

**CHELSEA FOOTBALL CLUB
SUPPORTERS' CONSULTATIVE FORUM, 2013-14 SEASON
DRAFT MINUTES, 2nd MEETING**

Meeting held in the Attenborough Suite, Chelsea FC at 11.00am on Sunday 1st December 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
Beattie, Julian	Chelsea Supporters Trust
Dartnell, Alan	Over 65's
Goodliffe, Ludo	16-21's
Gourlay, Ron	Club Chief Executive
Jeffrey, Paul	Chelsea Football Fancast
Kimberley, Steve	UK branch
Law, Matthew	Disabled
Newby, David	Club Marketing Manager
Nurse, Liz	Chelsea Supporters Group
Overstall, Keith	Club Head of Security
Puttock, Mark	Chelsea Supporters Club
Ramprasad, Bharat	Non-UK branch
Reeves, Jon	Thomas Cook Sport Senior Manager
Regan, Andy	Electoral Reform Services (Chair)
Robinson, Adam	Member
Smith, Graham	Club Head of Ticketing/ Head of Supporters' Liaison
Tyler, Joe	CFCnet
Winton, Natalie	Family
Woodhead, Michael	Hospitality
Worrall, Mark	CFCUK

Apologies for absence

Beard, Neil	CFCUK
Greig, Lesley	Home ST holder
Sporle, Lee	Non-UK branch

(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

Poppy Run

Steve Kimberley asked for the contact's details to be forwarded by representatives to him or the Club.

UK-based supporter question and answer session

The Club is trying to find a date in the diary for Ron Gourlay to attend.

Subsidised away match tickets

The Club is considering this for next season (see later discussion).

Catering

The Club has checked that the draught beer pumps are clean and welcomes further feedback from supporters. Pints are pre-poured to speed up service.

Supporter club data

The Club stated that IP addresses are used at present for focusing on local areas. Supporters' group microsites are being planned for next year so there will be more focus on local targeting. A rollout will take place in the next few months.

The Club is updating the website so the Facebook app should improve in time for next season.

Swindon away match

The Club confirmed that Samsung didn't receive tickets in the away end from the Club.

Cobham

The Club said it would consider increasing the number of visits in the future but for now it doesn't have the capacity to manage such an increase.

Recycling

The Club said that Sita recycles 85% of rubbish and the rest is turned into fuel pellets. There is still zero landfill as was the situation previously.

Viagogo

The Club confirmed that the current contract will be reviewed at the end of the season when it expires.

SECURITY

Banning policy

One representative commented that a friend had his ST removed immediately on the Club receiving evidence from the German police. Why does the Club not investigate each matter for itself? The Club responded that it is notified about arrests and punishments which have been imposed by foreign police or courts. An immediate ban is applied if the Club considers it necessary but a ban may be reviewed if a criminal prosecution is later unsuccessful.

The Club was also asked why there is a lack of transparency with the process. Immediate bans, or later ones when criminal prosecutions are unsuccessful, seem unfair. The Club was asked why it has banned more fans than any other Premier League (“FAPL”) club. The Club responded that over 2,000 bans are memberships taken away due to touting and associated ticket misuse. The other main reason is when a complaint is made. In such circumstances the Club seeks to corroborate the complaint before deciding on a possible sanction. To put this in perspective though, 1.2 million fans come through the turnstiles in total. The Club considers that it doesn’t give bans without good reason.

Club grounds are private property and the Club is entitled to have a different standard of proof to the criminal courts so matters are decided on the balance of probability. There is an appeals procedure and a representative from the Football Supporters’ Federation (“FSF”) sat in on one at the Club.

The Club is considering publication of a more precise procedure such as length of time to make an appeal, the process to undertake etc.

Away fans at Stamford Bridge

One representative commented that Cardiff fans behaved unacceptably at the recent home match. Coins were thrown at home fans in the Shed Upper and stewards were alerted but didn’t act. Police should have intervened early. Cardiff fans were also goading someone in the East Stand who remonstrated and was thrown out of the ground.

The Club agreed that it sounds like unacceptable behaviour. If problems fester during a match they tend to get worse. There are sometimes complaints from home fans around the away section. The Club will review its security policy for big forthcoming matches and will consider more visible policing there.

