

**CHELSEA FOOTBALL CLUB
SUPPORTERS' CONSULTATIVE FORUM, 2013-14 SEASON
DRAFT MINUTES, 1st MEETING**

Meeting held at Under the Bridge, Chelsea FC at 1.00pm on Saturday, 21st September 2013

Attendees	Club title/ group represented
Alexander, Chris	Club Finance and Operations Director
Alexander, Jenny	away season ticket ("ST") holder
Atkins, Steve	Club Head of Communications and Public Affairs
Barrett, Neil	UK branch
Beard, Neil	CFCUK
Beattie, Julian	Chelsea Supporters Trust
Dartnell, Alan	over 65's
Greig, Lesley	home ST holder
Jeffrey, Paul	Chelsea Football Fancast
Kimberley, Steve	UK branch
Law, Matthew	disabled
Newby, David	Club Marketing Manager
Nurse, Liz	Chelsea Supporters Group
Puttock, Mark	Chelsea Supporters Club
Regan, Andy	Electoral Reform Services (Chair)
Robinson, Adam	member
Smith, Graham	Club Head of Ticketing/ Head of Supporters' Liaison
Sporle, Lee	non-UK branch
Tyler, Joe	CFCnet
Winton, Natalie	family

Apologies for absence

Mills, Freddie	16-21's
Saville, Dermot	UK/ Eire branch
van Watermeulen, Tom	non-UK branch
Woodhead, Michael	hospitality

(Action points are underlined.)

INTRODUCTIONS

Forum representatives introduced themselves.

CHANGES TO MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The reference to Wifi access should be a reference to 3G access. The Club commented that O2 access has been good recently, whilst Vodafone and O2 are piggybacking on each other's

structure so Vodafone use should be better than before as well. The Club welcomes feedback on this.

MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

Seating fans by the start of each half

The Club is displaying announcements on the screens to state that the match should be starting/restarting soon. This is pre-programmed however so the timing may not be strictly accurate.

Positioning of microphones

The Club has asked broadcasters to review this and microphones have been moved where possible.

Poppy Run

The Club is waiting for the relevant contact to approach the Club to discuss this. Steve Kimberley will forward the individual's details to the Club.

Programme issues

The Club has reintroduced the honours board and is not focusing as much on close up player shots.

Smoking in toilets

The Club sends stewards in to deal with incidents in the toilets and monitors the problem carefully.

Alternative drink containers

The Club commented that it's not possible to have different types of drink containers as they are still considered to be potential weapons.

UK-based supporter question and answer session

The Club said it is a matter of finding time in the schedule. An update will be provided next time.

Players acknowledging fans

The Club, including Steve Atkins and backroom staff, will continue to encourage players to acknowledge fans at the end of a match, not just after a win.

AWAY TRAVEL/ THOMAS COOK

Thomas Cook

One representative commented that Thomas Cook prices were previously highlighted as being too high.

The Club said that many of those travelling independently book immediately once a draw is made, which makes it harder for Thomas Cook to book their flights. Thomas Cook buys as many transport facilities as it can to satisfy demand and prices them accordingly. For Bucharest it couldn't secure anything at a reasonable price. For the Super Cup it could only take a small number of people. Since the issue was raised previously it has tried to increase the volume and number of options for travel. It tends to sell out for most of the options provided to fans. Thomas Cook is usually most competitive when it is transporting large numbers of fans, such as for finals.

A representative will attend the next meeting. The Club asked for comments early from fans for Thomas Cook's attendance.

One representative commented that Thomas Cook is often only the back-up option for fans. Another added that it was a pity Thomas Cook couldn't make suitable arrangements for Bucharest.

The Club added that for Munich, Thomas Cook reserved flights from March, so finals are easier to pre-book.

In response to a question about the system of Thomas Cook selling European cup final flight and match packages before the match tickets are on sale, the Club said that tickets go on sale to all ST holders. Thereafter the same timing process for loyalty points applies whether the match ticket is sold by the Club or by Thomas Cook. If Thomas Cook sells out first, the Club keeps selling until its allocation is completely sold, and vice versa.

