

CHELSEA FOOTBALL CLUB
SUPPORTERS' CONSULTATIVE FORUM, 2014-15 SEASON

Minutes of 2nd meeting

Meeting held in the Attenborough Suite, Chelsea FC at 10.30am on Saturday 22nd November 2014.

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
Doherty, Tim	UK branch
Dwyer, Kevin	Home season ticket ("ST") holder
Eldridge, Andy	Chelsea Supporters Club
Gerrard, Carol	Away ST holder
Goodliffe, Ludo	16-21's
Gregory, Paul	Club Digital Product Manager
Hayden, Lisa	Disabled
Hillers, Karl	Overseas supporters' branch
Neal, Matthew	CFCNet
Newby, David	Club Marketing Manager
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

Jeffrey, Paul	Chelsea Football Fancast
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(Action points are underlined.)

MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

There were no changes to the minutes.

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

Touts

It is inappropriate for the Club to publicise all measures undertaken but they include monitoring the internet, spot checks on seats, analysing purchasing patterns and ascertaining how tickets have been purchased. Unauthorised ticket sales are predominantly supplied by members. The Club publicises websites for fans to stay away from. Signs outside the stadium will be displayed more prominently soon.

There used to be an exclusion zone outside the stadium but that hasn't been in place for two years. We continue to discuss the issues with the Council and the police.

Smoking in toilets

The Club is reviewing signage. Stewards also patrol the toilets.

Stewarding in the West Lower

The Club has told the relevant staff that fans consider there has been an improvement recently.

Cobham

The Club had dates pencilled in but the training schedule was changed. The Club will try and find dates for December or January. The Club will consider offering all Forum members including those from last season a choice between the two dates.

Roving sales points

The Club is looking to introduce these around the stadium and is awaiting delivery of the requisite equipment by the end of December. This is being dealt with as a stadium wide issue.

Club media platforms

In the October magazine and Aston Villa programme the Club requested ideas and feedback and we continue to welcome these.

Foundation page on the website

The Club said this was now shown on the welcome page.

International membership not including Chelsea TV

The Club commented that there are ongoing discussions as to the packages for next season.

Lord Attenborough

In consultation with Lord Attenborough's son Michael, the Club is considering both a possible memorial and a possible event to honour his contributions to Chelsea, young actors and multiple sclerosis. The Club is considering an event to appeal across the fan base.

Maribor tickets sales

For Maribor the email advertising tickets was sent only to those who asked to be notified by email. This has been rectified. The Schalke email was sent to all fans with an email address.

Disabled seating area in the West Lower

The Club said it is in the stewards' brief to ensure photographers don't get in the way of our fans. If photographers ignore the request then fans should send in details of the offending photographer's bib number. The Club reminded photographers of the issue recently and they will be reminded again today.

TICKETING

Supporters were thanked for sending in comments and ideas.

Home ticket pricing/ younger fans

There was a discussion as to whether lower ticket prices, and more accessibility to obtain tickets, for younger fans would improve the atmosphere, not least further to Jose's recent comments. One supporter asked who would be moved out if there were concessions for fans up to the age of 25 for instance.

A supporters' club representative commented that if clubs don't receive more tickets then it's irrelevant regarding arranging travel as to the age of fans who attend.

The Club commented that it had particularly encouraged younger fans and lower prices for cup ties and with Champions League group games. One supporter commented that the positioning of the family stand next to the away fans doesn't help as the atmosphere can be intimidating for children. Another suggested that the lower prices could be offered around the stadium.

The Club confirmed there are about 24,000 ST holders, 3,000 away fans and 5,000 hospitality users so has to act within those constraints.

One supporter commented that the atmosphere is often worse for cup games and Champions League group games when there are more younger fans present.

Champions League STs

It was commented that the prices for Champions League knock-out matches are very high. The Club was also asked why there is no ST for the Champions League group stage. The Club responded that UEFA could make contact after STs have been sold to say which areas can't be used. The Club may put all STs on sale at the start of the group stage once it's known which areas can't be used.

Domestic ST packages

The Club was asked if it would consider adding cup games to the ST deal without an increase in price. There is ever more money flowing into the game not least through TV deals but fans don't benefit from lower prices. Another commented that this might mitigate against attracting younger fans. The Club commented that a lot of fans don't travel to evening matches due to the distance they have to travel.

