

Charlton Athletic Fans' Forum – Thursday, September 16th 2021

Chair

LB – Lucy Bishop – Fan Adviser

Fan representatives

HA – Heather Alderson – Charlton Athletic Supporters Trust, TF – Tony Farrell – Charlton Athletic Disabled Supporters Association, CL – Christine Lawrie – Reminiscence Group, BR – Bernie Razzell – City Addicks, PS – Peter Smith – East Kent Addicks, IW – Ian Wallis – Bromley Addicks, JW – Jon Whitfield – Fans4Fans

Club

TS – Thomas Sandgaard – Owner, CEO, WM – Wayne Mumford – Commercial Director, GR – Ged Roddy – Technical Director, TR – Tom Rubashow – Head of Communications, ME – Mick Everett – Head of Matchday Operations, KP – Kishan Parmar – Facilities and Health & Safety Manager

Additional

RM – Dr Raelynn Maloney, KH – Kyle Henderson

Apologies

DW – David Wood – CASC West Country Branch, CH – Clive Harris – Armed Forces Addicks, RH – Rob Harris – Proud Valiants, ST – Sue Townsend – Maidstone Supporters Group

Topic	Raised by
Introduction <ul style="list-style-type: none">• LB welcomed everyone and introduced all involved. She referenced the meeting was the first meeting in two years and introduced TS• TS thanked those for attending. He said it has been an interesting year, with Covid and no fans in the stadium it has been an interesting experience taking over a club close to going into administration and a squad that had been decimated in order to pay bills. He said we spent an entire season getting through it and working with the squad we had and he feels that now we have, on the football side, a starting point, a platform where we are beginning to invest in players for the long term. He said the club have added depth to the squad to put the club in a position to challenge other teams and hopefully end up getting promoted. He said it has been a challenge during Covid and because of how things were run before off the pitch. He said he's working with the leadership team to get everything working and become a functional club again. He said he's integrated the women's team back under the Charlton umbrella• He said he was pleased with the initiative to introduce a new recruiting system which he feels in the years to come will be very helpful to stay competitive and do much smarter recruiting than other teams, even up to the top level of the Premier League• He said it has been exciting year but that now, after 12 months, he can say he's getting started. He said it has been an exciting introduction to English football and Charlton Athletic in particular and that he appreciates that the fans are the biggest asset Charlton has and that it is important to be transparent and have two-way dialogue with supporters. He said he felt that the dialogue was off to a good start and that he will look to continue with that communication	Ongoing
Football <ul style="list-style-type: none">• CL thanked TS for saving the club. She said that the recruitment has been slow, with positions not covered. She asked if the recruitment	CL and DW

incorporating analytics was the way to go? She said the football has been dreadful and asked what has gone wrong and why

- TS said the club added players towards the end of the transfer window and he was pleased with what he saw against Crewe Alexandra. He said he agreed the first half against Cheltenham was dreadful. He said we now have a squad that in all positions is a minimum the same quality as last season and in quite a few cases better, with one addition, that we now have depth in the squad. He said in every position we have good quality cover. He said his perception is that we have got stronger
- GR said that for the last three-four seasons because of the way the club was owned and run, the club was bringing in free transfers and players on loan. He said every pre-season, the club has lived through a cycle of short term contracts. He said what TS has brought to the club is that he's allowed us to create a stable platform for the future. He said for the first time in many years we've been able to bring players in on long-term contracts. He said we had the oldest squad in the league last year and that we've reduced the age profile of the squad. He said that's been possible because TS has invested. He said the club is still in a process where the team is a work in progress. He said we'll have to stick together and let's see where we are after 12 games and then we'll have a sense of what's working and what's not working. He said where we got to after the window finally closed was a good place
- He said the window was tough, he said the league is more competitive than it has ever been. He said clubs are spending a lot and what Charlton want to do is build a stable club that will be here for the long term which is what we'll try to do moving forward
- He said we watch training and there is a really good vibe and atmosphere. He said the manager has a plan and is working on it every day. He said we want to see attractive football and we want to win games. He said it may take a bit of time but bear with us as things are moving in the right direction
- TS said last season is a good example. He said although we nearly qualified for playoffs, we had a thin squad. He said when key players were out injured, we lost games and when they came back we were winning games. He said we have depth in the squad now which makes us confident that we'll do better than last season. He said this is not only about being patient but believing in the systems and the better recruitment. He said we are literally building for the future
- GR said analytics are the future. He said what we are putting in place are systems that mirror what Premier League clubs are utilizing. He said within the structure at the sharp point of process, Steve Gallen [Director of Football], is out there working with agents, with other clubs, doing the leg work that you need to have. He said we need the modern systems and that we use the data to verify the work SG and GR are doing. He said we have a scouting structure now that when TS arrived had been decimated. He said we didn't have people going to watch games or the opposition. He said we've had to build back in systems and processes. He said the sad thing was that the club was hollowed out from the inside – people would come to The Valley, and see this is great club with a great see fanbase, but actually there was nobody scouting. He said we've had to build infrastructure back in. He said we have eyeballs on players and a database

