

**CHELSEA FOOTBALL CLUB  
SUPPORTERS' CONSULTATIVE FORUM 2016-17  
1<sup>st</sup> MEETING MINUTES**

Meeting held in the East Stand Executive Lower, Chelsea FC at 6.15pm on Monday 12<sup>th</sup> September 2016.

<b>Attendees</b>	<b>Club title/ group represented</b>
Alexander, Chris	Club Finance and Operations Director
Ashmore, Michael	CFCUK
Atkins, Steve	Club Head of Communications and Public Affairs
Buck, Bruce	Club Chairman
Coady, Debbie	Chelsea Supporters Trust
Daine, Nav	Club Head of Concessions
Dwyer, Kevin	Home season ticket ("ST") holder
Fiorellino, Trizia	Chelsea Supporters Group
Gould, Robert	Home ST holder
Hayden, Lisa	Disabled
Heagren Paul	Owner's Representative
Herring, Alan	Over 65's
Hickey, David	Owner's Representative
Hider, Kevin	Disabled
Kimberley, Steve	UK branch
Kontzoglou, Iraklis	Overseas branch
Last, Nick	UK branch
Levy, Eddie	Hospitality
Lopez, Mark	Family
Merifield, Stephen	LGBT
Newby, David	Club Marketing Manager
Pastakia, Adil	Project Team
Regan, Andy	Forum Chairman
Rosen, Hugh	Project Team
Smith, Graham	Club Head of Ticketing/ Head of Supporters' Liaison
Trenter, Peter	Chelsea Supporters Group
Wall, Gerard	Away ST holder
Walters, Jez	CFCNet
Wittich, Margaret	Chelsea Supporters Club

**Apologies for absence**

Barrett, Michael	16-21's
Eldridge, Andy	Chelsea Supporters Club
Gerrard, Carol	Away ST holder
Hillers, Karl	Overseas supporters' branch
Neal, Matthew	CFCNet

Silver, Dan  
Strange, Ruth  
Winton, Natalie

Chelsea Football Fancast  
Member  
Family stand

(Action points are underlined.)

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Forum Chairman welcomed representatives to the new season. This would be an unusual meeting in that last season's Forum has also been invited given the main topic to be discussed.

All representatives introduced themselves. The Forum Chairman asked representatives to wait before publicising the meeting until the official minutes are published. It was requested that group emails aren't sent round. It was also requested that new members who haven't done so yet please provide photos for use on the website.

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

There were no changes to the minutes. The following are action points from the last meeting:

### **Meeting with stadium development team**

That will happen today.

### **Touting**

The Club is making anti-tout messages at the Fulham Broadway tube station in various languages. The Club will invite a police representative to attend a Forum meeting in due course.

### **Late comers**

The televisions in the concourses now just show the logo prior to the start of each half.

### **Supporter liaison role**

The Club now publicises a specific SLO email address in the programme and on the website.

### **Honouring former players**

The Club has been in communication with various fans' groups to formulate a clear policy for honouring former players who have passed away.

## **£100 half-time voucher draw**

The Club has reviewed the process and the winner of a signed shirt is drawn instead, with the screens showing a player signing the shirt.

## **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

The Forum Chairman suggested this be discussed first to leave the rest of the time for the main topic.

### **Bag searches and ID**

The Club was asked if the policy has changed as searches appear to be more intrusive now. One supporter was told he couldn't bring a bag in. The Club said there was no official change in policy and it is stated on the website. Items couldn't be removed from bags by staff when undertaking checks and smaller bags are encouraged instead.

The Club was asked why ID is now being requested by staff for concession seats. The Club will confirm the process and added that, at the ticket office, fan IDs are checked sometimes as well. One supporter suggested better publicity in the programme would help. Another commented that a backpack as sold in the Megastore should be allowed in. The Club responded that suitcases are sold but they are not allowed in! Bags can't be stored in the hotel either. Smaller bags containing items from the megastore are searched as well on entry to the stadium.

The Club will also confirm if it's possible to collect pre-match purchases from the Megastore post-match.

### **Water bottles**

One supporter commented that he is allowed to bring a small amount of water in to the stadium if it's for medical reasons without the lid being removed, which seems like common sense. The Club stated that standard policy is to remove lids at stadia nationwide to make it less likely for a bottle to be used as a missile.

### **Away fans**

The Club was asked to confirm the policy of away fans sitting in the home area. At the Bristol Rovers match some of their fans were being particularly rowdy in our area. The Club confirmed away fans shouldn't sit in home areas and vice versa but there is a judgment call to make if they are behaving well.

A representative commented that in the West Upper there are often away fans. If they are too loud or rowdy they are ejected, sometimes from hospitality there. Sensible stewarding is

always helpful. Another commented that situations can escalate quickly and fans should tell stewards early if there may be a problem. Stewards seem uncertain how to act sometimes. The Shed and Matthew Harding Stands are likely to be potential flashpoints.