The request for greater availability for younger fans to buy reduced price tickets was also raised by other fans groups.

In response to a question, the Club confirmed that the prices for cup games are stadium wide.

Away ticket pricing

One supporter asked if the Premier League could be approached to look at away ticket prices again, not least as categorisation always puts us in the highest ticket brackets at other grounds.

Loyalty points

One supporter commented there are always discussions about what constitutes loyalty. The Club was asked to take a longer term view of loyalty. The Club responded that if long term loyalty is a factor then the group who can access tickets becomes more of a closed shop and mitigates against including new fans. If someone misses a couple of matches one season that could hamper them getting tickets for years. One FAPL club sells tickets based on the number of matches attended last season. This causes a closed shop as tickets are usually sold to the same people each season. If we have a big game away in the first month of the season, we use the previous season's points. Derby is not being sold on loyalty but the Club wants to maintain a balance for the number of matches sold on loyalty.

One supporter commented that some fans stack points without attending matches. If there were five points for a long journey on a Monday night that would be fair. The Club commented that it has to maintain a difficult balance as subsidised prices for a high loyalty point match encourages fans to buy tickets just for the points. Supporters commented that our systems are some of the fairest seen in the FAPL.

Booking fees

The Club commented in response to a question that these have been frozen for some 12 years.

The Club was asked to consider having a group price. The Club commented that in 2006 the system was changed so a ticket is sent to the ST holder directly on behalf of whom it's purchased.

Away ticket split

The current 60/40 split was discussed. Fans acknowledged that ST holders and members are likely to think the split is biased against them. The Club commented that the allocations are altered slightly depending on numbers applying. Members haven't gone down to zero points for a match for several years. If 1,000 ST holders buy tickets and there are 1,000 members tickets unsold then ST holders are brought back in for instance.

The consensus was that the split is about right.

One supporter club representative said that the 150 Capital One Cup tickets for supporters clubs are pro-rata'd down which makes joint travel unviable. The Club responded that this was discussed at the supporters club meeting and only thirty clubs have access to those tickets.

Family enclosure

The Club was asked why a specific ratio is needed and responded that the ratio is 2 adults for 1 child which seems fair. One supporter asked why fans can't upgrade tickets from junior to adult on request. The Club said that such a system could be abused.

One supporter said they had changed a ticket from junior to adult but the Club responded this was only for away matches when tickets are still available. The Club was asked why there couldn't be an option to trade junior tickets for adult tickets say twice per season. If the Club does this for away matches, it could also implement this for home matches. Some supporters said that we have had a discussion on encouraging younger fans and this proposal would reduce the number of young attendees. The Club said it also assists by way of the refund policy so it tries to help where possible.

Priority for home tickets

The Club was asked why away ST holders who are members shouldn't have priority for home tickets. The Club responded that at present we have about 600 away ST holders who are home ST holders and far fewer away ST holders who are members. Members with the highest amount of loyalty points are offered season tickets each season. The season tickets on offer are those which have not been renewed by the current owner.

The Club rejected the idea of a half season away ST package.

Members' tickets for cup finals

The Club was asked to consider why members shouldn't be included in access to cup final tickets. There could be one big pot so a member who has attended say 15 home matches and 10 away matches would get a ticket in preference to a home ST holder who has not been to any matches beyond the home league games. It is unfair to exclude members who have a large number of points. Such fans would have paid more than ST holders. Some fans aren't in a position to lay out for an ST at the start of the season.

Two other supporters commented that ST holders make a huge financial commitment to the Club at the start of the season. These were likely to be the most regular attendees for all matches. We have a fair system that is clear cut. Another commented that again the issue is how best to reward loyalty.

The Club commented that on the ticket exchange if loyalty points were deducted when a ticket is sold then ST holders might not list their tickets for sale. The Club added that an ST holder who only goes to home league matches is unlikely to get a cup final ticket. The Munich allocation was 17,500, Moscow was 21,000 and Amsterdam was 9,800. There are fewer for the Supercup as well. At present the split is clear as members know they aren't in the pot for cup final tickets, with the exception of those in the away scheme.

Timing of ticket sales

The Club was asked why tickets for some matches go on sale at the same time. The Club responded that due to demand this year with tickets selling in less than three hours, it is ensuring that there is no clash of ticket sale times. This has happened since the middle of October. Information is now included on the front of the website showing what areas are still available.