<p>of thousands of players we can analyse through the data and we have an asset in SG and his team to go and negotiate the deals. TS added SG is one of the best negotiators he's ever met</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TS said the club interview the players to get the right personalities. He said compared to a year ago we are in the driver's seat to get the players in and know how they fit into our playing style. He said that's how the club have been able to build more depth in the squad and create a coherent team to play together • BR said it was really good to see the senior leadership team at the Fans' Forum as that hasn't happened recently. He said the strategy of sustainability resonates with Charlton fans but he wonders if there is room for pragmatism in the strategy. He said that Lee Bowyer got us into the Championship with a very good team. He said he hated the concept of loan players a few years ago because it is short term but he said it was our way of accessing a higher quality player within our budget. He said he didn't feel we've replaced some of the loans from last year. He said it looks like last year's squad was better in terms of first XI than this year • TS said there is a right place and right time for loan players at any club, any level. He said in order to break the cycle and still have a strong team, he had to spend more to invest in young players which is why he spent more money on the squad than last season. He used Charlie Kirk as an example, saying he believes before not too long he will be a very good replacement for Liam Millar. He said there are several other players like that. He said it may not have been in the last game we played but he can see throughout the season and seasons to come we have someone that can at least be playing at that level and then higher as the club progresses. He said we managed to bring in seasoned players with Championship and Premier League experience and mixed with young talented players, that we managed to spend our money a little differently but more consistently in terms of playing style, than some of the big spending teams. He said we have invested in younger talent on longer contracts and getting players with significant experience and quality to support that • He said Nigel Adkins is a huge asset to the club, he said the atmosphere he is able to create and sustain on the training ground to new players is excellent. He said he believes that will manifest throughout this season and seasons to come with people happy and motivated going to training and going into games. He said there are kinks to work out, which they are aware of, but that the foundation is in place. He said everyone is working hard behind the scenes to make sure that we'll see results • LB said that DW had submitted a question about if the salary cap still stands • TR explained that the question had been passed on to the club's Director of Finance Emma Parker, who confirmed that the salary cap rules in place last season were overturned in early February following an arbitration between the PFA and EFL. The restrictions have reverted back to where they were previously – Salary Cost Management Protocol – where club's player expenditure has to be a maximum of 60% of player turnover* • TS said this had resulted in the club spending around 50% more than they did last season. He said this is helpful for a club like Charlton with ambition and we are very happy the rules have changed 	
<p>Catering</p>	<p>All</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IW asked if the food and drinks outlets are still franchised out. The club confirmed this was the case. He said he had to wait 20 minutes for chips and that the staff didn't know what a lager shandy was. TS said the service was a big point for him. WM said getting staff has been difficult and the club were worried we wouldn't have enough staff for the opening game. He said the club know the caterers have to improve. He said the caterers want to improve too and that he would arrange meetings ahead of the Portsmouth and Bolton Wanderers games for supporter representatives to meet the caterers and talk through their main concerns. IW said the quality of food is much better than previous caterers. JW said the quality of Bovril is poor and that low quality products will impact on revenue • BR said we discuss this item every year and nothing changes. TS said it will change, it isn't optional, it's not a maybe, it may take a bit of time. WM said he's been here a year but Sheffield Wednesday was his first proper game with fans. He said we're just getting started and that the club are reviewing everything in the process including the contracts. He said the club want to make it a better, simpler experience. He said it is similar from a non-footballing side to the footballing side, he said the club has been working on bare threads for the last four-five years and things will get better • HA said let's not just make it less bad and cited Brighton and Hove Albion as an example of good practice. WM said Thomas will not accept the supporters not feeling good about this club • TS said it is about experience, he said it is about making it as good an experience as possible. He said simplicity will be key. He said he is building a better experience, not only the football, but the rest of the matchday. He said we are definitely listening as we want to attack the important areas first • Immediate action: WM to coordinate supporter meeting with caterers • TF praised the new catering company who had aided the club's disabled supporters and as appreciation to the disabled supporters, their first orders this season were free • KH said the club would be rolling out secret shoppers and that the fan feedback was really useful 	
<p>Stadium maintenance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CL said areas of the stadium were filthy and seats were coming off their mountings. KP confirmed that fans can email info@cafc.co.uk to report areas directly impacted. He said there is a new cleaning contract in place and that cleaning is getting better and better 	CL
<p>Seat numbers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PS said seat numbers weren't visible on a lot of seats. KP said there are new stickers for the seating coming in. Before the Portsmouth game, the new West Lower numbers will be put on and the team will be going through the stadium stand by stand. He said the new stickers are better than the previous ones, so shouldn't come off as easily 	PS
<p>Hand dryers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RH said some of the hand dryers weren't effective. KP said the team would be going round each of the toilet facilities, checking effectiveness. Any not performing will be replaced by better quality hand dryers 	CL
<p>Cashless stadium</p>	HA

