**CHELSEA FOOTBALL CLUB**

**SUPPORTERS’ CONSULTATIVE FORUM, 2014-15 SEASON**

**Minutes of 3rd meeting**

Meeting held in the Attenborough Suite, Chelsea FC at 10.30am on Sunday, 24th May 2015.

# Attendees Club title/ group represented

Alexander, Chris Club Finance and Operations Director

Atkins, Steve Club Head of Communications and Public Affairs

Barker, Kelvin CFCUK

Barrett, Neil UK branch

Beattie, Julian Chelsea Supporters Trust

Buck, Bruce Club Chairman

Daine, Nav Club Head of Concessions

Dartnell, Alan Over 65’s

Dwyer, Kevin Home ST holder

Eldridge, Andy Chelsea Supporters Club

Gerrard, Carol Away season ticket (“ST”) holder

Goodliffe, Ludo 16-21’s

Hayden, Lisa Disabled

Hillers, Karl Overseas supporters’ branch

Jeffrey, Paul Chelsea Football Fancast

McCall, Mark Leadership Factor

Neal, Matthew CFCNet

Newby, David Club Marketing Manager

Overstall, Keith Club Head of Security

Ramprasad, Bharat Overseas supporters’ branch

Regan, Andy Electoral Reform Services (Chair)

Robinson, Adam Member

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

Trapp, Goran Hospitality

Trenter, Peter Chelsea Supporters Group

Tyler, Joe UK branch

Winton, Natalie Family

**Apologies for absence**

Doherty, Tim UK branch

(Action points are underlined.)

There were no changes to the minutes.

**MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

**Cobham**

Supporters expressed their appreciation to the Club for arranging their trip to Cobham. The Club commented that, further to a request at the last meeting, it will not be possible to introduce more visits for other supporters.

**Half-time playlist**

The half-time playlist has been altered as requested at the last meeting.

**Player appearances at the Megastore**

The Club will continue with a first come first served policy for access to the players when they make appearances there.

**Selfie sticks**

The Club confirmed they are banned from the stadium.

**2004-05 SQUAD**

The Club commented there are a lot of special events today to mark the trophy presentation. One of those events not heavily publicised yet is for the 2004-05 squad to be introduced before kick-off and the Forum was requested to help spread this news.

**ANNUAL SURVEY**

Mark McCall introduced the results by stating the survey has been running for 11 years. The questions are similar each year in order to track changes and were established originally through focus groups. Over 3,000 fans completed the survey from a circulation of 15,000 fans, representing both ST holders and members. The survey was run over a four week period from early February.

Satisfaction levels for the match day experience were originally around 65% and are now around the 70% mark. Over all they are the second highest results over the 11 year period.

Firstly respondents are asked to rate the importance of various factors out of 10. Atmosphere and safety always score highly for importance.

Scores are also given by respondents as to how well the Club has performed on those issues. The Club does well on the programme, price of cup tickets, safety and stewarding. Ease of entering and exiting the stadium has improved quite a bit over the years. Price and quality of food and drink, and the availability of Premier League tickets, don’t score as well as previously. Neither do the ticket ordering channels.

Positioning of away fans receives different scores from different parts of the ground perhaps not surprisingly.

The respondents proportionately comprise 80% members and 20% ST holders. The groups are compared to see if they have different priorities such as ticket availability. The Shed End and Mathew Harding Stand score slightly lower than the side stands over all. At the Shed End availability of tickets and positioning of away fans are bigger issues. Younger fans who respond tend to be more critical of the ordering systems. The Matthew Harding Stand has a bigger problem with ingress to the stadium according to the results.

Respondents are asked if they’ve been to other grounds. About two thirds have done so which leads to a question about comparison. Over half say their experience is better at Stamford Bridge. Around 14-15% say they consider other grounds better. This also provides the opportunity to ask what works well at other grounds for the Club to consider. Atmosphere is raised as an issue of comparison quite a lot as well as price and quality of food and drink.