The Club added that, for the last European home match, some seats were removed by the Club at the front but away fans still broke seats in other parts of the away end. There were 22 complaints throughout the stadium during November.

The Club was asked why away fans don't appear to be policed as heavily as our fans. The Club responded that this is not necessarily the case. Nine German fans were arrested outside the ground for the Schalke match and no home fans.

Blocked exits

The Club was asked if the same stewards who manage access to the ground before kick off are the ones on the pitch at the end of the match, as some exits don't appear to be stewarded at the end. The Club responded that there was an allegation in the East Stand recently when a steward was not at hand to assist but generally there are always sufficient stewards at exits. The Club will check the original complaint and ensure the relevant area has sufficient stewards to hand.

Policing at European away matches

The Club commented that it is aware of occasional poor treatment and organisational processes affecting our fans by other clubs sometimes, such as the recent Basel match. Issues are brought to UEFA's attention. There is a view abroad in some cases that British football fans still present a problem which can lead to heavy handed treatment. The Club sends an advance group to look at security matters for European matches who try and address any preconceptions and ensure arrangements are proportionate and reasonable. There is an FA adviser who writes a report on each away match so a database exists for all English teams to access regarding travel to a specific European club.

The Club will consider a supporter debrief facility in which fans attending could provide their comments on how an away European match was handled.

Persistent standing

The Club said it receives complaints about persistent standing as it is unfair on those who can't see as a consequence. It is clear what the standards are and what the local Council expects. The Club will contact fans in the Shed Lower and Matthew Harding Lower to emphasise the message that persistent standing isn't fair to other fans. The consequence could be bans for some supporters if they don't change their behaviour although this would be a last resort.

The Club was asked why individuals who persist can't be identified and written to at present. It appears to be a game for some fans to bait the authorities in the ground. The Club intends to contact individuals about this. The Club added that the Matthew Harding Lower is virtually all ST holders whilst the Shed Lower is more mixed.

Safe standing

The Club was asked if its stance has changed. The Club said it understood the importance of atmosphere and the manager has underlined this. However a change of law would be required first for safe standing.

The Club announced that it will meet with the FSF who will present its safe standing road show. The Club recognises from some individual fans and groups that there is a desire for the Club to consider the issues in more detail. A number of representatives welcomed this development. The Club added that the local authority still requires an all seating policy in the ground for now.

One supporter said that safe standing wouldn't help increase capacity; that areas with the best atmosphere at present are the ones most likely to have safe standing so the atmosphere wouldn't improve; and that the Club would be asked to reduce prices which is unreasonable and would lead a reduction in income. The Club said it can't comment on whether capacity would go up or down but that egress is still a key issue.

In response to a question, the Club commented that the German system is for seats to be locked in place in areas of a ground that have standing facilities.

(This following discussion took place later in the meeting on the same topic.)

It was commented by a representative that 14 out of 20 FAPL clubs are interested in the proposals. Bristol City is incorporating safe standing areas in its ground. The Club commented that there are a range of opinions in the FAPL but the Club is happy to look into it further. A change in legislation would be needed but in that situation the Club could introduce it. The Club considers that as long as everyone is safe in the stadium it is a possibility. The Club acknowledges that many groups feel strongly about it and there would have to be support from outside football as well for it to proceed. One representative commented that the law actually says that seats have to be offered at present not that they have to be used everywhere.

The Club was asked if it has considered the German model of club organisation and supporter experience. At the moment fans seem more removed from clubs in this country. The Club responded that it has looked at the German model in detail, particularly in Dortmund and Schalke. There are set rules about when standing and sitting applies throughout the Bundesliga. Where 10% standing is on offer to home fans the same has to apply to the away end. However there have been problems with standing three times there this season. There were a number of incidents at the Schalke/ Dortmund match recently. Problems were within the Dortmund end firstly then spread. Until this season there was a good record.

They put a lot of effort to put all the seats up or down. The process takes two days at Schalke as the seats have a lock when not in use so it's a slow process.

One supporter said it wasn't helpful to compare our stadia with German stadia. Also there would be more restricted view tickets due to the overhangs in the lower tiers at each end if there were safe standing. Also the issue, linked to atmosphere, is not whether a fan sits or not but whether it's considered a big match by fans. Another representative said that there is more expectation of success generally which is a problem for all big teams.