The Club will consider all the points raised regarding ticketing in preparing next season's policy.

WEBSITE DEVELOPMENT

This was presented by Paul Gregory who introduced the recent changes to the website. The Club has listened to fans' feedback. When the site was introduced the Club focused on HD only content in the live video section but there was a request for a live Chelsea TV stream from Sky which is now offered. We still provide high quality programmes.

As regards the Foundation and Bridge Kids the positioning is quite low on the front page and the Club will continue to monitor click throughs.

There are updates to the magazine and programme apps which are available through membership. They are not working on IOSA and those changes should be ready in a couple of weeks. That will allow those who have Fan Club + to have access to digital publications.

As regards ticketing we are focused on clearer signage including information and ticket prices. This is a continuing process and we hope to release improved functionality in a couple of weeks.

Chelsea Rewards Scheme has an online presence including rewards for watching articles, sharing articles, exclusive offers and competitions.

Mobile games for junior fans are being developed. They are easy games such as keepy-upys, competitions against other Chelsea fans, customising Stamford's look by buying accessories for instance. There is an educational section for young fans as well.

We are also looking at connections to TV, mobile and tablet apps. We discontinued these but there is a need for a native IOS app and key features will include multiple camera angles, utilisation of Chelsea TV features. The look will be more engaging with an excellent user experience.

In response to a question, the games for children will be free.

The Club also confirmed that the system for online ticket purchasing involves a holding area prior to the on sale time, usually 7am. There is no advantage to entering the holding area prior to 7am therefore as fans progress on a random basis from the holding area.

The Club was asked why specific ticket information sometimes uploads slowly. The Club responded that there is a Content Distribution Network being included which should improve access time per page.

In response to a question the Club commented that previous match and next match details should appear prominently. On the apps the Club is looking to add a feature where you can add automatically updated fixtures to your calendar. Fixture changes should alter automatically on the website.

ATMOSPHERE

Singing/ music

The Club is happy to hear fans' views and is involved in a process of consultation with fans' groups. In response to a question the Club said it would consider having Chelsea-themed music at half time.

Fans raised then rejected the idea of playing a specific song when we score.

The Club is looking to introduce an improved pre-match sequence before the Spurs match.

General/ Jose's comments

As regards whether lack of atmosphere is worse at Chelsea than other leading clubs, one fan suggested it may partly be a result of many local pre-match pubs closing down. Therefore fans aren't as pumped up when they arrive at the match.

At away games the atmosphere is much better but fans at Stamford Bridge expect to win. Differing views were offered as to whether atmosphere at other leading grounds is better. Two supporters said the timing of Jose's comments were strange as the atmosphere has been much better in recent years. There are schemes in place such as the Shed End initiatives.

When asked the Club responded that it considered Jose's comments gave fresh impetus to the debate and helped focus on the issue. There have been many initiatives introduced and there is no one simple solution. Some fans commented that sitting at grounds doesn't help.

Positioning of dugouts/ away fans

One supporter commented that Jose is likely to hear away fans loudest given there is only part of the family section between him and the away end. Dugouts the other side (in front of the West Stand) would make him less of a target for away fans to sing at. The Club responded that he would be in the sight line of away fans, and they would be more in his if the dugouts were moved there.

The Club commented that as regards away fans there are various initiatives being looked at. The Club has received feedback that both their current positioning and their previous positioning are not ideal. The problem with having them high up in the East or West Stands is they would be above our fans which is dangerous. At present they are in a straightforward area to police.

One supporter commented that having away fans next to them in the Shed End encourages our support to sing. One fan commented that there has to be an impetus to sing such as when there are drums in the away end. Another commented that in the East Upper the away fans don't appear to be loud. Others commented that the away fans' decibel level appears to be very different in different parts of the ground.

In response to a question the Club said away fans would be kept behind if the police advise that.

Safe standing

There was a comment that fans being asked to sit down regularly doesn't help. The Club replied that it considers stewarding is not heavy handed. Early last season the Club tried to be robust on the issue but there is now a happy medium. The Club has to consider not only rules and laws but also fans who can't see the match when others stand.

QUESTIONS TO BRUCE BUCK

Ground expansion

Bruce addressed several questions raised about a new stadium.

