**CHELSEA SUPPORTERS SOCIETY LIMITED**

**SOCIETY BOARD MEMBERS’ REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MAY 2015**

The Society Board Members submit their report together with the financial statements for the year

ended 31st May 2015.

**1. Guiding Principles**

The Society is run on the following fundamental principles :-

* A non-profit making Supporters Trust, with membership open to all Chelsea Football Club supporters worldwide;
* Wholly independent of Chelsea Football Club but seeking an ongoing positive dialogue with them;
* Run on a democratic one member, one vote principle with annual board elections, regular meetings and transparency of activity;
* Committed to proactive and mutually beneficial dialogue with the club and other stakeholders including the local community, local council, relevant media and other supporters groups.

**2. Principal Aims**

The Society was set up in 2013 with the following principal aims

* Encourage the board of Chelsea Football Club to take into account the interests of all supporters (both UK and Overseas based) and of the local community (businesses, residents, local authorities etc) when making decisions that impact upon them;
* To actively and professionally engage with all relevant stakeholders on matters of interest and concern to Chelsea supporters;
* Act as an effective means of communication between club and supporters;
* Build on the work done by the Fans Forum in enabling issues of concern with supporters to be raised with the club;
* Work with Supporters Direct and other Supporters Trusts on pan-club issues like ticket prices and kick-off times;
* Work in partnership with existing supporters groups, websites, fanzine, podcasts etc without detracting from their independence.

**3. Responsibilities of the CST Board**

The Society Board is required to prepare financial statements, for each financial year, which give a

true and fair view of the state of affairs of the society for that year. In preparing those financial

statements, the Board is required to :-

* Select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
* Make judgments and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
* Follow applicable accounting standards, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the accounts;
* Prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the company will continue in business.

The Board is responsible for keeping proper accounting records which disclose with reasonable

accuracy at any time the financial position of the society and enable them to ensure that the

financial statements comply with the Industrial and Provident Societies Act 1965 and the Friendly

and Industrial and Provident Societies Act 1968. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the company and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

**4. Business Review and Future Developments**

**4.1 Comment on Annual Accounts**

The CST board feel that the surplus currently held (£5,425 as at 31/5/15) should be maintained, in case there should be a need for a ‘fighting fund’ or similar unplanned contingency requirement. The amount held in surplus will be reviewed regularly by the board and, if appropriate, changes made to the membership fee structure.

**4.2 CST Membership**

The CST has a direct c6,000 reach through individual memberships and affiliations, plus 10,000+ Twitter followers and 4,130 Facebook followers (figures correct as at 4/8/15).

**4.3 Progress on Board Motions Passed at 2014 AGM**

4.3.1 The Future of Stamford Bridge

The future of Stamford Bridge, and the desire of the majority of CST members for the club to stay at their spiritual home, is the fundamental long-term issue facing Chelsea supporters. It is therefore clearly immensely pleasing for supporters to be able to see, over the summer, the exhibition showing outline redevelopment plans, which if implemented will certainly make a 60,000 capacity Stamford Bridge one of the great football stadia of Europe. This also underlines the clear desire of the owner of the club to remain at Stamford Bridge.

It is clear an immense amount of work has taken place, not just in terms of design but in terms of addressing the complex labyrinth of stakeholder engagements necessary in a proposal of this type. Those responsible for commissioning and carrying out the work to date are to be applauded for this.

Ongoing supporter input as the plans and designs firm up is essential, to ensure that the final stadium design meets, as far as is possible, the needs of all stakeholders.

The necessity to move out of Stamford Bridge for a period of probably 2-3 years will inevitably mean challenges for the club and supporters, but it seems clear that most supporters accept that it is genuinely a case of ‘short term pain, long-term gain’.

The CST membership passed a motion last season to purchase a Chelsea Pitch Owners share. The CST board believes that the CPO is an essential long-term safeguard for supporters with regard to the stadium, regardless of the redevelopment, and will work with relevant parties to help ensure this is the case.