As regards the comments that are received with the survey, availability of tickets and ticket ordering channels are major discussion points as well as atmosphere. Requests for a bigger stadium capacity and more tickets going to loyal fans are highlighted. There were satisfied comments about the performances of the team not surprisingly! More drink options are requested in some comments. Suggestions were made for half time music.

The Club does act on these and changes are reflected in the results over the years. Safety is a big plus and if it goes wrong it’s noticed quickly.

Leadership Factor also runs the hospitality survey. 217 responded as there is a much smaller potential sample group. They are more satisfied as a group, close to 80% over all. Quality of staff scores around 9 out of 10 and the view, safety and stewarding score well. Speed of service at half time and atmosphere have dropped slightly.

Those results are broken down into suites with the Centenary and Manager’s scoring lowest with speed of service. Toilets for Canalettos score quite low and staff service ranges between areas. Drake over all scores well, especially for staff quality.

The Club can then focus on the topics most in need of improvement.

**EUROPEAN AWAY MATCH TICKETING**

The Club explained the reasons for the new policy. The Club considers there has been a deterioration in behaviour over recent seasons with more undesirable individuals attending matches. The Club considers it has to take action.

Any change of policy such as this will introduce difficulties but some other clubs use this system and the Club wants to ensure that the individual who buys the ticket attends the match. This is not always the case at the moment as we know some tickets are passed around. We have to account to UEFA for who uses each ticket.

The new policy is that someone who has purchased a ticket can then collect it in the city of the match. The detail will be very important such as the dates, times and locations for this facility. Matches will be risk assessed so timing may change according to each match. We want to ensure our supporters have the highest standards and this is not just in response to the well-publicised events in Paris.

The Club is fully aware this is a situation where the minority detrimentally affect the majority; all supporters will be inconvenienced. The Club also consulted with other clubs as to how their schemes work including Manchester United and PSG. The policy will be continually under review but we want and expect this to work. Unfortunately supporters can’t arrive to collect their ticket an hour before kick off and expect to get to the match on time.

In response to a question the Club said there were quite a few incidents of the wrong individual having a ticket. The majority of fans are fine but there seems to be a growing trend of problems. Pyrotechnics have been let off by those who haven’ bought a ticket through the Club. Often someone arrested will not have their ticket on them but the Club traces back to the original source and takes action where possible.

The Club was asked what’s to stop an individual collecting their ticket then passing it on. The Club commented that one option was for a wristband to be placed on the collecting individual so only that person can enter the ground. What the Club is implementing is more likely to give an element of control over all.

One supporter commented that potential troublemakers will still try and get in, perhaps in the home areas. The Club commented that at least some of those should be kept out of the ground due to these measures.

The Club was asked whether there could be an exception for fans known to be responsible. The Club commented there are just under 600 on the away scheme and it may not always be practical to implement the measures every time. The Club wants to try this for all fans. The policy had to be publicised in March in line with all ticketing policies for next season which is why it wasn’t discussed with fans pre-announcement.

One supporter commented that congregating with other fans may make them more of a target for home fans. The Club responded there would be communication with local authorities to prevent this and there is no great evidence that away fans are targeted. There should be a large enough window for collection times. It’s a big step for the Club as well. As stated opening times and locations are key. It’s not in anyone’s interest to have a narrow collection window.

One supporter expressed concern that the police would round up our fans and march them to the ground from the collection point. Another commented that supporter club fans could be considered exempt if the Club so choose. Also the Club was asked what happens about individuals with more than one ST in their name. The Club responded that the current system applies in that the second individual travelling on one ST name also provides their personal details . Each ticket holder will have to pick up his/her own ticket. Careful planning should avoid police rounding up fans in the collection area.

The Club was asked if all fans would have to take their passports to the collection point. A suggestion was made that a driving licence should be acceptable too. The Club said at present the intention is for passports to be provided but details are to be confirmed for each match.