Subsidising away matches

The Club said it is subsidising ten trips this season at £10. More coaches than previous years have been booked and a train was booked for Old Trafford. Coaches also pick up at Newport Pagnell. It's not possible to reserve particular seats though. The Club is putting significant money towards assisting fans for away matches.

Representatives discussed the Club providing subsidised travel from different parts of the country. It is appreciated that the Club is assisting fans in this way but given that fans travel from different parts of the country, instead it would help most fairly if the away match ticket is subsidised. The Club will consider this option.

European loyalty points

The Club was asked why loyalty points weren't given for Japan. The Club responded that it treated the trip as a final and finals don't provide loyalty points as they are sold to a closed group. The Club will look at this if we are involved again. The Super Cup wasn't sold to a closed group so could be considered for loyalty points if we are involved again.

STADIUM ACCESS

One representative commented that access to Matthew Harding is still a problem and can be chaos getting in.

The Club commented that there is a gap between the turnstile and the reader. The Club changed the configuration last season there and in the West Stand so the Club is very aware of the issues. There is also a cost aspect to consider. Problems can include fans having duplicate tickets or fans in the wrong section and therefore if the reader is on the turnstile it takes longer to rectify the problem and can lead to slower access for the fans who are queuing. A lot has been invested in addressing this and it will be looked at again in the close season.

Late arrival at the ground is also a problem such as on Wednesday night. If fans arrive earlier it would help a great deal. Evening games are a particular difficulty. The Club is trying to assist by providing special offers for early arrivals and it would help if fans groups encourage supporters to arrive early.

"Wave and pay" in the ground is being rolled out which will help with the speed of payment in the stadium. The spend limit is up to £20 now.

ATMOSPHERE

The Club said that if any issues from the Ten Point Plan from some years ago are worth revisiting it would do so but the drive should be towards new, fresh ideas.

Positioning of away fans

The Club commented that its position hasn't changed. Disability access is a problem in the East Stand and managing away fans is easiest in their present position. Away fans can be stewarded in and out of the ground with minimal contact with home fans given the stadium configuration. The manager commented previously that he didn't want away fans around him in the East Stand Lower.

The Club has given warnings to those buying in the family area that they are near the away fans.

The Club explained that a new option has been given to away teams in the Premier League this season. Previously clubs had the option of either 1,500 on a sale or return basis or 3,000 which had to be paid in full. The new option, as was taken up in the Hull match, is for 1,500 on a sale or return if they sell at least 50% and if they sell less than 50% they pay for all those. The same

option exists both upstairs and downstairs. Therefore there is more flexibility for away clubs to choose how many to take.

Four rows were kept free at the front of home fans in the top tier to protect the away fans below.

Safe standing/ singing areas

Fans asked if the Club would consider safe standing. The Club said this was addressed last season in the Forum and its position hasn't changed. It is aware of the campaign but is not planning to get involved. If legislation changes the Club will consider its position.

The singing area for the Spurs cup final in 2008 didn't work well. The Shed End singing area has been a success and the Club is happy to look at the option in the ground in other stands without moving STs. Therefore the problem is that only the wings of the West Lower, in that tier for instance, would be free to group singers together.

The under-16 concessions were increased to under-18 and the Club is looking at increasing concessions further to under-21. Options for moving these fans when they leave the family area are limited.

The Club has had acoustics checked when the sub-committee was running. Microphones won't be introduced not least as the Club and supporters would be criticised for this.

Representatives commented that the West Lower in particular is poor for singing. There is a mixture of reasons but it ultimately it doesn't contain a hard core of loud supporters. The Club said the option of having singers in the Shed End was much easier as there were no ST holders before the current system was implemented. The West Lower has mostly ST holders already.

The Club is happy to readdress atmosphere issues. Fresh ideas are welcome as the Club is aware it helps the team. Fans groups will revisit this to consider new ideas.