The redevelopment of Stamford Bridge will hopefully enable issues like safe standing, atmosphere enhancement, affordable ticketing and encouraging more young supporters to be addressed. This cements its position as the single most important strategic matter facing supporters as it encompasses other issues of significant supporter interest.

4.3.2 Safe Standing and General Atmosphere Concerns

Concerted efforts by a number of groups and individuals, including the CST, were made to try and improve the atmosphere inside Stamford Bridge last season, and their efforts and commitment are to be applauded. CST board members met with senior club executives on a number of occasions to discuss this specific issue. The work done by groups like Shed End Atmosphere in trying to foster a vibrant atmosphere in the ground is also to be applauded. The displays and other atmosphere-enhancing initiatives towards the end of last season seemed to make a difference, were appreciated by supporters and give a good base to build on this season.

4.3.3 Ticketing / Supporter Issues
Ticket Prices at Stamford Bridge were frozen for another year. The big challenge, on a PL-wide basis, comes when the massive increase in TV revenues comes into effect in 2016/17. As a key 2015/16 activity, we anticipate working extensively with colleagues at other PL trusts, and organisations like the Football Supporters Federation, to try to ensure clubs use the fruits of the 2016-19 PL TV deal as a driver for reduced ticket prices, greater opportunity for young supporters to attend games etc., across all 20 clubs. The pricing of away tickets, the categorisation of matches (with an inevitably negative impact on Chelsea supporters) and the ongoing creep of kick-off times will all be wrapped up in this pan-PL trust initiative.

The club subsidy of away travel outside London continued in 2014/15 and the announcement of an expansion of the scheme in 2015/16 to include more match ticket subsidies is to be welcomed. From discussions with other PL trusts it is clear that Chelsea’s scheme is more comprehensive than at other clubs.

4.3.4 Membership of Hammersmith and Fulham Safety Advisory Group

There is a clear need for the Chelsea Safety Advisory Group (SAG) to be expanded to give supporter representation. The Met Police, Hammersmith & Fulham Council, Chelsea FC, London Fire Brigade etc meet twice a year to discuss safety issues relating to Stamford Bridge and it is clearly counter-productive that supporter input is not sought. The club are not in favour of supporter representation on the SAG on the basis of confidentiality, which we see as a nebulous argument. The CST board therefore decided that engagement with other parties was a useful step before approaching the council. The Metropolitan Police and British Transport Police both see the merits of supporter representation on SAG’s and even a Premier League representative at a recent PL trusts meeting had no objection. We intend approaching the council early in the new season with a view to attending SAG meetings going forward.

**4.4 Ad Hoc Issues**

4.4.1 Touting

An issue regularly highlighted by CST members last season was the increase in street touting in the environs of the ground before matches. The club are equally frustrated by the matter. We have spoken to the Metropolitan Police matchday commander, Insp Jim Brockway who understands supporter concerns, and plan to talk to the council to identify what steps the various interested parties can take to try and reduce this activity.

One idea that will definitely be taken forward is a ‘write-in’ campaign to the relevant councillors and MPs. This was held over from the end of last season due to the general election but will be picked up on the election of a new CST Board.

4.4.2 Playfair Qatar

Before the Manchester United home game last season we held an awareness display outside the stadium for Playfair Qatar, a lobby group working to highlight the appalling working conditions and fatalities caused amongst migrant workers working on construction projects for the 2022 World Cup. This attracted supporter and media interest, and the organisation are rolling it out at other grounds.

**4.5 Stakeholder Engagement**

A pleasing feature of the past 12 months has been the regular CST board member dialogue with senior club executives. As well as a number of meetings in atmosphere, referenced above, there have been a series of wider discussions and, critically, a presentation of the results of the annual survey. The club stance on supporter dialogue seems to have changed to a more open approach, clearly to be welcomed.

The CST continue to work with other Premier League trusts on developing engagement at a senior level in the FA and Premier League. There are a number of issues, including ticket pricing, where working with other trusts is far more effective than ploughing a lone furrow.

