**CHELSEA FOOTBALL CLUB**

**SUPPORTERS’ CONSULTATIVE FORUM 2015/16**

**2nd MEETING MINUTES**

Meeting held in the Copthorne Lounge, Chelsea FC at 6.15pm on Wednesday 18th November 2015

# Attendees Club title/ group represented

Alexander, Chris Club Finance and Operations Director

Ashmore, Michael CFCUK

Atkins, Steve Club Head of Communications and Public Affairs

Barrett, Michael 16-21’s

Buck, Bruce Club Chairman

Coady, Debbie Chelsea Supporters Trust

Dwyer, Kevin Home season ticket (“ST”) holder

Eldridge, Andy Chelsea Supporters Club

Gerrard, Carol Away ST holder

Granovskaia, Marina Club Director

Hayden, Lisa Disabled

Herring, Alan Over 65’s

Hillers, Karl Overseas supporters’ branch

Last, Nick UK branch

Levy, Eddie Hospitality

Neal, Matthew CFCNet

Newby, David Club Marketing Manager

Overstall, Keith Club Head of Security

Regan, Andy Forum Chairman

Silver, Dan Chelsea Football Fancast

Smith, Graham Club Head of Ticketing/ Head of Supporters’ Liaison

Strange, Ruth Member

Trenter, Peter Chelsea Supporters Group

Winton, Natalie Family stand

**Apologies for absence**

Daine, Nav Club Head of Concessions

Doherty, Timothy UK branch

(Action points are underlined.)

The Forum Chairman welcomed Michael Ashmore and Eddie Levy to their first official Forum meeting.

**MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING/ MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

There were no changes to the minutes.

**Purchase of an adult ticket with a senior ticket online**

The Club confirmed that this has always been possible offline but will be introduced online this season.

**Fiorentino hospitality prices**

The Club stated that seat-only tickets were reduced in price to assist sales. The lower price was advertised to those with birthdays coming up, for instance. This is the reverse of the usual Premier League match process whereby prices can increase nearer a match day.

**Chelsea TV supporter appearances**

The Club said it values supporter views as an integral part of live programming. In addition to live post-match shows where fans can phone in or contribute by social media, this season supporters’ clubs are phoned before, at half time and at the end of a match to give their views in “Wherever They May Be”. The Club tries to involve as many supporters’ clubs as possible.

**TICKETING**

**Buying cup tickets**

The Club confirmed that cup tickets are always sent to the ST holder whose ticket is being used to purchase tickets rather than to the purchaser.

**18 day posting period**

The Club was asked if the 18 day period can be varied for overseas ST holders and replied that there are no plans to amend the policy. If a ticket doesn’t arrive then a duplicate can be provided. The Club confirmed the 18 day rule won’t be increased during the Christmas period. Supporters’ clubs can ask for tickets to be collected at the box office.

**Sale of loyalty tiers**

One representative commented that selling different tiers on the same day can involve a lot of time for supporters’ club secretaries if they are helping fans in their club to get extra tickets. The Club agreed but said this process had to take place for Spurs away tickets as we have a European away game next week and can’t sell around that game. The Club reiterated that if supporters miss their supporters’ club deadline then the secretary is not bound to help out those fans.

**ST holders purchasing for members**

It was raised that an ST holder can’t purchase for friends and family who are members. The Club confirmed this option was removed a number of years ago because an ST holder may click the first button they see in the purchase section in error. This blocks the system and if too many do this then the system temporarily appears to members as if there are no tickets left.

**Ticket exchange sales**

The Club confirmed it doesn’t transfer points from the seller to the purchaser as this would discourage ST holders from selling. The Club confirmed that an automated email is sent to the ST holder when the ticket is sold and to the purchaser to say it’s been purchased. The Club holds copies of the emails until the match.

In response to a further question the Club stated that the 48 hour cut off is needed as information is processed regarding the ticket holders at that point. Viagogo sales were about 14,500 for its last season. Last year we were just short of that but the system came online one week before the first match so there was less scope for sales. One supporter sold his ticket for Arsenal in three seconds so the Club is aware there is great demand for big games.

The Club commented that we do not allow someone to list somebody else’s ticket in any stand. The system seems to be successful.

