

## Minutes from the preliminary meeting of the Chelsea Disabled Supporters' Association which was held on 3rd October 2023.

Thank you for all that attended.

### **Speakers**

Cat Smith ~ Chelsea FC

Liam Bird ~ Level Playing Field

Cliff Auger Chelsea Supporters Trust

Diane Akers Chelsea Supporters Trust

### **Welcome ~ Cliff Auger CST (Chelsea Supporters Trust)**

- Pay homage to the late Matthew Law who previously chaired the DSA.
- Brief introduction of why we are here, to engage support and to see if there is a want for Chelsea DSA to be re-established.
- Chelsea Football Club and Level Playing Field welcome this meeting and putting together support for our supporters with disabilities and accessibility.
- The DSA is proposing to be independent from Chelsea Football Club, we would like to form an allegiance, disabled supporters voices are important and we want to get our voices heard.

**Diane Akers CST (Chelsea Supporters Trust)** ~ Some good news and progress from The Club, few adjustments;

- West stand lower counters,
- Megastore accessibility with the installation of a portable ramp.
- We will continue to work with The Club for further adjustments.

### **Liam Bird ~ Level Playing Field**

- Introduction of who he is, what role he has and the work he does.
- Chelsea FC is one of the only clubs in London not to have a DSA.
- We want to hear your good and bad match day experiences!

### **Questions/Feedback from supporters**

**Q** - Why can't we have our PAs next to us, instead of behind, making communication difficult. This would improve match day experience.

**Liam** ~ Infrastructure issues are things the DSA could get questions answered about, though stadium current layout and time is a factor, in the future these could be considered changes.

**Q** - Other stadiums get beverages/food with tables for disabled supporters, I have to put my food and drink on the floor, being in a wheelchair this impacts me.

**Cliff** ~ Confirm tea bar is open before KO and is accessible for all.

**Q** - For away games/stadiums, allocated seats / tickets are putting supporters at the back, this is not accessible and they cannot see.

**Liam** ~ No more than two steps up or down for ambulant supporters. Contact the away club beforehand to confirm that you have or can get an accessible area.

**Supporter response** ~ Away clubs say talk to Chelsea, Chelsea say talk to away club.  
Away clubs should have the same accessible areas. No help from anyone since Diane in access left.

**Liam** ~ Clubs have let go a lot of ticketing staff since the pandemic.

**Q** - Chelsea last season, change of infrastructure put with home fans when disabled supporters go to some away stadiums.

**Answer** - Away fans should not be with home fans.

**Q** - There should be someone from the club to be able to get queries and anything sorted / related to disabled supporters.

**Liam** ~ Tottenham Hotspur are holding a southern DSA forum, where we discuss what other clubs do, what works and doesn't, where clubs should improve, what can be implemented, where we share ideas.

**Q** - At Arsenal, they have a person ask if they are ok, do they need assistance in going in / to their seat. We don't have that at Chelsea.

**Q** - Can the ticket allocation issue be brought up to the FA or other body as some tiers are above/below opposite fans and this puts us at risk from objects thrown, flares etcetera.

Supporter response;  
Loyalty points for disabled supporters.

**CST** (Chelsea Supporters Trust) send out annual questionnaires to its members on their views, loyalty / loyalty points is one that keeps coming up.

**Q** - Restroom facilities at away games are not clean, accessible not looked after. Minimum standards for facilities for disabled supporters.

**Liam** ~ Get them to call it in, ask for their DLO / DSO  
If you feel nothing has been done, contact the club. Pressure as a collective can make a change.

**Q** - My dad is blind, he uses the audio, the timeline to give back the device is thirty minutes, which is not feasible, we want to wait for the stadium to be less busy, so we can move safer, less hazards.  
I either have to leave him to get it back or navigate through lots of supporters which can be hazardous. Can there not be a deposit box, as it's counterproductive, we have to sign a form, they have our details etcetera.

**Liam** ~ You can hand it in to the stewards.

Supporters;

**Q** - What are the next steps, how do you see us working together?

**Cliff** ~ We should be independent, we have a lot of interest. We will get an email out to people.  
We will have a governing body committee, social media presence, will have a dedicated website.

**Liam** ~ next meeting will be about how a DSA works, how you'd like to be involved.  
Today was hearing your voices, your thoughts on re-establishing the Chelsea DSA.

**Q** - Not happy the club stopped the travel subsidy for coach travel to away games. Supporters rely on this.

**Communication** ~ Set up a dedicated email address for the DSA.  
Collect the information of those who have left their details, so an email update can be sent out, for further

meetings.

You can use this to ask questions, suggestions etcetera.

We can pass on information to the club.

We understand that not a lot will change in the short term, we will keep battling, the CST will back you 100%.

We would like to thank-you all for attending today and voicing your thoughts.

**On behalf of the CDSA**

**Diane and Cliff**