The Club commented that at present it is not looking at new sites. The two options looked at most closely were Battersea Power Station which has now gone, and Earl's Court.

From a construction only perspective it is possible to increase the size of the stadium. However other issues would need to be resolved such as financial viability, ingress and egress, rights of light, property behind the Shed End, listed buildings etc.. Consultation announced in the summer is part of the process but there is no final plan ready. Stadium redevelopment here has always been our first choice.

The ideal capacity is 60,000. No application has been made yet and we are still looking at several designs. There are two options for rebuilding, either stand by stand or all in one. We had a short informal meeting with Twickenham as we need to consider all the options. We haven't made the decision on whether to move out during any potential rebuild and are looking at two factors. The first is financial and is a trade off. The other aspect is what the fans would prefer.

As regards ticketing at a rebuilt stadium the Club can't make any comment about prices.

Safe standing would be considered by the Club in a bigger stadium if the law changes.

Asked if there would be a system in place for current ST holders to have priority for new seats in a bigger stadium the club confirmed there would be.

Game 39

The Club was asked why there was no consultation with fans prior to Game 39 being announced. It commented that Premier League shareholders – the Clubs – meet four or five times per year. In the June meeting this year the Premier League Executive said they are considering studying having a league game overseas. There was a discussion at that meeting about reaction of fans and integrity of the competition but the general view was to authorise the Executive to study it. This is standard for the Premier League. The Club is aware this is a sensitive issue for fans.

New Club Structure

The Club was asked what the new structure would be. Bruce responded that Marina has handled transfers and salary negotiations since before the Torres transfer and will continue to do so. Michael Emanalo and Jose work most closely with her. Bruce will oversee other areas such as the stadium and marketing. We don't expect any noticeable change to the outside world not least as Bruce has worked with Eugene Tenenbaum and Marina for many years.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Stadium payment card

The Club was asked if it would consider introducing a stadium credit card which would also speed up payments. The Club is already researching this issue.

Turnstiles

One supporter commented that the Club had discussed bringing turnstiles forward for certain areas such as the Matthew Harding Stand. The Club said it has gradually carried this out around the ground as well as introducing new turnstiles. It's an ongoing process.

True Blue tiers

The Club was asked why it had dropped the international tier. It makes it difficult to justify the price, not least as the international TV aspect was included. The Club replied that Chelsea TV was set up to be separate to membership for now. It is a better product now which is more expensive to run. The number of international fans becoming members has not dropped off.

Cobham matches

One supporter raised the fact that access to Cobham is difficult to watch non-first team matches. The Club responded that three non-first team matches are scheduled for Stamford Bridge. It is important to protect the pitch here but unfortunately sizable crowds can't be accommodated at Cobham. The Club reminded fans it also uses Aldershot and Staines.

Megastore appearances

In response to recent sold-out appearances at the Megastore, the Club will consider making them all-member and ST events or at least giving priority to these groups. The line is stopped at 200 so those who won't get a chance to meet the players don't need to wait around unnecessarily.

Youth Forum

One supporter commented that he'd received an email from a 14 year old who wanted to contribute to fan discussions with the Club. The Club clarified that at present there is a 16-21 representative on this Forum and there is a junior forum for fans up to 15 which meets once per season.

Fans commented that better consultation with younger fans would be useful especially given the previous discussions about encouraging them to attend.

The Club was also asked by a supporter to consider minority places on the Forum. Other fans commented that there isn't the need to have specific minority places.

The Club will review youth and minority representation. It reiterated that it wants all fans to feel they are represented on the Forum.

Selfie sticks

In answer to a question, the Club will confirm whether selfie sticks are allowed in the stadium or not.

Cobham visits

The Club will revisit the issue of non-Forum supporter trips to meet the players at Cobham, further to a supporter request. The Club is also planning an open day at Stamford Bridge next year.

Recognition of fans

The Club was reminded that fans have asked for players to acknowledge them. The Club responded that senior staff remind players to acknowledge fans at the end of matches. John Terry and Jose are also involved in helping with atmosphere issues generally.

One supporter asked if players could be reminded where disabled away fans are positioned so they can be acknowledged too. Sometimes they're not positioned with our other away fans. The Club will notify players where all our fans are positioned for away matches.

(The meeting ended at 12.30pm.)