Feedback from representatives on the re-sale process was positive. The Club confirmed that it intends to include a history order section in due course.

**Paperless tickets**

A representative raised whether cup tickets could be included on ST cards. The Club said it has looked into the issue and, if it were to do anything, the preference would be a print at home function though the problem then is concern over touts trying to sell copies. Membership cards don’t have the capacity to include match tickets at the moment.

The technology is not a problem for ST holders but the concern is ensuring touting doesn’t increase. All the turnstiles would need changing but the technology does exist. The Club is aware that many entertainment venues provide print at home functions.

**Champions League ST**

The Club commented it can consider the reintroduction of this for next season if we qualify. One problem is that we only find out from UEFA which seats we lose after the ST would be sold and we would then have to disappoint some purchasers by moving them.

We have additional cameras and photographers’ areas at each end of the ground which we can’t sell for European matches as we only know near the match if they’re needed. The options would be far greater in a rebuilt stadium.

**STs IN CORPORATE/ MULTIPLE NAMES**

The Club commented that this topic arose at the last European away ticketing review. At present an individual can buy more than one ticket or a ticket for an individual who hasn’t been to previous away matches in Europe. The Club proposes that for general admission STs only and not hospitality STs, a ticket held in a corporate name will not entitle the purchase of an away European ticket. An individual who has more than one non-hospitality ST in their name could only purchase one ticket for a European away match.

A name change for a seat can be purchased requested end of the season when renewing the season ticket free of charge. The above proposal would be implemented next season so fans have a chance to alter the names on their ST in anticipation of this should they wish. The new name on the ST would not accrue loyalty points from this season so couldn’t apply for big games early in next season but would otherwise be unaffected.

Some representatives concurred with this. The Chairman welcomed further feedback if supporters’ groups want to request further feedback from their members.

It was also stated by the Club that all season tickets not in individual names will be required to be in the names of companies registered at Companies House.

**MEDICAL CARE IN THE STADIUM**

The representative for the over 65s said he had canvassed other fans of that age. The majority were happy with the way the Club is run but wanted reassurance of medical facilities available.

The Club responded that it is part of the safety certificate requirements from the local authority that good provision exists. We have fully equipped medical rooms in the West and East Stands which include defibrillators. There are also other defibrillators in the stadium. We have St John’s staff around the stadium and they are also in our control room with London Ambulance service personnel. We review scenarios as to how casualties would be removed from higher levels.

**SECURITY**

The Club was asked whether it has reviewed this since the Paris attacks and further to the threat to the match in Hanover last night. The Club responded it will announce a revised policy on this soon. There will be more visible security outside the ground and enhanced clothing checks to go alongside the bag checks. There will be some body searches but we have to bear in mind that over 40,000 want access relatively quickly. The Club will discourage fans from bringing large bags into the stadium and will encourage supporters to arrive earlier so there is sufficient time for checks. It’s important for fans to remain vigilant and tell a steward if they have a concern. This will not be airport level security but will be a proportionate response.

The Club added that staff will have good training to make the process efficient. The Club is meeting with the police two days before Saturday’s match as usual and other measures are taken behind the scenes which won’t be publicised. There is a careful balance to maintain.

The Club has spoken to the FCO in Israel again. The police and authorities there are keen for this to go well; there are sufficient trains between Haifa and Tel Aviv and Israelis are used to good security.

**NEW STADIUM**

The Club confirmed that fans will be offered comparable views for their new STs when the stadium is rebuilt, depending on the design. The Club will try to give existing ST holders priority.

The Club intends to invite members of the stadium project team to a Fans’ Forum.

**CAR PARKING AT A TEMPORARY STADIUM**

The Club commented that fans would have to use the car parking facilities available in the relevant area, whether they are stadium-owned or private. The Club emphasised that the location of our temporary home has not been finalised yet though.

**ATMOSPHERE**

One representative asked if the Club can revisit this issue. The Club responded that a group of supporters were moved at the start of this season to create a singing area in the Shed End.

The Club will check why the lights are no longer dimmed before kick-off for evening matches.

The Club commented that the PA volume was too loud at the first match of the season but has been adjusted subsequently.

One representative commented that there appear to be less regular faces at some matches this season which may account for less singing.

