

**CHELSEA FOOTBALL CLUB  
SUPPORTERS' CONSULTATIVE FORUM, 2013-14 SEASON  
DRAFT MINUTES, 3<sup>rd</sup> MEETING**

Meeting held in the Attenborough Suite, Chelsea FC at 1.00pm on Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> April 2014.

<b>Attendees</b>	<b>Club title/ group represented</b>
Alexander, Jenny	Away season ticket ("ST") holder
Atkins, Steve	Club Head of Communications and Public Affairs
Barker, Kelvin	CFCUK
Barrett, Neil	UK branch
Beattie, Julian	Chelsea Supporters Trust
Dartnell, Alan	Over 65's
Goodliffe, Ludo	16-21's
Gourlay, Ron	Club Chief Executive
Greig, Lesley	Home ST holder
Jeffrey, Paul	Chelsea Football Fancast
Kimberley, Steve	UK branch
Law, Matthew	Disabled
McCall, Mark	Leadership Factor
Neal, Matthew	CFCNet
Newby, David	Club Marketing Manager
Nurse, Liz	Chelsea Supporters Group
Perrin, Xavier	Club Digital Product Manager
Puttock, Mark	Chelsea Supporters Club
Ramprasad, Bharat	Non-UK branch
Regan, Andy	Electoral Reform Services (Chair)
Robinson, Adam	Member
Smith, Graham	Club Head of Ticketing/ Head of Supporters' Liaison
Tyler, Joe	UK branch
Winton, Natalie	Family

**Apologies for absence**

Alexander, Chris	Club Finance and Operations Director
Sporle, Lee	Non-UK branch
Woodhead, Michael	Hospitality

(Action points are underlined.)

**CHANGES TO MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING**

There were no changes to the minutes.

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

### **Banning procedure**

The policy has been reviewed and is now online with the customer charter.

### **Updated security**

In the away end police are deployed to assist stewards with segregation and netting is used, both when appropriate.

### **Blocked exit and sufficient stewards**

The issues highlighted last time have been resolved. More stewards are on duty at the relevant positions now.

### **Supporter debrief facility for European away matches**

A dedicated email address has been set up which is publicised to those who buy tickets for these matches.

### **Volume of loudspeakers**

The Club has carried out checks and the volumes are fine.

### **Train stopping points**

The Club confirmed that trains stop at additional stations where possible and when demand is sufficiently high.

### **Spams/ Trojans to representative email addresses**

The Club has increased security. Most members confirmed they are not having problems.

### **Post match sales points**

The Club said that the West Lower, East Lower and Matthew Harding Lower have sales points which stay open.

### **Beer sales points outside the stadium**

The Club has no licence to sell outside the stadium and as a restricted area sales aren't permitted there.

### **Personalised supporter club shirts**

The Club reported that demand may not be high enough to make this economically viable and lead times may take up to six months. However the Club is happy to consider other products.

### **Player acknowledgement of fans' at the end of matches**

Steve Holland, Steve Atkins and others continue to remind the players at the end of matches. Other clubs have a similar problem with their players.

### **Loyalty points**

Fans said that they know when tickets will be in demand for a particular match and the Club isn't always aware of this. The Club responded that not all matches will be sold on loyalty points and it is important to maintain a balance. The last game of the season will be on points. However a midseason match is harder to justify for selling on loyalty points. All London away games will be included next year, amongst others.

The Club added that when matches are sold on points, it anticipates the number of fans in each band so the actual number of points is used for reference rather than being all important. There are approximately 400 in the UK away scheme at present with a potential upper limit of 800 ST holders and 200 members; there are just over 500 in the European scheme. Members in the European scheme can miss one game and remain in the scheme. The UK scheme requires payment over 8 monthly instalments of equal amounts with an adjustment at the end. We have 95,000 members now.

The Club commented that fans had the chance to comment on the policy at the last Forum but changes were not proposed then.

The Club responded to a comment that a member with only two points could not have purchased a ticket on loyalty points for a recent match.

### **Tickets for Champions League ("CL") away matches**

The Club confirmed that it only requests travel details when match tickets are purchased. The European scheme was introduced so a supporter would know for certain that they have a match ticket and can book their travel arrangements as soon as a draw is made.

### **Sale of away tickets**

The Club provides details of sales procedures only once the tickets arrive from the away club so there is certainty as to how many are available. As regards away fans at Stamford Bridge, the 2,200 option was only introduced for domestic matches this season so may be offered to away clubs in Europe next season.