Some fans commented that safe standing would be the most important introduction. Away fans stand anyway. One commented that more positive songs than anti-Spurs chants would encourage singers. Another commented that players encouraging the fans, as Dennis Wise used to do when taking corners, had a big effect. Chants printed in the programme are an option but the Club responded that this leaves it open to criticism for spoon-feeding fans. New songs arise naturally from small groups of fans anyway, often at away matches.

VIAGOGO

One representative said Chelsea Supporters Trust ran a survey which had 85% of responses requesting the Club to use a non-profit system for ticket resales. Viagogo have been investigated by Panorama and their methods were widely questioned. Another representative commented that a £75 West Upper ticket was sold for £100.95 on Viagogo with the fan receiving £61.50. Viagogo therefore made a £39.45 profit. This is legalised touting and if a fan carried out

such a sale on the street, even selling at face value only, they could be arrested. This can't be right.

The Club responded that the only tickets Viagogo resell are from ST holders. Its contract with the Club runs for another year and will be reviewed at that time (as are all contracts). The Club, and particularly the sponsorship department which runs the contract, is aware of the views within the Forum and amongst other fans. The number using Viagogo does increase each year however.

One representative said that fans who wanted to buy for Spurs away ended up buying for Basel at home just to get loyalty points then sold the latter tickets on Viagogo. The Club said that cup games are not sold on Viagogo. As regards touting in the area, the Club's security department can assist the police with banning touts in the area for 48 hours at a time. The problem is that those who sell tickets in the street hardly have any tickets on them at any time. Runners provide more tickets from nearby once supplies go down. Over 2,000 members per season are suspended for touting. The Club puts a lot of effort into stopping tickets getting into the wrong hands. For the family areas, one adult seat must be bought for every two child seats and it has to be assumed that the child tickets are being used each time.

It was requested that Keith Overstall, Head of Security, attend a Forum meeting this season.

CATERING

It was raised by a supporter that the cost of a burger at "Burger This Burger That" can be as much as £6.80 which is a sizable increase. This will threaten demand. The representative had been told by the Club in writing that prices are competitive with the area around the ground. The Club added there were a range of products on sale in the stadium and also a range of outlets in the stadium for different types of food. There are burgers on sale from other Club outlets for cheaper prices.

The Club carefully compares prices with other stadia and our prices compares well with other Premier League clubs.

One representative commented that Singha draught beer in the stadium tastes poor which is not the fault of the basic product.

The Club will review the process of serving draught beer to ensure optimum taste.

Representatives commented that speed of service has improved. The Club said it has worked on this by having the same staff in place for each outlet, ideally. Reduced cost beer tokens have assisted with this in some areas and the process is being rolled out around the stadium. There are also roving beer selling points.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Supporter club data

Supporter club representatives said it is frustrating that, for Data Protection Act reasons, the Club can't provide local officials with contact details of fans in their areas. The representative for UAE commented that he had been told there were 400 True Blue supporters there but only a small proportion are in contact with him and the supporter club.

The Club said it sends supporters in an area the local official's contact details and it is then up to the individual fan. The Club doesn't ask fans if they want to hear from their local representative automatically as not all areas have a supporters club. In such a scenario it tries to contact the most active fans in that area to ask if they are interested in starting a supporters club.

One representative said that IP address areas can be identified so the website in a particular area could show details of the local supporters club. The Club will look at this.

One representative commented that the Facebook app is poor. The Club will review this.

Representation on the Forum

The Chair explained there is a rule in place that no supporter organisation can have more than one member on the Forum. The Chelsea Supporters Trust has a place on the Forum now and as the Trust is an umbrella group which encompasses other organisations, we now have the situation that some organisations have more than one individual present at meetings. The Forum was asked how it wanted to resolve the matter.