In response to a question the Club said it would consider if the situation arises whether the policy should apply for a final. One supporter said we are being told there is a deterioration in behaviour but there seems scant evidence for that. Perhaps this change is designed for administrative purposes. The Club denied that was the case and responded that there should be confidence in what it’s asserting in order to have a meaningful dialogue. The new process adds to internal administration.

Supporters who travel to the matches commented that behaviour in the ground hasn’t changed but may have deteriorated outside the ground. In the ground home supporters seem to be able to do what they like. The Club wants to avoid our supporters acquiring a bad reputation and believes behaviour is deteriorating generally.

In response to a question the Club said it had considered other options. In Copenhagen membership cards are issued for instance.

The Club also commented that it would be difficult to print individual names on a ticket and check these on entry to the ground. In Italy names have to be written on the tickets.

One supporter commented that in PSG our disabled fans did have their passports checked on entry to the ground but this only affected five supporters.

In response to a comment the Club said wristbands may slow the process for entry to the ground but it’s an option.

One supporter commented that the Club has to act if it understands there’s a problem and our fans are more likely to be at risk from other fans if our supporters have a bad reputation. Another commented that after Paris the Club had to be seen to act.

The Club said that, as regards corporate tickets, there are only about 200 in total e.g. for staff, and as they mostly travel with the Club those people may be exempt. This is different to hospitality fans who will have to adhere to the same process as non-hospitality fans.

The Club was asked if its own stewards could carry out any checks at the away ground. It replied that unfortunately it’s not always this simple but wants to use the same staff for ticket distribution to make the process as friendly and efficient as possible. Graham will also be there overseeing the process.

The Club commented that it’s not possible for us to enforce individuals sitting in their specific seat at the away ground. Before each European away game we send Keith, our club safety officer, a Metropolitan Police officer and an FA representative. They are often told what will happen in theory at the away ground but this is not always applied. We try and seat away fans at Stamford Bridge in the right seats and provide detailed information and advice for clubs visiting here. We have an ongoing dialogue with UEFA.

A supporter asked if special arrangements will be in place for fans who know they will arrive late. The Club is not intending to have these. The Club also commented that if a ticket is not picked up then that individual comes off the away ticket scheme. If a supporter doesn’t purchase the ticket in the first place for one match they can stay on the scheme.

The Club was commended for its response to the Paris incident.

The Club will consider and take on board comments regarding the new procedure.

**CHANGES TO THE FORUM**

The Club stated that the only change is for meetings to take place on midweek evenings in future. It’s not ideal having a meeting on the last day of the season and it’s difficult to book rooms for a match day. This will also give the Club more flexibility for discussing issues with fans when a major issue arises. It worked well to consult both the Forum and other supporter groups regarding atmosphere and the intention is to increase supporter group dialogue generally next season.

The Chair suggested that supporters inform him within a week if they want to stand down for that reason. One supporter asked if meetings could be near home match days to assist those travelling long distances. The Club added that supporter clubs will still have their meetings with the Club on a match day.

The Club rejected the idea of video conferencing for meetings.

The Chair will ask for feedback on ideal meeting times and for confirmation of those standing down due to the change in meeting times.

One supporter asked if the Club could look at a broader range of issues in the Forum rather than just ticketing. The Club responded that the agenda is dictated by requests from representatives although team issues are not discussed. Therefore transfer policy discussion would have to stay confidential. The focus of the Forum should stay on improving the supporter experience. The Club’s sponsorship partnerships and the Foundation have been discussed previously. The Club is happy to consider anything raised regarding supporter experience.

One representative commented that ticketing is far better than in the Bates era.

**CATERING**

The Club announced it has been trialling a catering app over the last three games with a pre-order service, including in the family area. This has worked well and the Club is hopeful of rolling this out. Orders can be up to 48 hours before the match and should improve the customer experience. There are a large range of items offered including low calorie food which some may not know about. We benchmark against other clubs and consider we provide excellent value for money. For our key items we are at the bottom end price-wise compared to Wembley and special offers such as beer tokens further reduce the price.

The two representatives trialling the app commented that it’s worked well.

