



2024/25 Club Secretary's Report

At the end of last season I thought I'd learned a fair bit after becoming Club Secretary, but I think it's fair to say there is always something new to understand or get to grips with. So, with the season now over for most, save for the odd tournament and end of season parties, it's perhaps a good time to reflect on how the season has gone, what went well, and what could have gone better.

First off the good stuff.

Training & Qualifications

Ensuring the Club abides by all the various FA and league rules remains the single biggest part of my job as Secretary and I'm sure you've all been on the receiving end of me chasing you to do or renew something at some point by now as a result.

I said last year that it had been a massive effort to chase down and address a big backlog of missing or overdue training but I'm pleased to say that we seem to have got over the hump and it's now much more of a case of keeping on top of the good position we've got ourselves into.

A big priority, as you might expect, is ensuring our new coaches all have the required qualifications, in particular for the youngest age groups. It's been particularly pleasing to see them making great progress meaning we can really start to see a pipeline of new fully qualified coaches being in place well before they're unleashed as U7s managers and coaches.

Further changes to the FA's systems are coming this summer which should help to make some of this a bit easier - a new learning platform, the retirement of the Whole Game System and new self-certifications for DBS applications. I'm sure there will be some teething problems, but overall, this is a good thing.

That said, I don't want to get complacent, so please, please, please make sure you have what you need and that the same is true for all the coaches and helpers in your team - and if I do chase you, that you act on it quickly!

Accreditation

Thanks in no small part to our great levels of training compliance, our re-accreditation as a 2* FA Charter Club was completed promptly at the beginning of November, again making us one of the first clubs in West Riding to be accredited and several months ahead of the deadline.

Our accreditation status demonstrates our ongoing commitment to player development and progression through designated player pathways as well as our commitment to the local community, further development of girls football and generally being run sustainably.

While all that is great, it also has some more practical benefits. It means we get some free equipment, vouchers to spend on further equipment and, perhaps most excitingly, means we get offered free tickets to England matches - something we've really managed to take advantage of this season!

Affiliation

This year's team affiliations have already started and I'll be completing them, with Andy Craddock's help, in the coming weeks alongside individual team entry into respective leagues and cups ready for the start of 2025-26 season.

As a reminder, team affiliations can only happen if managers and coaches have all the required qualifications so, without wanting to sound like a broken record, get your training done as soon as possible when I tell you about it. If you don't, you risk not having a team come September....



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Club Development Plan

Although it's never easy to move things along, we have made further progress on the Club's Development Plan. Clearly a big part of this has been the new 4G pitch at Guiseley School and with all the required funding secured and construction well underway, we should hopefully see everything ready for the coming season.

However, we have made progress in lots of other areas too:

- With Heather's help we've been able to work through and clear down the waiting list, making it easier to manage and more reliable when we do need to refer to it.
- We've put in place new processes to run and manage our U4,5 and 6s age groups which I'm confident will really start to bear fruit from next season.
- We've worked through and updated all of the Club's documents, including producing new guidance on streaming.
- We again held the players Christmas parties, but also held the end of season event for managers and coaches.
- We've made some progress on launching open age teams and have established regular training sessions for the Girls. There is more to do for the Boys and to establish teams, but we want to make sure we do it right to ensure they're sustainable.
- We rolled out Easyfundraising, which despite relatively low uptake, has raised c.£300 for the Club (something for everyone to take away please as we could raise much, much more...).

However, we can't pull the Club Development Plan together in isolation, so it's really important that you have your say on the things we're working on to ensure it's aligned to what's important to all our members - so please tell us what you'd like us to be doing.

End of Season Social

I'm hoping that by the time we have the AGM, we've had an enjoyable end of season social for Managers, Coaches and other helpers at Saltaire Brewery. I'll let you all be the judge. If it works, I'll look to do it or something similar, at the end of next season, if not, I'll think again.

Doing something like this was something I was very keen to add to the Club's Development Plan not just because I like a nice pint of Saltaire Blonde, but because I think it's really important that we're able to get together as a club more often as well as to recognise everyone's hard work.

Match Tickets

As much as this has created a fair amount of work for me, being able to give out tickets to our members is one of the more rewarding things I get to do and something I'm very keen we do more of. We have quite literally given away hundreds of tickets to an assortment of Lionesses, U23's and England Men's games, but by far and away the most popular has been the Guiseley AFC Season Tickets.

460 of our members applied for a free season ticket after Guiseley AFC agreed to extend the offer to all age groups and not just the U11's and below, and those of you who go to Nethermoor will undoubtedly have seen it busier on matchday as a result.

