

Fans Forum Minutes – 15 October 2015

1. Attendances/apologies

Attending: Katrien Meire, Mick Everett, Felicity Waller (head of commercial), David Joyes, Mandy Anderson-Myers, Tony, Keohane, Olly Groome, Lisa Squires, Darren Kent, Jack O'Sullivan, Ian Wallis, Craig Parrett, Christine Lawrie, Pete Catlin, Syd Cheeswright, Alex Clarke, Dave Wood, Keith Blair

Apologies: Jean Huelin, Vernon Roper, Matt Ring, John Bennett

2. Fans Forum

a. Role within the club/remit

CP asked what the remit of the FF is. Is it more than just the matchday experience as an overseas supporter has asked whether those overseas have any role. KM said that feedback on what happens during match days is useful but it is not limited to that. One of the main roles of the FF is to discuss getting everyone involved in where the club is going, and guide as to where the club can grow.

b. Fans Forum Finances

IW has produced a summary of the bank account. Increase in cost due to new catering arrangements at end of season dinner. Just over £6,000 in the bank, no reason to spend it immediately but it was suggested that £1,000 be donated to the museum, and this was agreed.

c. Player Of The Year Dinner

IW asked if there had been any thoughts about next year? KM would like to change format and make it on last match day. Will need FF involvement. IW taken aback by comments last time, spoken to a number of supporters, they like it the way it is. It is a supporters event, but needs club support. TF pointed out that if it is not held on Sunday, hard for disabled supporters. KM idea is that last game would be a celebration, will organise events in lounges. CP said that we have had an excellent event recently, no need to change. KM felt that in the last two seasons that last game is last time for certain players who will leave. Could do both events.

3. Organisation Structure

SC asked when we will get the information about those in senior management positions. KM said that the info is on website and in programme.

4. Travel

a. Travel Guides for away supporters

SC said that supporters at away matches are very important and the club should encourage it. However, he was concerned that certain delays in publishing travel guides on the website, was costing away (rail travel) supporters money. For example, SC presented the first page of the Away Fans Guide for the match at Wolves on Saturday 29th August, but it had only been “posted” the previous day, which is not helpful for forward planning.

OG said that information has always been published the day before. People probably look elsewhere other than the official site. Info provided by SC was included. Cannot do it too far in advance. During the discussion, SC reminded OG of the statement by KM during the meeting on 8 July that SC had agreed to produce rail travel information for next four games, including how to get from station to ground and this will be published online. SC thought that this meant that the information would be published online earlier. OG said that there had been a misunderstanding, as it was not agreed.

b. CARTG Rail Travel

SC reported two examples concerning heavily discounted ‘Advance Purchase’ (AP) fare tickets issued on a very small percentage basis by some train operators. The price increases as the allocated quota is sold. AP tickets bought to York for Middlesbrough on 01 October cost £38.50 in each direction. The total adult fare to Middlesbrough is £90 return.

Due to the long lead time for AP tickets, those required for Burnley (on 19 December) were purchased on 3 October, 11 weeks in advance at a cost of £23.75 return. SC said that the lower cost for AP tickets means that such tickets should be communicated well in advance.

TF said there is a fans away travel page on Facebook. ME asked SC to clarify his suggestion. SC said that we should keep to the 4 game plan, and publish cheap fares online early. KM asked whether we can create a link to allow these tickets to be purchased online. MA said that the club can tweet when fares become available and OG said we can advertise what SC does and ask this who are interested to get in contact. CP suggested an email circulation list for SC to use. MA asked SC to give her a calendar of key dates regarding train tickets that can be published. SC said that he did not wish to use emails to that extent. SC will post a letter with full details of his suggestions, and ME said that the club will address internally.

c. Valley Away coaches

IW went on coach - found it alarming. Still at Charlton at 3:15 and had to get to Nottingham. We got there 20 minutes from kick off. MA said that the route was

planned by DJ coaches. Aim to arrive an hour before. DJ should be aware of any roadworks or incidents. Cannot get to the ground too early. If they do not perform, strong feedback is given.

CL - for first few away games, people were told that we did not know if we were running coaches. MA explained that the coach contract had to go out to tender, this was quite late, and DJ Coaches were the best. Everything was new at the start of the season but no longer an issue.

PC asked whether valley express could be an option on the phone system? MA said that she will change the menu to include it.

5. Tickets

a. Restricted sale of away tickets

CP had been asked to raise whether we should restrict to one per person after the problems at Crystal Palace? ME said that 50% of those arrested were season ticket holders, and it is counter productive to attract new supporters if we restrict any more. Two is not excessive. It was agreed that two is appropriate.

b. Electronic Ticketing system

AC had received positive feedback about the new system. Still some teething problems, but may be due to people getting used to it. IW thought it has worked well. CL said that some peoples' tickets work one week but not the next. MA explained that some people came to an under 21 game and as the system was set up for Fulham, it thought that credit had been used. No need to tap in for an under 21 game. Damage to cards will mean they won't work. Minor issues being rectified as we go.

It was asked whether you can buy valley express online? MA said they are working on it.

Is there any way to change a password online? Yes, in My Account.

It was reported that buying more than one ticket is very time consuming as each individuals' details have to be inputted. MA said that this is just the first time. After that, the system will associate people with you.

c. Season tickets

Final figure - 10,115. The final forfeit footage is available and it may be released. It was not clear why this had not yet been done. Still one of the cheapest around.