### **Bad language**

The Club was asked what the policy and procedure is regarding bad language. Supporters commented that to some extent it is a part of football; the Club stated that, when brought to the attention of the steward, that person could be asked to leave. One supporter said there is bad language at times from ST regulars in the family stand; the Club asked for further details. The Club said racist, anti-Semitic and other discriminatory language is not tolerated at all and should be reported to stewards or the hotline straightaway.

### **Away match tickets**

One supporter raised the fact some fans are buying away tickets but not attending games and just want the points. The £30 price makes this more appealing. Prices are particularly low for the Leicester cup match.

The Club commented that it was anticipated that this would happen with cheaper tickets. Options in response could include not awarding loyalty points or having a collection system such as our European away match policy, but at the moment the Club is not considering taking any action. There is also an effect at Stamford Bridge – last season we budgeted for only seven teams to take the full allocation here but budget for 19 such games this season, the result being fewer tickets for our supporters here. One supporter said a ballot wouldn't be popular but there were substantial numbers of empty seats at Swansea yesterday. Another commented that having fewer home tickets available as a consequence has a negative effect on supporters clubs as they can't entice membership with home tickets not readily available. One supporter said away match points perhaps need to be scrapped.

The Forum Chairman suggested the matter is revisited in the ticketing discussion.

### **Singha tokens**

It was raised by a supporter that beer tokens were sold outside the stadium recently but the express lane at catering outlets didn't have time to serve supporters so the tokens couldn't be used.

The Club responded that transactions are meant to be quicker by pre-selling tokens. The Club apologises if there were problems and a small number of complaints were received. There is a feedback mechanism which helps evaluate the processes. Barriers to separate the express lanes can't be used for queuing because of health and safety requirements. The number using the service has increased dramatically and cashless locations for catering should be in place for next season. Unfortunately tokens can't be sold across matches. Fans who've pre-purchased won't always be let through to collect their drinks and food by others who think they are queue barging.

The Club will investigate further and Nav Daine will make a presentation on the issue at the next meeting.

### **Concessions**

The Club confirmed, in response to a question, that it doesn't want to introduce a single concession category as our categories are clear at present. It's not possible to pay for individual seat upgrades on a match by match basis so the only options are to upgrade the child ST in the summer or to sell any spare concession ticket on the ticket exchange for that match. The reason there are no upgrades is that the system was abused in the past.

### **Restricted views**

The Club confirmed that restrictions are clearly marked at the point of sale.

### **Osgood Plaque in Shed End**

The Club will review the fact advertising boards are covering the plaque.

### **Online sales**

The Club confirmed it has publicised there is no advantage to logging on before 7am as the waiting room operates on a random basis only.

## **REBUILT STADIUM: QUESTIONS TO THE DEVELOPMENT TEAM**

The Chairman opened the discussion by reminding everyone that planning permission is pending and has not yet been received and also that the owner will make a final decision on proceeding only when planning permission is received and full figures on construction costs are finalised.

### **Overview**

The development team commented that the Council is considering the application and there is a second public consultation for local stakeholders. Design and transport issues in particular occupy a lot of the focus. This second consultation is to elicit further comments and ends in October. The Planning Committee of the Council then determines whether initial consent is granted and, if approved, the matter is referred to the Mayor for a two week decision period. If approved by the Mayor, the public have 42 days to object to the process which could then lead to a judicial review. If the matter is approved, design developments would be considered and partners/ suppliers decided on which would take most of 2017.

David Hickey was hired by the owner recently to help deliver the project having been previously involved with the Olympic and Emirates stadia. The first steps subject to planning

consent would be demolishing the hotels, the sports club and the museum as well as the start of railway line decking, all whilst the first team continues to play here. In summer 2019 we would leave for three years and move back for 2022-23.

The Forum Chairman suggested that we discuss the permanent stadium first followed by temporary stadium questions.

### **Recent publicity regarding planning**

The Club commented that any site over 40,000 square feet is considered a major development so there are bound to be many issues including ecological studies. The “bats” issue was normal for a major development and not really a newsworthy item, no single item is out of the ordinary in such a project and there are many environmental factors to consider.

There are no issues that the planning team consider can't be overcome.

### **Atmosphere**

It was raised by fans that this is a key factor. Liverpool put a lot of work into their recent stand construction in this regard, such as double cladding the roof.

The planning team responded it is very aware of the importance of this, with an increase of over 40% more supporters attending than the present capacity when the ground is completed. The atmosphere will focus down to the pitch thanks to the roof and stands' design; we also have acoustic consultants working with us. The roof will be fully clad all the way round to maintain noise in the stadium. West Ham have seats over 16 metres from the front row to the pitch and Spurs are 8 metres away. We will be 7 metres from the front row to the pitch. Fans make the atmosphere but this will be the most conducive environment for fans to do so.