### **Viagogo**

The Club was asked for an update as to whether an in-house facility was possible instead. The phrase “legalised touting” is used by some fans regarding the facility. The Club responded that it is under contract with Viagogo until the end of the season and cannot comment further at present.

### **Positioning at away matches**

The Club was asked whether domestic away ST holders can specify upper or lower tiers from now on. The Club responded that it will consider this for the season after next.

### **Transparency of home ticket sales**

The Club confirmed that it already publishes what percentage of tickets are distributed within the ticketing policy.

### **Return tickets on sale**

The Club was asked why returns go on sale the day before a match when it must be known some time before whether there will be additional tickets. The Club responded that there are returns from internal departments, supporters and sponsors up to 48 hours before.

The Club was asked why those who just missed out can't be contacted first when more tickets are on sale. The Club replied that it continues with sales from the point at which they were stopped originally, for instance with the next loyalty point band.

For the first time, UEFA will be returning some tickets for the PSG match for sale to our fans.

### **Touts**

The Club wants to avoid tickets getting into the hands of touts and over 2,000 members have been suspended. Innocent supporters are being scammed. One fake ticket recently was sold for £500. Non-regular supporters are being ripped off even more now than they were in the past.

One representative commented she'd seen a transaction take place within the stadium and will provide the Club with details as to when and where this occurred. The Club will investigate this.

The Club has the highest level of security on tickets. It is also considering signs around the stadium warning of touts.

There is no exclusion zone now. The problem is that touts get runners and associates to do the work for them. The Club sees it all from the control room but it's a growing problem. The size of the Club doesn't help in that respect and we may have 100,000 members next season. The Club would have to pay for extra policing to deal with this. Not all mechanisms to deal with this can be publicised for obvious reasons.

## Safe standing

The Club confirmed that it was shown a working demonstration of the rail seats. The Club considers it is very well informed on the product. The Club's position hasn't changed on the issue but it considers it important that other clubs are well informed too. There will be no change without legislation being altered first. The Premier League ("FAPL") and other governing bodies would then be in a position to consider the issue. The Club has spoken to Manchester United and Aston Villa about the issue, amongst others. The board of the FAPL would have to lead the process if the situation arose.

For the avoidance of doubt, the Club doesn't consider itself to be leading a campaign for this change.

Supporters commented that there is a demonstration for fans at the CFCUK stall before and after the Sunderland match. Also there is a web survey on fans' views on safe standing which is ongoing. The Club responded that it takes notice of such surveys.

Another supporter stated that he had been threatened at a recent match when he asked the person standing in front of him to sit down. Fans have to be policed from the front to the back to ensure that fans sit. It isn't fair on those who can't see due to others standing. A steward was approached and there was an argument with the fan in front. The stewards are just not active enough.

The Club said it would review the stewarding role with respect to imposing fans to sit down. Also the fan in question will provide details for the CCTV to be reviewed.

The Club added that fans standing will not help the safe standing campaign at all. At the last forum stewards were criticised for being too heavy handed. The Club reviewed its policy on this after it had sent letters to persistent standers. It's a very difficult balance.

One supporter suggested that there appear to be fans who want to sit and those who want to stand which would be a clear starting point for any policy.

As regards standing on the rails in the away end at the recent home Galatasaray match, the Club commented that it's really difficult to manage this issue. UEFA are investigating the behaviour of those fans.

Another supporter commented that everyone low down in the Matthew Harding Lower for the Arsenal match stood up and fans seemed happy with this. Overzealous stewarding would have caused trouble.

Another supporter commented that a line of stewards walked past the Shed End after kick off for the Steua Bucharest home match which blocked supporters' views. The Club said this was unusual and stewards are usually in place by kick off. Another supporter said that stewards could be intentionally obstructive over this.

## **Smoking**

One fan commented that smoking in the Shed toilets is still a major problem. The Club will investigate.

## **SUPPORTER SATISFACTION SURVEY**

Mark McCall from Leadership Factor explained that this is the tenth year of the survey so there is substantial precedent to which the results can be compared.

### **Main survey**

3,762 web surveys were completed compared to 2,933 last year and show an increase in satisfaction from 68.8% last year to 72.9% this year. The respondents are analysed by age, gender etc. An increasing proportion of women replied this year. Location of respondents in the stadium is also analysed. Positive scoring from respondents in the East and West Stands tend to be higher than in the other stands.