**4.6 Communication and Dialogue with Members**

In line with their stated practise, the CST held an Annual General Meeting and three Special General Meetings in 2014/15. The Finborough Arms became an ideal location for SGM’s in terms of size, location and welcome. One SGM guest was official Chelsea historian Rick Glanvill, who did a Q&A session on club history. Another was Inspector Brockway, the Chelsea Matchday commander, who together with his colleague PC Wright answered questions on a number of policing issues.

One of the SGM’s was held virtually (a Virtual General Meeting) in May, with members accessing and interacting with the meeting through the internet. The level of interaction and quality of questions made the VGM a success. The AGM and SGMs were broadcast live via the internet and also made available via a podcast, meaning members from across the globe unable to attend in person had the chance to participate and/or listen.

Newsletters are e-mailed to members on a monthly basis, designed to keep them informed on a range of issues, on issues relating to Chelsea but also more widely. It is always a judgement as to how many e-mails to issue to members, as there is potentially a law of diminishing returns, but the board felt that monthly newsletters seemed about right. The CST website is regularly updated with current news items and a re-launch is imminent.

The CST has a strong presence on Twitter and Facebook, believing that these are a key tool in terms of getting important messages out, to our membership and beyond. We also have a pre-match presence at the cfcuk stall on Fulham Broadway, and this will continue for weekend matches during 2015/16.

Our third annual members survey was conducted over the summer, and results will be presented to members at the AGM. The club, media and wider supporter base will also receive relevant highlights.

Maintaining effective member dialogue in a world where face-to-face interaction is often replaced by virtual engagement is an ongoing challenge, but it is imperative if the CST are to truly identify and represent the wishes of its members.

**4.7 Media Coverage**

A number of CST board members continue to have a regular media presence and are regularly asked for comment by broadcast, print and online media, on a range of issues, both relating to Chelsea and wider football matters. We have worked hard to build good working relationships with journalists and media contacts. The results of the annual members survey again received wide coverage, as did statements on key issues affecting Chelsea supporters and the CST last season, and campaigns held with other Trusts and organisations the CST took part in.

**4.8 Summary**

Next year is likely to be a pivotal and challenging year. Progress will hopefully be made with regard to the details regarding the Stamford Bridge development and it is imperative that supporter input on issues around facilities and ticketing is an integral part of the process in the years ahead. A key challenge for the new CST board is to work with the various stakeholders to help ensure such input is coherent, realistic and listened to.

The membership votes on the various motions submitted to the AGM will of course decide CST board priorities for 2015/16 and I would urge as many members as possible to cast their votes on the motions, and in the board elections.

**5. Society Board**

The members of the Society Board in the year were as follows (all were elected in September 2014) :-

Cliff Auger; Neil Beard; Julian Beattie; David Chidgey; David Johnstone

Stuart Kinner; Theresa Magee; Celia Mindelsohn; Tim Rolls

In addition the following were co-opted as board members during the year :-

Ross Mooring (co-opted September 2014); Iain Rodger (co-opted October 2014)

We are losing at least three existing board members for next season, a shame but an inevitability in any voluntary organisation. On behalf of the board I would like to thank elected members Stuart Kinner and Theresa Magee and co-opted board member Ross Mooring for their tireless efforts over the past three years to help set up the CST and steer us through the first two years of existence. Between the three of them they looked after, among other things, our social media, web-mastering, formal treasurer activity, meeting arrangements and organising social events so there will be some significant gaps for the new board to fill. Their loyalty and hard work is genuinely appreciated and they will all be missed.

It is pleasing that we have a contested election for board membership. The annual cycle of survey, AGM and annual elections is what keeps the CST a transparent organisation and gives the board its mandate.

**6. Independent Examiner**

The Independent Examiner was Sudhir Rawal of Jeffreys Henry LLP. The CST board are very grateful to Mr Rawal for his uncharged help in producing this report.

This report was reviewed and approved by CST board members via email.

On behalf of the Board

Name: Tim Rolls

Position: Chair