The Club responded to a question by stating that bottle tops have to be removed when served.

The Club was asked if the kiosks in the Shed Upper could be changed round so the better facilities are always provided to home fans rather than away fans.

The Club will review this and change the kiosks if possible.

**ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

**Supporter events**

The Club was asked if more Star on a Stool nights can be introduced so there are cheaper events for supporters, as the Player of the Year event is expensive. The Club replied that there were 300 cheaper tickets at £25 offered for the Player of the Year event as a result of those concerns. Now the event is at Battersea it’s possible to offer the cheaper tickets.

The Club is happy to host more Star on a Stool events.

The Club neither makes nor loses money on these evenings.

**Free scarves**

In response the Club commented it would look at distributing these rather than free flags for special matches.

**Away ST scheme**

The Club was asked if the “best seats” policy for away scheme individuals could be altered by a choice of upper or lower tier. The Club commented the system could be changed for the season after next but then away scheme individuals would need to log on to give their preference for each match.

The Club will consider this.

**New/ enlarged stadium**

In response to a question, the Club said there is no further news to impart. Contrary views were expressed by representatives as to whether seats should be larger in a rebuilt/ new stadium. The Club will consider all those issues at the appropriate time.

**Sponsorship**

The Club was asked if supporters can have direct benefits from sponsor deals. It commented that there was an offer regarding Samsung early on during its sponsorship.

The Club will look into this.

**Match day experience**

There were positive responses to the additional entertainment provided by the Club such as the brass band. The Club said it tries to provide something new every match.

**Card reading machines**

One representative asked if the readers can be moved, especially in the West Stand. The Club commented that some have been moved such as at turnstile 43 in the north east corner where we now have two rather than one reader. The Shed End readers are being replaced.

**Memorial wall**

Asked to whom an enquiry regarding the memorial wall should be directed the Club confirmed that the main customer services contact number can be used for enquiries.

**Frank Lampard**

The Club was asked to mark Frank’s Chelsea career. It will do so at the appropriate point.

**Disabled away STs**

Representatives commented that these have been discontinued which has not gone down well and no explanation has been given to the two ST holders. The Club said there are limited spaces for each match which is why it’s been stopped. This was communicated to supporters who were affected prior to the policy being released.

The Club will ensure those ST holders are contacted.

**Virtual waiting room**

One representative commented that it doesn’t appear to be a random process according to some fans’ experience. The Club confirmed it is a random system.

**Cobham**

The Club was asked if Forum members can have the opportunity of a second visit in future years. The Club replied that the visits this season were particularly difficult to arrange and supporters may have visited a second time after a gap of some years.

**PlayStations**

One representative commented that fans were criticised for playing on these during the title winning match. They could be switched off during the match.

The Club will consider this.

The Chair commented that PlayStation being sited near the press area makes it easy for journalists to write about this.

**Matthew Harding Stand**

The Club will look into cleaning the roof before next season.

**Away fans’ positioning**

The Club said various suggestions had been made but the conclusion is that where they are at present is the best solution. This would be a significant issue if there’s a reconstruction.

**Brompton Cemetry**

The Club was asked if it could contribute to the Cemetry’s campaign to raise £500,000 so it can then apply for £6.5 million to help redevelop the area. The Club confirmed that the Foundation is in contact with them.

**Ticket office assistance**

A representative commented that Stephanie in the ticket office was particularly helpful recently.

**Relationship with Liverpool FC**

One supporter commented that the relationship is terrible between fans of the two clubs and could result in serious injury or worse. According to Liverpool fans some of them were attacked at Earl’s Court after the last match between the teams. The Club was asked what could be done to reduce tension.

The Club commented that the last match appeared to pass without problems in the ground according to Liverpool’s match liaison representative. Generally the clubs get on very well behind the scenes.

The Club will investigate the incident at Earl’s Court.

**Thanks**

Representatives were thanked for their work on the Forum, in particular those who have completed their two year term.

*(The meeting ended at 12.05pm.)*