The FAPL surveys all of its clubs, which provides a benchmark for our results.

The survey is sent by email to all ST holders and members who've been to a match in the past year. A reminder is also sent out but those who respond tend to do so in the first 48 hours.

Results are analysed according to both satisfaction with key issues and weighting as to the importance of those issues. The Club also receives thousands of comments and reviews them all.

The main areas of satisfaction are shown to be:

- Safety at the stadium;
- Standard of stewarding;
- Match day programme;
- Access and egress at the stadium.

The Matthew Harding Stand scores substantially lower on the last point. The Club commented that it previously announced it would try and improve access and plans are in place for Shed End turnstile improvements in the summer. The issue of the distance between machine and turnstile is key and is being improved. One supporter commented that the West Lower is now much better for access.

The main areas of dissatisfaction are:

- Price of tickets for FAPL matches;
- Price of food and drink;
- Club approach to booking fees.

Recommended priorities for improvement are:

- Price of tickets;
- Atmosphere within the stadium;
- Price/quality of food and drink.

### **Hospitality survey**

224 surveys were completed in comparison with 201 last year. The overall satisfaction index increased from 79.0% last year to 80.6% this year. The survey is valid statistically as a representative sample. Again responses are broken down according to profile and hospitality area. An increase from 70% to over 80% is very impressive over recent years.

The main areas of satisfaction are:

- Availability of match day programmes;
- Safety;
- Match view from hospitality areas;
- Level of respect from match day staff.

Areas of dissatisfaction are:

- Value for money of season tickets;
- Fans to be seated by the start of each half;
- Speed of bar/ table service at half time;
- Access to non-hospitality match tickets.

Recommended priorities for improvement are:

- Speed of bar/ table service at half time;
- Quality of food;
- Fans to be seated by start of each half;
- Toilet facilities.

### **Seating by start of the second half**

The Club rejected having a buzzer or similar sound throughout the stadium to announce that teams were coming out for the second half as it may be misinterpreted as a fire alarm or other serious warning. The Club confirmed it shows the teams coming out at the start of the second half on TVs around the ground.

## **CLUB DIGITAL SERVICES**

Xavier Perrin introduced a preview of the new website. The website has to be aimed at some 400 million fans. The content must also work well on mobiles and tablets etc. Supporters want to feel connected to the Club and also use the facility for social sharing.

Forum members indicated that they use the website at least once a week and in some cases daily.

The current website was launched in 2007 and the Club wanted to revamp the look. Fans may want to use different devices for different aspects of website contact and the new design should be as user-friendly as possible. Our motto is “content is king and context is queen” so the Club tries to emphasise the content a particular fan may want, as with Amazon anticipating a customer’s choice of books. This contact could be by email, website, app or text message.

There is a large amount of information for each player available and some fans may want to follow particular players, including any current news or interviews in which they feature. Programmes and highlights from the last ten years are available, as the focus in media at large is for delivery on demand.

The Club would appreciate the Forum providing detailed feedback on the new site in due course. The site will go live when feedback has been received.

The current mobile app will be discontinued. The Club has already received feedback from 2,000 fans in designing the website. Two fans said that the current app is very good and the hope is that the quality will be maintained. The Club said that the emphasis going forward is on providing each fan with the aspects they want.

## **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

### **Ticket prices for 2014-15**

The Club confirmed that all ticket prices are frozen for next season.

### **Disabled facilities audit**

It was confirmed that this would be addressed in the disabled fans’ committee meeting.

### **Netting at Manchester City**

The Club confirmed that it wasn’t given prior warning about this and Manchester police decided to do this. The Club also confirmed that netting was up for all Paris St Germain home CL matches this season so we weren’t singled out. There were discussions to have it removed but PSG insisted on keeping it.

### **Closed off seating for CL matches**

The Club said unfortunately the same seats tend to be closed off as the issue is the egress time once the outside broadcast units are in place. Fans have to be capable of being evacuated in 8 minutes.

### **Quantity of hot food**

One supporter commented that food tends to run out for evening matches particularly in the Matthew Harding Upper. The Club will check this.

### **Supporters tournament**

The tournament will be held on 13<sup>th</sup> July. Any group of fans wanting to enter a team should contact Cliff Auger for whom the Chairman has contact details.

