise significant funds for the benefit of the club.

The fund could be increased even more if 'walk-up' matchday revenue is also considered.

Careful consideration will be required on how that would be managed, i.e. two ticket prices required – 'Standard' and 'FansFirst' tickets (£1 extra).

Walk-up fans will not have voting rights, the £1 fee will be a donation to FansFirst.

| | No. of Fans | Trust | Supp Club | Per 23 Games | FansFirst Total |
|------------------------------|--------------------|--------------|------------------|---------------------|------------------------|
| Season Ticket | 5000 | £5 | £5 | | £50,000 |
| Walk-Up Fans per game | 2500 | 0.50 | 0.50 | £57,500 | £57,500 |
| | | | | | £107,500 |

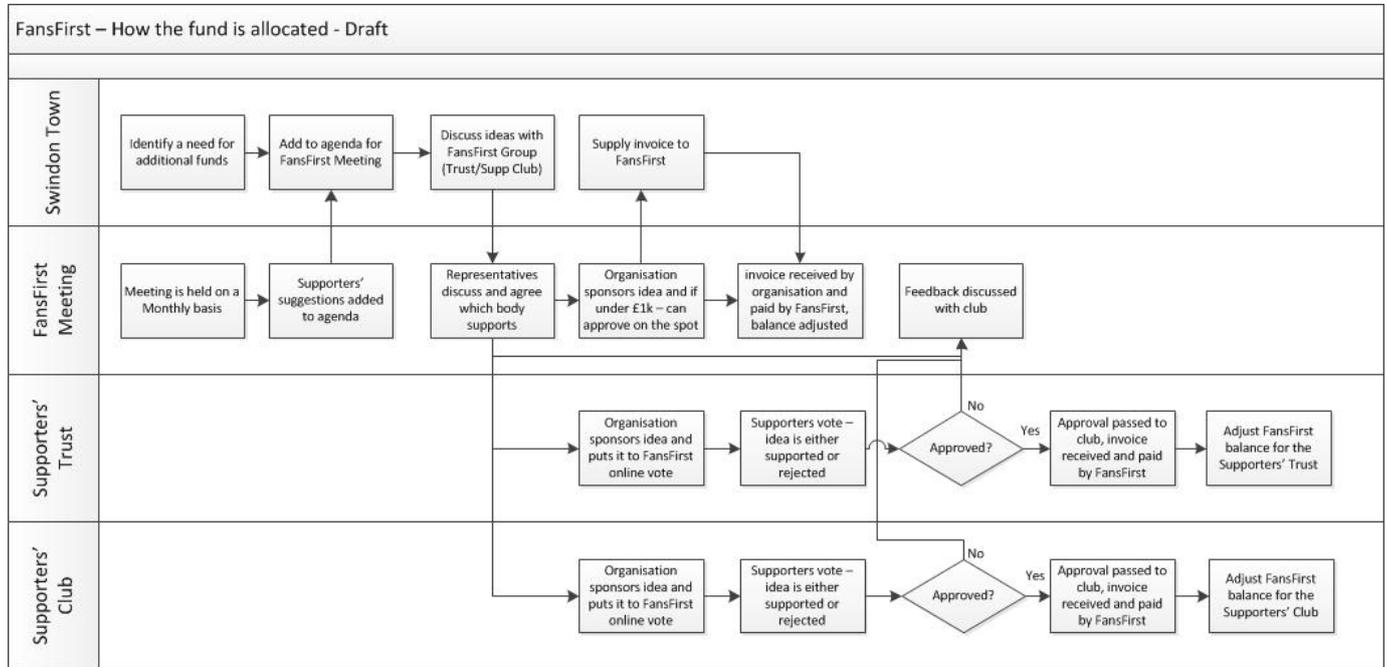
Totals shown above are probably maximum case, so figures will be reduced, but it's an OPT-OUT scheme, so a generous take-up can be expected.

In addition to this, fundraising initiatives and donations could be added to the overall total, as 'FansFirst' effectively becomes the STFC 'support fund' for the benefit the club.

FansFirst would replace the existing Red Army Fund, and would require the club to deposit the appropriate funds into the 'FansFirst' account at the start of the season and every week following a game.

How would the FansFirst funds be allocated?

As with all elements of this proposal, this process requires further examination, however a draft suggestion is shown below. For smaller amounts of funding, we should examine the potential for supporters group representatives to sanction spend (e.g. items under £1k can be approved at Monthly meeting):



For a clearer view of this draft process, double click the image below:



Fans First Process

Conclusion

The Swindon Town Supporters' Trust would welcome further discussion on the FansFirst initiative.

We have already consulted the Swindon Town Supporters' Club who are keen to back the idea and have also discussed with the Swindon Town Family Excellence Panel, who are supportive.

We hope that together we can help to make a little difference to Swindon Town's future success.

Contact Details

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