There is no “ring of silence” around the middle tier of the proposed stadium, as at both ends of the ground the stands behind the goals will be general admission only with no hospitality seating areas, over all three tiers. We have the oldest average ST age in the country which shows long term support so those fans are likely to want to keep their seats. However, the support will be added to with new attendees.

Visiting supporters will be set at the Premier League stipulated figure of supporters and a lot of planning has gone into accommodating visiting supporters including access and egress issues, so they will be located in the south west corner over three tiers. We don't want them to be along the sides of the pitch; we want them to be seen but with limited noise emanating as they will be spread over several tiers. The south east corner of the stadium will be the main Shed End home entrance with an open space in the grounds, “The South Terrace”, between the Fulham Road and the stadium at the historic main Entrance. Visiting supporters will enter exclusively at the Bovril Gate.

The Club added that the FAPL recently imposed a rule stating visiting supporters must have some seats at pitch level. A proposal by one club for an increase in away allocations was defeated in an FAPL vote.

### **Safe standing**

The project team commented that the rebuilt stadium would have the capability of being switched to standing in some of the lower tier but there is no plan for standing at the moment. One supporter commented that on the recent European club tour there were two types of standing, one capable of being used for seating and the other not.

The Club added that the current regulatory regime does not permit safe standing at present and if there is a change we will consider the position, but don't intend to campaign for a change in the law. One supporter stated they didn't think a change in the statutory law was needed and quoted the Adam Smith Institute that only a change in regulatory discretion would be required. The Club considers that good atmosphere is not necessarily a result of standing and our safety team currently believes that it's not as safe.

The project team added that existing ST holders may be displaced if standing is introduced and moving ST holders is contrary to the project policy. One supporter commented there is standing at present so a change would just be formalising this. The Club responded that those who want to sit would move if standing were officially introduced; at present it receives complaints from fans about others standing throughout. One representative commented that there is confusion at present at West Ham's new stadium as fans are being stopped from standing there and they may not be allowed to increase their capacity if standing continues. The development team repeated that the intention is that existing ST holders remain in their usual seat after the redevelopment.

### **Pricing**

A representative raised a concern that ticket prices may go up throughout the ground. The development team responded that it acknowledges ST holders mostly will not want to move seats. In effect a third tier is being added to what is there, in very general terms. Existing ST holders will stay where they are in each stand as far as possible.

The Club added that we have a very good track record of not raising prices in recent years with only increases in two out of eleven years. Our model just shows additional revenue from the increased capacity and not from price increases. We expect pricing to be reasonable.

### **Hospitality Season Ticket Holders**

The Club responded in answer to a question that in the new stadium it would consider concessions for Hospitality ST holders who are 'senior citizens'. There would be a concern that a reduced price ticket is then passed to another individual who should not be benefitting from the discount.

## **Priority STs**

The Club was asked if it would consider implementing a loyalty point scheme early for members who will want STs in the new stadium. The Club responded that it would arrive at a policy in consultation with supporter groups but not at the expense of dislocating existing ST holders. The development team added that it had West Ham and Arsenal policies from their moves to learn from but has the added challenge of having a temporary stadium where we also want existing ST holders to move to in equivalent seats. If we don't have that seating continuity, the situation would just be confused.

The Club was asked to make the policy completely clear to fans in due course so there is no room for misunderstanding.

## **Turnstiles**

The development team confirmed there will be more turnstiles and the gap between machine and turnstile will be reduced. Various designs are being investigated to make access speedy. There will be some escalators in the stadium.

## **Disability access and facilities**

The development team stated that the Chelsea Disabled Supporters Association received a presentation earlier today and both access and facilities for the disabled will be excellent. There will be disabled places in all four stands. In response to a question the team stated that ambulant disabled fans will have the most practical seats alongside the aisles. There must be one wheelchair-accessible toilet per 15 wheelchair fans within 40 metres, which is a statutory provision, and we will easily comply with this.

## **Wi-Fi**

In response to a question about poor Wi-Fi facilities at present, the development team stated it has studied this aspect in the USA amongst other countries. There will be digital developments in place but there are no plans to improve the facilities here until we move. O2 and Vodafone improvements were made here last season.

## **Car parking**

The development team commented that parking will be under the stadium with 25-26 blue badge spaces out of 190 total spaces. The total number of spaces represents a reduction from our current number of spaces, as TFL discourages car use in central London. 10% of spaces must be for the use of blue badge holders so will be exceeding this.

## **TV requirements for European matches**

The development team confirmed that the new stadium won't require seats to be lost for matches, as an outside broadcast facility will be incorporated in the stadium.