Looking at ways to increase all the time. Will be half season tickets available. Of the 10,000, 1,400 are new.

CL asked if the database is now correct? MA said that any issues have been remedied and data has been tidied up. The issue is where season ticket holders create multiple profiles. TF said that disabled supporters need double entries for their carer. MA said that is not a problem, as the issue is where an individual is added twice as they forgot a password for example.

6. Matchday Experience

a. Big Screen

PC has had a lot of feedback. Better quality, main gripe is that the team lineups are missed. TK said they just waiting for a new piece of software. PC thought that there was no need to show game on the screen when it's on the pitch. TK said that people like to see the game on the screen but CL said that nobody now looks at the screen. TK has received good feedback about replays, and this was agreed. CP suggested lineups be showed and then replays when there is a significant moment. KM has also had complaints about lineups, working on it. AC said that font size is very small and TK said they are onto it.

b. PA system

AC said that sound in north stand is almost inaudible. ME said that the sound system is checked regularly, and it depends on how full the stand is. Local authority checked the sound in the quadrant, and said it was fine. One may say it's too loud, another may say it's too quiet. TF said distortion is more of a problem.

c. Programmes and Programme Sellers

IW said he has been critical, but spot on now. MA asked whether they can be heard? PC said that the seller on Ramsom Walk has always sold out. MA said that there are 3 sellers there now, and she has a runner who replenishes supplies if sold out.

CL has had some complaints about content - too many photographs and not enough text. OG said that they have 4 page feature at the back, but good text on other pages. Also some mistakes, such as missing last fixture. IW said that black on red is hard to read and SC said that white on grey is also difficult.

d. East Stand Catering

IW thought catering was going to improve, but now back to how it used to be. DK said they are reviewing the range, and added the real ale bar. IW said that the outside companies providing food outside the stand and now all disappeared for

health and safety reasons which is understandable. However, he thought some outlets would be returning. DK said real ales are back. Pulled pork will also return along with more options.

It was commented that food and drink are very expensive. DK said they try to keep it competitive.

7. Miscellaneous issues

a. Attracting the South East to Charlton

CP had been asked to ensure club is aware of the value of valley express. DW said there is often a waiting list, and people won't come back if there is not availability. If people want to come on an as hoc basis, it's very difficult. MA said Sue Townsend is given an allocation of spaces from Kent and can be provided with additional. Sue has never spoken to MA about this issue. Should be a ticket office issue, but people are added to a waiting list and cannot therefore book match tickets. MA said that the club already subsidises valley express, so has to make a profit. It was pointed out that its value is more than just the coach service as it brings people to the ground.

There seems to have been no advertising of promotions such as kids for a £1, football for a fiver. MA said this will be done and Wolves is kids for a quid.

b. Hastings and Bexhill Branch issues

CP said that certain issues had been raised by JB, and asked JB to email Mandy with details of issues faced by its members.

c. Minute Of Silence/Clapping

IW said that this is an old issue. Raised it four or five years ago, seems to be inconsistent. Club representatives are not here, supporters are. Didn't do one for John Hewie, Fred Lucas or Bob Curtis but do for unconnected people. Should be a proper way to decide who should get a tribute. Significant former players? Only consistent if a sub committee, perhaps through museum. KM said that Matt Baker is also interested. ME said we do a tribute in January. Certain tributes are instructed from the FA or football league - eg. Gary Speed. Have no option. OG has a policy used by Bolton, and we can base it upon that.

d. Health and safety

CL reported that at start of season when the weather was hot, people in east stand had no access to water after half time. All catering outlets were shut, no medical help. DK said there are solutions, can add water sellers.

TF said that ambient disabled supporters in west stand used to use lifts, but now a different lift. ME is looking into it, seeing what we can do. Have to consider safety issues in the event of an evacuation, and operational issues.

DW asked about handrails in east stand but ME said that the local authority said no need for handrails. The poor quality of hand dryers was also raised.

8. Any other business

Any supporters entitled to compensation following the Bournemouth game should email MA. It was believed that all have now been contacted.

Target Committees. ME said they have been speaking internally about resurrecting target 10,000/target 40,000 committees (as they used to be called). Would like to have a working group to discuss ideas and put them into action. If any FF members or others are interested, they should email Mick.everett@cafc.co.UK. In particular, ME said that the north lower is often not full and part of remit is to fill that - perhaps by making it a season ticket deal, perhaps make it the cheapest.

SC asked how many season ticket holders are no shows. MA said there are about 3,000 per game on average. Gates announced are all tickets that have been issued.

Valley Gold. DG said that Valley Gold is not mentioned in programme and the fact that VG now has a box at the ground should be marketed as a perk to non members. JOS said it has been communicated to members that we have the box.

CL asked whether Bartrams is shut every Thursday lunchtime as it causes difficulties for the reminiscence group. TK said that it is and asked whether the group could move to a Wednesday. CL will ask the group.

Feedback on new mascots? LS - no negative feedback. Less interaction so far, but they are becoming more interactive.

Gladys Dutton - died last month. She was the president of the west country branch for a time, and ME was thanked for arranging flowers from the club.

Next meeting 28 January.