The Club considers that as long as each organisation has one spokesman on the Forum there shouldn't be a problem but recognises that the present rule would need changing in that case. Representatives expressed different opinions on this but agreed that the rule needs clarifying. The Fancast representative commented that there is a limit as to who is able to represent his organisation as there is a significant overlap with involvement in the Trust. One option would be that no representative could be an officer in two organisations. Some supporter club representatives are also in supporter groups.

The Club will review the rule.

Pre-season friendlies

It was requested that the Club have at least one UK friendly. The Club commented that this summer was exceptional and it is unusual to have two overseas tours. During a World Cup summer it may well be the case there is only one overseas pre-season tour. The Club will keep the request in mind.

Away areas at Swindon

It was requested that the Club advertise which is the larger away section at a ground where a choice of ticket selection is provided to fans. The Club responded that the split for Swindon was based on covered and non-covered. Capacities are not generally advertised for each section.

Champions League home tickets

The Club was asked why it doesn't save advertising revenue by reducing the cost of tickets instead. The Club said it sold out the Basel match. Basel took 1,500 tickets. The policy is reviewed each year regarding prices.

The Club advertises sales 48 hours before a match. With tight sales timing for a particular match, it is acknowledged that "buy now" email alerts can take time to arrive with fans due to the volume sent out. All fans who have signed up for such alerts and have the correct data protection settings should receive the "buy now" emails relatively promptly though.

Loyalty points

The Club was asked to review the loyalty points system such as Southampton away in the Cup as there is inconsistency in the way points are allocated. Leicester away would be popular too should they get promoted. The Club said that AA matches are sold on loyalty points plus certain other matches as they arise. For instance a major final game of the season would be sold on points. Hull was incredibly popular because of Jose but it was considered too early in the season to use the system for sales.

Loyalty points are set out in the policy. All European away games are worth five points through to the semi-final now.

Supporter bans

The Club was asked why supporters are banned in circumstances where they are either charged but acquitted or not charged at all. The Club responded that it is not looking to ban fans without good cause but the weight of evidence is not the same as needed by a court and the Club is allowed to arrive at its own decisions. One representative asked for more clarity for the process; fans are not always aware of how it should operate. The Club said Keith Overstall can address this when he attends.

In response to a question, the Club considers there is no conflict of interest in the Club employing ex-local police.

Away game "tourists"

The Club confirmed that Thomas Cook doesn't get a ticket allocation. Only ST holders and members are sold tickets and where there are non-Chelsea fans who appear to be in our areas these are in UEFA "neutral" zones where anyone can obtain a ticket.

One representative said that Samsung advertised away end tickets at Swindon on Twitter. The Club answered that Samsung receives an allocation on request. The Club will check the advertisement.

Mauritius

In response to a potential request, the Club would be happy to consider setting up a Mauritius supporter branch if further details of the contact are provided.

European away scheme

The Club confirmed that due to the short time for selling tickets and also travel issues, members of the scheme can miss the Bucharest match and another whilst staying in the scheme. Tickets have just arrived for Schalke now but haven't been checked yet.

The Club said it is not aware of a major rival event in Basel which would impact on prices, as happened last season there.

Cobham

The Club was thanked for the visit there last season. It was requested that the Club increase the visit to being an annual trip for all Forum members. The Club responded that it will try and identify a date further in advance although this is dependent on the training schedule. The issue is mainly due to limiting those who want to tour the building so if few want to revisit the building, more Forum members may be able to watch training a second time.

One representative added that it would be good for visits to be expanded to more fans. The Club said it would look into this and added that sponsors and charities tend to be the main beneficiaries of tour opportunities at present.

Supporter tournament

The Club was thanked for hosting the tournament this year. It was requested that slightly heavy-handed stewarding could be toned down.

Recycling

The Club was asked if the new company contracted for recycling had 99% recycling and is as committed to a green policy as the previous waste suppliers. The Club said the new contract was awarded to Sita who are committed to a non-landfill policy. The Club will report back on Sita's green policy in more detail.

(The meeting ended at 2.40pm.)