One supporter commented that Kiev fans were quite noisy in the family stand.

As regards music it was suggested that The Liquidator played until kick-off could help with atmosphere. Alternatively the beating heart sound up to kick off is atmospheric. Other representatives commented that less music up to kick-off allows fans to sing more.

There were different views about whether Neil Barnett encourages home fans or away fans (inadvertently) to sing more.

**EUROPEAN AWAY TICKETS**

**Kiev**

The Club was asked why certain tickets could be collected away from the majority of fans. Those fans didn’t have to show vouchers. The Club responded these were friends of the owner and underwent similar security checks first and had to show their passports for collection of tickets.

The Club was asked what security measures were in place when fans were attacked at a bar in Kiev. The Club confirmed that the Metropolitan Police chose not to send anyone on that trip. However the Club provides an emergency contact number which is on the back of the voucher and publicised separately. That number goes to the Club’s security officers who can then contact the local police, the FCO or other potential forms of assistance. The Club spoke to some of those affected the next day when they collected tickets so the collection point acted as a useful point of contact. One supporter commented that local police were helpful with directions.

One representative commented that female fans were denied access to the ladies’ toilets after the match. The Club responded that it was assured fans would have access to facilities after the match and the Club will check again for next week’s match in Tel Aviv.

The Club confirmed that the ticket collection point for next week’s match has not been publicised beyond those travelling and the meeting point in Kiev was only publicised briefly on the Club website inadvertently.

**Tel Aviv**

The Club stated there will be a collection point in Tel Aviv on Monday between 10am and 9pm and then in Haifa on Tuesday from 10am until kick-off. Feedback about travelling arrangements from representatives has been helpful. Not many flights get in beyond 9pm on the Monday night. The Club considers it has comprehensive arrangements in place. Ben-Gurion Airport would have been a good solution but the authorities there vetoed that idea.

**Porto**

One representative raised the issue of Thomas Cook bookings not being confirmed quickly resulting in a supporter who was unsuccessful with his Thomas Cook application not being able to buy a ticket in time. The Club responded that 41 plane seats were taken. After initial bookings were made the Club confirms the eligibility of each applicant when other tickets are still on sale. We went on sale on 11th September, Thomas Cook’s list was confirmed on the 14th, their email went out on the 15th and we went off sale on the 17th.

The disabled representative commented that disabled fans were told there would be a Club steward with them at this match further to problems in Paris, as our fans were next to home fans again. This didn’t happen though. The Club responded they weren’t aware of this being promised for the Porto match. The Club will review whether a steward can be provided for this area in each European away match.

**General issues**

The Club was asked if a set proportion or number of tickets go to Club travel for ST holders in comparison to members. The Club confirmed this doesn’t happen and it’s never been a problem for group matches. If we get to a final for instance and sell out for ST holders on 60 points for Thomas Cook applications, we continue counting down for all ST holders to 60 points. We work closely with them and sell the tickets for their packages on our system.

For Porto we couldn’t get an aircraft for a reasonable price so took BA seats. We didn’t run flights to Tel Aviv due to demand and cost issues.

We don’t intend to provide more tickets for Club travel. The intention is for fans to have the freedom for their own travel plans. There is no one scenario for arranging flights and Porto plane hire was affected by late summer holiday prices for instance.

**Away scheme rules**

One representative raised the case of an individual who had to cancel his ticket at a late stage as he had to look after his son. The individual concerned was thrown off the away scheme without an appeal process being applied. The Club responded that there is a rule in place that a fan can miss only one game and stay on the scheme. The Club had been in contact with the individual concerned, and explained that we hear many reasons for fans missing more than one game but that we have to treat everyone equally under our rule. The current policy was introduced on the recommendation of the Forum.

**Refusal for tickets**

The Club was asked about an individual who was not allowed to buy tickets for an away match by virtue of not having sufficient purchasing history. The Club commented that this individual purchased membership after matches were announced so wasn’t allowed to buy a ticket in accordance with our rules. A fan has to be at least a member when the fixtures are announced.