### **Forum vacancies**

The Chairman announced that the advert would be published soon for next season. Jenny, Lesley, Matthew Law, Natalie, Lee, Steve, Mark, Michael and Liz were thanked for their work on the Forum.

### **Cobham**

The Club is looking to confirm a date and it should be possible for those who went last year to go again.

### **Stadium improvements**

The Club announced that over the summer we will have a new Desso pitch which will be replicated at Cobham. There will be new LED boards around the perimeter. There will also be new floodlights due to UEFA regulations.

### **Subsidised away games**

The Club commented that at a recent FAPL meeting a review took place of the initiatives that clubs had employed to try and increase away fan attendance. We were the only club to have tried as many as four initiatives, namely subsidised travel, subsidised away tickets, improvements in the concourse and taking more away tickets.

The feedback from our fans generally on our initiatives has been positive. Away followings at Stamford Bridge have increased slightly but at least this has arrested a downward trend. Our away following has been slightly down though this is largely accounted for by not having Wigan on the fixture list as we took some 6,000 fans there last season.

The Club has been pleased with initiatives so far but there may be a requirement for more subsidised tickets in preference to subsidised travel. There is a minimum that FAPL clubs have to spend on assisting away fans but we are way beyond that subsidy level anyway. We have to

keep in mind various factors. For instance, a couple of clubs complained that visiting fans had received subsidised tickets and their own fans had been annoyed, so those clubs may not agree to this being repeated in the immediate future. We would agree in principle to away fans here having their tickets subsidised but we would require a reciprocal deal and that may not fit into our plans for a particular away match.

The Club was asked if there could be an overall move by all FAPL clubs to reduce away ticket prices. The Club responded that FAPL clubs like having the flexibility to alter their policy during a season, for instance in accordance with how their season is going. At Sunderland we informed the home club what we were doing. The problem is not a particular club, it's their fans complaining that they are paying more than ours.

Supporters thanked the Club for trying initiatives. Subsidised trains were a massive saving in some cases, and especially beneficial for evening matches. One fan suggested that if the away club in a particular instance rejected our ticket subsidy, then instead those fans could be given a voucher for a reduction at a future home match. The Club responded that it would want the subsidy benefit to apply for that specific away match straight away or not at all.

One supporter suggested that other clubs with similar numbers of away fans are more likely to agree to reciprocal subsidies. The Club commented that it is the midweek matches where subsidies are more likely to benefit fans, so there has to be flexibility as to which matches are chosen. Fans agreed that helping supporters with difficult return journeys was particularly welcome.

Forum members voted as follows on the emphasis the Club should have for subsidies:

Match tickets primarily: 7

Travel tickets primarily: 6

A combination of match and travel tickets: 3.

Of the latter category, 2 said if they had to choose they would subsidise match tickets and 1 would subsidise travel.

One fan suggested that the train subsidies could be reduced so instead of going down to £10 we could go down to say £20 or £30 and the rest could subsidise tickets. The Club commented that trying £20 train tickets previously was not that popular.

### **Poppy run appeal**

One supporter commented that he now had the correct contact details and would pass them to the Club.

### **Paris SG away**

One supporter commented there were four ticket checks before getting in to the ground then no checks within the stadium so some fans moved tiers. Also fans could have been told when they

bought their tickets that the seats were unallocated. The Club said it just handed out tickets as, if it tries to pass on such instructions, there may be confusion if the home club alters its strategy for managing the away end.

Fans said press reports about the behaviour of our fans in Paris was unfair. The Club responded that it expected the police report to come in in the next day or two and the report would also go to UEFA. Media reports appeared to be excessive. There were many Met police throughout Paris as well as a lot of CCTV to go through in order to understand what happened. The Club tried to manage stories as they emerged but some reports appeared to be anecdotal. Some TV pictures were of previous matches and we were successful in our request to have those stopped.

The Club will act accordingly in the light of the report. One of the supporter groups wrote to the Club about certain events there and that has been forwarded to UEFA.

The Club is particularly concerned about tickets falling into the hands of banned fans. This has happened at a few recent away games.

One supporter commented that we were unfairly portrayed in “Despatches” as the context of our fans’ actions was inaccurate.

### **Forum meetings**

There was a request from one fan for more Forum meetings to be held each season. The Club was also asked to review the rule that no Forum member be allowed to represent two organisations.

*(The meeting ended at 3.05pm.)*