## **London Underground**

The development team stated that problems of post-match overcrowding are not expected at Fulham Broadway, as spectators will be encouraged to stay in the stadium grounds for longer after the game. We would expect about 4,000 extra spectators over the existing amount to use the underground in the first hour after the final whistle, bringing the total to around 18,000 spectators per match in that first hour. Gates at the station are typically closed for the existing match day station entrance via Wansdown Place 30 to 32 minutes after the final whistle. The average wait will be increased by 12 to 14 minutes in the new stadium. This is before new signalling at Earls Court that will be introduced before the new stadium is in place and so we hope these times will reduce further.

## **Match day Experience**

The development team envisages a completely different experience to match-going at present so facilities will be in place to encourage all supporters to arrive early and stay late. Food, beverages, entertainment and screens are all being planned. Supporters welcomed this in contrast to being ushered out as quickly as possible after matches now.

One representative commented that more than one train every five minutes would be difficult to achieve. The development team responded that the estimates for accessing the tube would most likely be faster than envisaged as conservative estimates for S7 tube capacity are being used. Also trains are stacked up at Parsons Green so it may be possible to utilise those. A lot of collaboration with TFL has gone into this. One train entering Fulham Broadway station every three and a half minutes may be possible.

## **Accessing various parts of the ground**

The development team confirmed that spectators will be able to access all parts of the Ground Floor Concourse so can meet up with friends, eating and drinking together before and after the game.

## **Chelsea Pitch Owners**

The Club commented that it hasn't discussed the issue yet as we don't have planning consent. The development team have kept the CPO directors informed of developments.

## **Seat comfort**

The development team confirmed that the plan is that every category of seat will be improved from what is provided now either in terms of view, leg room or width.

## **TEMPORARY STADIUM: QUESTIONS TO THE DEVELOPMENT TEAM**

## **Choosing seats**

The development team confirmed it has a policy of “LEAVE NO FAN BEHIND”. Therefore the intention is we move as a group and return as a group. We have modelled various scenarios based on the possible temporary venues but there are no final decisions to make until we receive planning permission. The Club reiterated the aim to keep supporters in the same places within each potential temporary ground. If a supporter wants to move and there is no occupant in that seat if we move to a stadium larger than our existing capacity, they could do so.

## **Prices**

One representative commented that their group’s survey of supporters shows some supporters won’t want to move to the temporary home – the Project team questioned this attitude - and therefore it’s important to reflect that in prices. The Club reiterated that it is aware of pricing issues and wants to keep prices reasonable.

## **Supporters clubs**

The Club confirmed it will assist supporters clubs to engage in further dialogue with fans in due course.

## **Singing sections**

The Club commented that there is a singing section in the Shed Upper and it is aware this should move to both the temporary and permanent homes.

## **Box office**

In response to a question the Club stated it would position box offices wherever is logical, possibly both near Stamford Bridge and near the temporary stadium.

## **Coaches for away matches**

In response to a question the Club will look at the best pick up places, perhaps involving the new stadium as one of the meeting points.

## **Coaches for home matches**

One supporter asked if the Club is proposing this form of travel to the temporary stadium. The Club responded that some temporary venues would lend themselves to this more than others. If the venue is Wembley or the London Stadium, for instance, then travel by underground would be more logical.

## **Pubs and businesses near Stamford Bridge**

The Club commented that the local authority is keen on business resilience. 38% of local businesses, of which there are about 500, have a dependence on football and non-football stadium traffic. We will offer to establish a Business Improvement District (“BID”) alongside the local authority which will have its own membership levy and collect money expressly for the benefit of businesses in the area, all of whom will become BID members. There are over two million football-related customers a year in the area. There will be economic benefits from the building works as workers will need to use the local facilities. At the tube station shopping centre, the owners will take some premises back to enlarge the facilities in time for our return. There will be substantial long term benefits to the area.

There are about 50 members of the local pub and bar association who benefit from football and non-football visitors. There are about 1.2 million visitors to the ground on non-match days at present. The stadium should be one of the great landmark buildings in London.

### **Naming rights**

In response to a question, the Club commented that it intends to look for a naming rights sponsor but ideally including “Stamford Bridge” in the title. It is a good opportunity for a revenue stream.

### **Supporter representation**

One supporter asked for supporter representation on the project development team. The team responded that it has spoken to or consulted with thousands of supporters since 2011 and this dialogue will be ongoing. The project team is a wide collection of people such as those who are at the peak of their profession, an example being the engineer who built the Shard over London Bridge station, or the right to light expert who is also an ST holder. All the negotiations are vital to get right so we have to be confident we already have the best team.

The Club informed the Forum that there is a stadium model to inspect after the meeting. The Forum Chairman thanked the development team for attending today.

*The meeting finished at 8.15pm.*