I'm really pleased to say they have kindly agreed to repeat the offer for all our players for this coming season, meaning season tickets will be available for all home games (it was a couple of months into the season last time) but have also offered all our coaches a 50% discount - something I would encourage as many of you as possible to take advantage of!



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Under 4's, 5s and 6s

When Phil and Ollie stepped down from running our U4s, 5s and 6s training last year it left us with a big hole to fill. But I've been thrilled with how its stepped on with Kev Harrison and Ross Tabel now running the sessions - with some help from a great group of parent volunteers.

I hear endless stories from other clubs about how hard it is to get volunteers and teams folding, or never even getting started, as a result. So it's a fantastic reflection on their hard work and the ongoing appeal of Guiseley Juniors as a Club that we're in such a good position.

The demand for places at this age group is astounding. We could easily fill the sessions several times over and have 10-12 teams but sadly space is a limiting factor meaning we do end up disappointing some parents. Certainly something for us to think about in the future.

And now for the less fun stuff...

St Mary's Closure

Just when we thought we were approaching the light at the end of the tunnel on the build at Guiseley School I received an email from St Mary's advising of their proposed school build and the forthcoming closure of the all weather pitch. Guiseley School was meant to give us more capacity so this obviously wasn't in our plan. Trying to plan for what might be when there has been some uncertainty with regards to St Mary's hasn't exactly been easy.

However, assuming all goes to plan, the new pitch at Guiseley School will be open and ready in time for the new season, but you will have to bear with us because there is still lots to sort!

Fines & Suspensions

This season we have seen an uptick in the number of fines for teams not submitting scores, stats, lineups, unauthorised postponements as well as the usual fines and suspensions for players. I appreciate that the admin can sometimes get forgotten and that it's never intentional, but fines can quickly build up and I can certainly think of better ways for the Club to spend what could easily end up being a couple of thousand pounds a year, so please try to keep on top of it!

Matchday Conduct

This season has seen exponential growth in the number of poor conduct reports. This has included both instances reported by our teams, but also reports made against our players, parents and coaches. Even more alarmingly, some of what has been reported has been extremely serious and we've also had reports from just about every age group.

Just before Christmas I felt the need to write to every parent or guardian to remind everyone of the required and expected behaviours and how we must all play our part in making football an enjoyable and safe experience for all. Whether as a result of this or by coincidence, we had far fewer reports after Christmas which is good, but this must be maintained. As well as being completely unacceptable, dealing with poor conduct reports is disproportionately time consuming and, quite frankly, depressing.

We have updated our complaints and disciplinary procedures to ensure we're better equipped to deal with any issues, but I'd like to avoid ever having to use it!



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FA Rule Changes

I'm sure you've all seen the FA's proposed changes to formats starting in 2026/27. While they are a way off, there is much that needs to be worked through to understand how we will make it work. For context, it's been 12 years since the current structure of formats was introduced and 27 years since 9v9 football was introduced so changes like this don't come around very often and are almost always met with headaches to deal with. However, the changes represent a great opportunity to improve player development and technical skills so I'm confident that the positives will outweigh the negatives.

And lastly....

Departing Managers

As the season draws to a close, we sadly have a small number of managers and other volunteers stepping down from their roles, so I would like to say big thank you Eddy Nuttall, Kieron Barker and Spencer Newlove, Kev Neale, Dave Holben, James Fearnley, Angus Young, Gavin and Danielle Toner, Simon Bucktrout, Gareth Peel and Damien Hayton. There is no doubting the brilliant contribution they've all made to the Club over multiple years. And apologies if I've missed anyone off the list.

I'd also like to give an extra special mention to Ray Williamson and Carl Townend whose U18 Blues have just completed their final season. Ray has been with the club right the way through from U7's and has developed what might just be the best ever Guiseley Juniors team, unbeaten in the league for nearly 4 years! Ray has very kindly offered to stay on and do some refereeing for some of our younger sides, a genuine Guiseley legend!

The Management Committee

In my role I get to see the Club for what it is - a brilliant Club, full of wonderful volunteers, all of whom are passionate about providing opportunities for kids to play football - none more so than the other members of the Management Committee who spend an untold number of hours not only keeping everything ticking over but striving to help everyone and improve the Club.

This year we've welcomed Heather Warwick to the extended committee in helping to look after the waiting list. Certainly not a small job and one which impacts everyone. If anyone else would like to get involved there are always other things we could do with a hand on!

In signing off for 2024/25, I'd like to take the opportunity to give my particular thanks to Mark Stitson and Kevin Harrison for all your help. You both do a brilliant job and the Club would be lost without you!

Here's to a successful 2023/24 and hopefully even more in 2024/25.

Many thanks,

Sam