



Chelsea Supporters' Trust – Ticketing Meeting 17.11.21

In response to the numerous ticketing questions we receive from our Members, we have produced this document cataloguing the queries and proposing some recommendations for improvements.

Through this paper, we will cover the following:

1. Systems/Infrastructure
2. Allocations and Loyalty Points
3. Communication
4. Season Ticket Holders of the future

Our recommendations are based on benchmarking of other teams, sports and large-scale venues, as well as utilising personal experience within the CST network.

1.0 Systems/Infrastructure

Whilst we understand the decision to delay any investment in upgrading the ticketing system due to the potential stadium move, this has allowed our system and its features to fall a long way behind not only top-end entertainment venues, but also football clubs across all levels of the pyramid.

1.1 Virtual Waiting Room

A holding area to manage traffic flowing through to the purchasing area of the ticket site, the virtual waiting room (VWR) will hold users in a queue until a place is available to push them through to the main site to be able to purchase. However, there are numerous issues with the current platform which causes even more traffic, thus adding to the issue it is designed to solve.

Currently there is no authentication in front of users accessing the ticketing system, meaning anyone who attempts to enter the ticket site, regardless of their profile (Member, STH, General Supporter) joins the queue. Fortunately, there are a number of solutions available to solve this issue. The proposed solution for this would be a Single Sign On (SSO) system. Currently, supporters have a number of different login credentials for accessing CFC websites. A central account, accessed via the CFC home page login, that is linked to ticketing platform, would allow users to be authenticated by profile (including Loyalty Points status). This is an excellent method for moderating traffic through to being able to access a page where the relevant match is available for sale. An estimated investment of circa £150k, would be required to

build an average SSO system, that brings huge user benefits, as well as greater vision of supporter behaviour, which brings obviously commercial benefits for CFC.

There is also a growing security concern about the VWR, with a number of well-known 'hacks' where people are able to find ways of accessing the site before tickets go on sale, and then 'hoovering up' at the exact time tickets go on sale. There is a concern that this could be linked to the increase in suspected online touting, particularly prominent at high-demand away fixtures. These 'hacks' are undoubtedly causing real supporters from missing out on being able to purchase tickets. The CST would also like some reassurance from the club on tracking those who sell their tickets on these platforms, and what steps they take to remove the tickets, as well as the deterrent tools available in terms of punishments for those found selling tickets against the terms of the ticketing policy.

1.2 Seat Selection

The absence of a seat selection feature within our ticketing system is a huge omission that affects supporters of many different profiles and backgrounds. All of the main ticketing providers offer this as a feature, and it's used by the majority of Clubs in the top 3 flights of English football. It's also widely available at events venues (theatres, concert arenas etc) in London, where our ticket prices are comparable.

The lack of ability to pick a seat of choice provides a number of issues. For example, those looking to purchase two tickets are reliant on being able to find two together, rather than being able to purchase one in front of the other, or being happy to have a seat or two of separation. More importantly, supporters with additional needs that aren't necessarily classed as a 'disability', are also in a lottery as to whether the seat they are given is suitable. The ability to choose a seat allows supporters to minimise stair climbing, be closer to aisles, be further away from speakers, or be seated in a area where portions of an supporters tend to stand (the corner areas of the MHL for example). We believe this change not only increases the experience of purchasing tickets for existing supporters, but will encourage new supporters to Stamford Bridge who had previously been put off through accessibility fears.

1.3 Print-at-home

We are aware of developments to ensure supporters are no longer mandated to print their own tickets and have the ability to show the ticket via a mobile device. We welcome this move but would like to understand the timings for this roll-out plan and get some reassurances about those supporters who may not have access to a smart phone.

2.0 Allocations and Loyalty Points

The CST appreciates that allocations are hard to get right, with the challenge of servicing the contractual requirements of existing partners and Premium ticket holders. However, we believe that access to away tickets is becoming harder and harder, with the premium ticket holders.

There has also been a culture of loyalty point harvesting, which is rewarding financial outlay rather than attendance. Of course, it's not about a ticket holder not being back to pass on a ticket to a friend, but there are noticeable amounts of empty seats at 5 point games, which potentially indicated people are buying and not attending. With tickets all being scanned upon arrival, we would recommend that points are issued on attendance rather than purchase.

With existing STHs in the West Upper being moved at the end up of the season, we are also concerned about the quality of seat available to them and their ability to be able to sit with their existing groups of friends and family. The supporters in this area of the stadium feel like they have been treated incredibly badly, despite paying the highest general admission season ticket fee of all supporters in the stadium.

3.0 Communication

We are aware of a large amount of supporters missing out on tickets because they don't realise they had gone on sale. Granted, you don't need to send emails to sell out, so we understand why this wouldn't be a commercial priority, but in terms of servicing supporters (customers), the emails are sporadic and often not giving the essential information about when tickets will become available. This then pushes it back on the supporter to try and seek out the information on the website of their own accord. A SSO system, with communications preferences would help your CRM team be able to send the relevant information to those supporters who wish to receive it.

Having noted the above, it's also worth giving credit for the pre-match emails which now arrive on time and contain some relevant information for ticket holders about their trip to Stamford Bridge.

4.0 Season Ticket Holders of the Future

The recent success of the club and increase in demand for tickets is clearly great news for supporters, but we need to consider the challenges that will come for fans of the future.

Supporters (who aren't in the know) find it quite difficult to understand how they can eventually become a season ticket holder, which leads to confusion and misunderstanding. Would the club be able to communicate to the fans, via a section on the website, exactly how they go about doing this? It also goes for those STHs who would like an additional ST to start bringing a child to matches with them. This has always been unclear and mainly be communicated via personal experience.

The other alarming thing for those Members who would like to become a Season Ticket Holder is the rising cost of individual Member tickets and the number of tickets they would require to meet the required point threshold for potentially gaining a ST. In recent years, looking at the points required, an adult would have had to spend approximately £1,200 in tickets (based on the average ticket prices) to meet the level needed to be invited to apply. It's worth noting that an outlay of £1,200 doesn't even guarantee that Member a ST, it's an

estimate. This means there will be people spending close to that and then missing out on a ST. Also, these people would be expected to use the ticketing system more than any other supporter, meaning they are at the mercy of the VWR and have a poor user experience every time they part with their money.

Other alternatives to this are featured by other sports internationally include a hybrid system of a waiting list (which is a paid deposit), and a commitment of attending x number of games per season to remain on that list. This rewards longer term loyalty and doesn't allow an instant season ticket for those in a position to spend that much money.