THOMAS COOK ("TC")

Jon Reeves commented he considered TC was usually competitive but agreed that it was not as competitive when small numbers of fans travel to away games. Low cost airlines are increasing their reach all the time as there is no flexibility to reserve tickets a lot of the time. As soon as the draw is made for a competition, individuals buy plane tickets. TC considers this to be a reducing market. Also smaller numbers of fans are travelling and this is common to other clubs who are regularly in European competition. It is no surprise that there is no competition from other companies for this football market as it is not big enough. TC sometimes has had to cancel trips rather than run them and make a loss.

For Steua Bucharest, the price would have been in the region of £370 for a day trip and the market is incredibly price sensitive. Those fans who do travel often like arranging their own travel plans anyway.

TC is more competitive for semi-finals and finals where it can charter planes.

It may be possible to increase the number of one night packages but again, the flights are difficult to book as TC can't have, say, 60 seats on reserve as the airline knows it can sell the flights themselves. Sometimes 50% of the flight price is air tax. TC is competing against someone booking immediately after the draw is made.

One supporter commented that it is cheaper for a couple to book through Expedia rather than as two individuals via TC. Jon replied that this is fine for individuals or couples booking but it is not so simple when making a block booking.

On request for a show of hands from one representative, the majority considered Gatwick to be an accessible airport. Jon added that TC has always considered Gatwick to be the most accessible airport for most Chelsea fans.

One supporter asked if it can be assumed that TC can't cater competitively for any group match in the future. Jon responded that this couldn't be assumed as there may be a big draw that attracts travelling fans. TC can't generally subsidise losses for these trips but where a trip is feasible it will try and announce details early. A commercial decision may then be made early as to whether to continue with that trip, to avoid annoying fans who have booked and avoid late cancellation.

TC can still try and obtain flight tickets on a sale or return basis. A decision is made within hours of a European draw by a committee which includes TC and Club officials. The Club can then announce to the c500 in the European away scheme what is on offer.

TICKETING

Loyalty points

One representative proposed that loyalty points should be recorded and applied from the past three seasons and also the effort going to a specific away game should be more significantly rewarded. Another representative commented that loyalty will always be a subjective issue.

The Club responded that it hasn't allocated additional points at short notice for some years. The Club has treated the World Club Championships and Super Cup as being closed group matches and therefore minimum or no loyalty points were allocated. However that will be changed if we get there again. The policy now is that European away games are five points, everything else has stayed as they were. All FA Cup games, Capital One matches and European group games are five points. All league matches are three points or one point.

As regards the longevity issue, the previous season is only looked at for sales in the first month of each season. Members can therefore earn points towards cup semi-finals, finals etc equally throughout a season which rewards attendance during that season.

One representative commented that for Spurs away, there was pressure to buy a Basel home match ticket in order to qualify with enough points for a Spurs ticket. The Club responded that if it hadn't differentiated at that point, all ST holders could have qualified for a Spurs away ticket.

The Club explained that, when an allocation is received, it calculates an upper grouping who are guaranteed a ticket. The loyalty points level then comes down in subjective stages to prioritise loyalty whilst guaranteeing a ticket as much as possible. Two seasons ago a system was introduced whereby if the member allocation doesn't sell out within a set time, ST holders are reintroduced as potential purchasers. This system can be crammed into a five day period such as for Arsenal in the FAPL.

One representative commented that away ticket scheme members sometimes don't qualify for a cup final ticket. The Club responded that the domestic and European schemes are separate and any member within one group will have the option to buy a cup final ticket domestically or for Europe, according to the relevant scheme, along with away ST holders. It is probably the case that the individual complainant was a member in the domestic scheme but didn't qualify for a European final ticket.

The Club was asked why more matches aren't sold on loyalty. The Club responded that not all fans can get to every game so it's ideal that some matches aren't loyalty based. It would create a closed shop system. It was suggested by one representative that Leicester away would be very popular if they go up. The Club repeated that it doesn't want too many matches to be sold on loyalty in order to maintain a balance of "open" and "closed" matches.