**TOUTING**

It was raised that despite the Club’s increased measures there are still many touts in the area, particularly around the station. They use the anti-tout signs as meeting points. The Club said that responsibility outside the stadium belongs to the police and local Council. There have been 11 arrests due to new measures. There is a more open dialogue with the police on this matter. The Club will continue to pass on the concern of fans to the police and recommends that fans - in particular supporter groups - write to the Council and local police asking them to take action. We continue to run extensive anti-touting measures.

The Club also confirmed that we need a 48 hour cut-off for official return of tickets. A small number are returned to the ticket office after this but the Club emphasises that it cannot guarantee it can sell them. The Club doesn’t want empty seats in the ground either. It has considered having the ticket exchange open on a match day but the 48 hour rule creates certainty of whether a fan should still try and get to a match. We do help out fans who pass their seat to a friend on or near match day.

The Club uses a number of methods to find online touts. Touting is fraud and criminal behaviour. We can track which members are responsible a lot of the time.

The Club commented that it clears the web queue now in half an hour. Also the shorter distribution time for tickets has helped the Club retain tickets destined for touts which can now be sold to legitimate fans.

**TV REVENUE/ ADDITIONAL PARACHUTE PAYMENT**

It was raised whether the windfall from increased revenue and the additional money from Norwich being promoted can be spent in part on cheaper prices. The contribution of fans in creating atmosphere is essential to the popularity of the Premier League. The Club said these are just some of the relevant factors when the budget is considered, such as whether we will be in the Champions League. We can’t be certain of next season’s budget at this time. Ticket prices are an important consideration and the fact we’ve frozen prices often in the past decade shows we are aware of the pressure on fans’ finances.

Representatives raised the topic of away ticket prices and commented that supporters’ groups are taking action on this. The Club added we have to spend £200,000 on away incentives according to the Premier League but we have actually spent £460,000 and will probably spend more next season.

The Club was asked what its position is regarding a flat £20 cost of an away ticket but responded that it’s the right of each club to set its own prices.

**ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

**Catering App**

The Club stated that an independent review of the business picked up the new catering pre-order app “CFC Express” and tested it on match day successfully. Feedback was positive. Supporters commented that ordering works well but some staff are clearly still getting used to the facility and are unsure what to do when an order is collected.

**Branded formal shirts**

In response to a question the Club will investigate the possibility of providing more formal shirts with logos in the Megastore.

**Twitter**

The Club was asked if it would introduce customer service and ticketing tweets. The Club responded that, as regards ticketing, that individual’s personal contact details would be needed anyway so Twitter is not the ideal format.

**Player acknowledgment of fans**

The Club said staff would keep reminding players about recognising our support after each match, including pointing out the location of our disabled fans.

**Matthew Harding ticket scanning**

The Club said some turnstiles, such as in the Shed Lower, were changed in the summer and at the same time scanning machines have been moved. There is nowhere for stewards with hand scanners to stand in the new layout.

**Frank Lampard testimonial**

The Club was asked if, further to national recognition for Frank, there are any plans for a testimonial. The Club responded there are no concrete plans but some players consider they may be due a testimonial. It may be an easier issue once the relevant player/s have retired, in case they return in some capacity as a player.

**Forum topics**

The Forum Chairman thanked those who have raised other issues though they may not have all been discussed today and encouraged supporters to keep suggesting topics.

**Kingstonian**

In response to a question the Club said it is discussing a deal whereby youth and women’s teams’ matches can be played there, with some renovation of the ground taking place.

**UK away season ticket**

Representatives commented that further to this being raised last time there is no demand for abolishing the UK away season ticket.

**Negative media**

The Club commented that where appropriate it defends its position.

**Programme printing**

One supporter raised the fact there is a stapled design for league matches and a glued spine for European matches. The Club commented we have the same printers for each but a decision was taken a few years ago to have different designs.

**Envelopes**

The Club confirmed it’s changing ticket distribution envelopes to avoid having unwanted perforations which could split open in the post.

**Forum meeting days**

In response to a question the Forum Chairman commented there are slightly fewer branch representatives attending this season but they have their own meeting on match days. All other representatives have been able to attend today. The Club added that midweek meetings allow more time for discussion than on match days. There is also more room availability. The Club confirmed it considered Skype attendance but there would be no certainty that the right representative only is on that call.

The meeting finished at 8.15pm.