Sales timing

It was raised that four matches were sold at the same time at one point this season. This delays access to the purchasing area in the website. The Club responded that the queues tend to go quickly but sometimes fans will want to buy for more than one match at the same time.

TV deal money

One representative requested that a reduction in ticket prices be a priority from the new TV deal money. The Club responded that there are financial growth considerations and that Financial Fair Play must be complied with. However the Club acknowledges that fans' interests must be considered as well. The money won't come in for three years though.

Ticket pricing at away matches/ subsidised travel

Representatives commended the Club for away travel and tickets as well as maintaining affordability for European and cup matches at the Bridge. The Club said sometimes it gets ticket pricing wrong, in particular for European group games which can involve less popular opposition. The Club continues to consider these issues. It is aware that a lot of fans attend regularly which can be a big cost.

As regards travel, the Club has recognised that subsidising travel may not be the only solution. TV money is fantastic but the FAPL recognises that stadia have to be full to attract worldwide attention. It was commented by fans that the gesture of subsidising travel is appreciated but as fans are travelling from different places, the fairest system is to subsidise ticketing as a priority. The Club added that it could still consider subsidised travel as well and makes efforts to identify what can be done all the time.

The Club was asked about away ticket pricing. The Club responded that Everton had their fans' ticket prices reduced for at least one of their away matches last season and had to respond when at home to that team, which involved major reductions. There is great inconsistency in the way that away fan initiatives are being implemented and there is a desire for more uniformity amongst clubs going forward. The FAPL appears to consider the issue a priority now.

The Club was asked why our fans have to pay maximum prices at every away ground just because the team is successful. Even Manchester United now charges our fans far more for a ticket than in recent years.

The Club responded that it is aware of this issue being unfair to our fans generally. It has to consider whether ticket prices or travel should be subsidised for away matches. A sum has been committed to helping fans. We are taking about 3,000 fans to Sunderland which is a huge commitment for a midweek match. The Club is conscious of these efforts and Jose talks about the importance of fan support at board meetings. A level playing field for away ticket pricing is unlikely.

The Club was asked if it could clarify travel arrangements at an earlier date. It responded that it can only announce at the point that transport can be confirmed. The Club is already looking at away games until the end of the season. If the Club makes tentative announcements and then can't obtain the travel packages, fans will be annoyed and consider they've been misled.

Touting

The Club was asked why more effort isn't made to prevent touting. The same touts are in the same position around Fulham Broadway every week. The Club responded that it is aware it's the same touts around and treats it as a security issue. 2,000 memberships were suspended last year as a consequence of touting. Some were suspended today. There was an exclusion zone in the area last year but the touts moved to the other side of the bridge where a different council operates. The tout at the front may carry a small number of tickets but the Club wants to catch the tout with all the tickets behind the scenes.

The Club was asked why it takes a hard line against ST holders who don't sell for a profit. The Club said it differentiated between a private transaction in which it won't take action and a public transaction such as outside the ground or a Facebook sale. There is also a security issue. One representative said that some fans self-police twitter and Facebook and would not countenance someone making even a £1 profit. The tragedy is that some tickets are priced out by touts which is unfair. The Club acknowledged that it isn't always possible to differentiate between a public and private transaction in the case of someone trying to get rid of a friend's spare tickets in the street.

18-21 year old concessions

Two representatives asked if the Club would review the upper age limit for concessions to 21 as the increase appears to have stopped at 18. The Club will look at this in its review. The Club was also asked if it would consider concessions being available more widely around the stadium. It replied that again it would look at this but there are cost implications.

ATMOSPHERE

One representative wrote in that the loudspeakers weren't loud enough in the ground. The Club will check which area this applies to and review the issue.

Banners

One representative commented that four new flags are being introduced, one of which had the four European trophies. This may help improve atmosphere.

Singing leaders

One representative commented that in the US the clubs work with specific fans to encourage singing, perhaps with free tickets as a reward. The Club responded that it opened up the Shed End for ST holders over five years ago to encourage singers sitting together. The West Stand appears to be more of a problem.

The Club was asked if it consults American partners about atmosphere at sports matches there. It responded that in the US fans tend to stay quiet when their team has the ball and make more noise when the opposition has it which is the opposite of the UK. Acoustics were also reviewed

a few years ago and there is nothing more that the Club can do regarding that specific issue given our configuration.

Representation on the Forum

Earlier in the meeting, the Chair confirmed that the Club has asked the Forum to decide on the issue. One supporter commented that the Club has been slow to either implement or get rid of the rule. An announcement of a vote should have taken place earlier. The Club responded that it has decided that the Forum is in the best position to review this.

The Chair explained that the current rule is that no supporter organisation can have more than one board member on the Forum. The proposal is whether that rule should continue. This issue has arisen as the Chelsea Supporters Trust is an umbrella organisation for other organisations as well as individuals.

The Fancast representative said that there are only a small number who can represent it anyway as the programme has few regular presenters. If this rule is applied then only a tiny number could continue to represent the Fancast as some are on the Trust board.

One supporter said that independence of supporters is vital on the Forum so that groups don't dominate and it doesn't become a closed shop. The Club confirmed that the rule was particularly introduced so a "neutral" role such as the away season ticket holder is not also on one of the supporters' boards.

The Club commented that it was happy for the current rule to stay in place. The Forum works because it's not just a body for the same people to give their views all the time.

One fans' group representative said that independence could still be maintained without the rule. He added that those groups that fall under the Trust can still speak only for their individual organisations. It is just in name that three Forum representatives happen to be on the Trust board as well.

The Club said that the fans raised this issue so it has to find a solution. It is important that the Forum isn't just a platform for the same group views.

Another representative said that it is possible to be, for instance, an away season ticket holder and supporter group member and still represent fans well. In effect someone is being banned from being a representative in their own right. The Club said that there is no dispute about an individual being capable of representing fans well.

The Club reiterated that the rule could be left in place. The Chair asked for a vote on the rule staying in place and clarified that the current rule is that each supporters group will be restricted to one board member on the Forum and should not also be represented in other categories.

The vote was 11 in favour of staying the same and 4 against. One representative asked for clarification of the motion and the Chair explained again that the resolution was to keep the

current rule that a group can't have two board members. In the light of that no one asked to change their vote. One person confirmed their abstention.

Flags and scarves

One representative commented that this helps the atmosphere and such items are well received by fans. The Club responded that it gets mixed responses about these. One representative commented that a piece of plastic broke off from one of the clackers handed out at the end of last season.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Sunderland away

The Club was asked why the trains to Sunderland weren't stopping at Peterborough. The Club will look into this. It may be to do with the length of the train not fitting in the station, which has been a problem at times before for other rail journeys. Trains have stopped there twice this season for trips. The Club publicises when it can stop at other stations.

Another fan said they had problems booking travel on an iPad for that match. The Club said the booking system seems to be fine.

Email spam to Club addresses

One representative raised the point of receiving a lot of spam. The Club said it has looked at the issue and tried to tighten firewalls for representatives. Representatives' email addresses aren't available publicly. Club officials said they sometimes have problems with spam as well. Representatives said Trojans are still a problem. The Club will revisit this issue.

Empty seats for Ruben Kazan

The Club was asked why there were lots of empty seats in the West Lower for this match last season for a match that was supposedly full. The Club said that UEFA and other official groups had seats there which may not have been used.

Sale of drinks at the end of a match

The Club asked why water isn't sold on the way out of a game. It responded that both main gates have sales points. The Club will provide a more detailed response next time.

The Club was asked if we could replicate what is on offer at Schalke away, where there were beer sales points outside the stadium. This would reduce the last minute rush to the ground. The Club will look into this but for Champions League matches alcohol can't be sold in the parameters.

Supporter club merchandise

The Club was asked if the quality can be improved especially as Adidas are official partners. Supporters would be prepared to pay more for a good product. It would be useful if supporters clubs are allowed to brand their own items more. There could be a basic design with Club and Adidas logos for the supporter club to add their own crest. The Club responded that the quality should still be good. The numbers ordered are small though for each supporters club. The Club looked at this in the supporter clubs meeting and will review this matter further.

Player acknowledgement of fans

Further to a comment about the Basel away match, the Club will remind players to acknowledge away fans at the end of a match.

(The meeting ended at 1.15pm.)