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HA said people do see a cashless stadium as a way of the world, so there isn't opposition to it especially since Covid. She asked what could be done for people who can't have bank cards or phones to pay • PS said at his granddaughter's school they used a pre-loaded cash card. WM said a cash card is a great idea. He said being cashless does speed up service which is crucial. He said that some have said there are no receipts and supporters can't see what they are spending – he said he would speak to the caterers on that • CL said it is important not to sideline older fans and to make sure we can cater. She said not doing Valley Gold jackpot tickets on the matchday meant she wasn't buying one • Immediate action: WM to check with VG on return to in-person purchase 	
<p>Disabled supporters</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TF said he'd had long list of questions from supporters and 90% had been dealt with • He asked what the situation was with WiFi. TS said it is something the club looked at. He said it is expensive and complicated and with everything else going on the club hasn't made a decision on it. He said it is something that will be reviewed during the season • TF said there is a group in Scotland - the Disability, Inclusion and Loneliness Project who organize a buddy arrangement. Anyone needs to know any more about it – he can give them more detail • Immediate action: TR said the club would look to do a story on the club website 	TF
<p>Safe Standing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JW asked if there are any plans to sort safe standing • TS said this is something the club have been discussing. ME said in the last year six or seven big clubs have all agreed to do this. He said the club are looking to see how it all pans out. He said issues include overcrowding and potentially having to offer the same for the opposition. He said one club spent £250,000 putting it in and supporters now want cheaper season tickets, meaning clubs might make losses on it. TS said the club will look at what they can learn from experiences other teams are implementing. He said that he is hopeful that towards the end of the season that we'll be able to have a good discussion about topic. He said it is of interest to fans, so the club need to take it seriously and see if the right thing for Charlton and if we do what the timeline of it is 	JW
<p>Sanitary products</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RH submitted a question about making sanitary products available in the women's toilets. KP said the club are looking into different options that are out there. He said that where free sanitary products are offered, this is often abused and where products are available for purchase, there can be issues with poor quality products. He said sanitary products will be offered and the club are just looking at how it will be implemented 	RH
<p>Scope and remit of Fans' Forum</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HA said the club is moving in the right direction and that other clubs aren't getting this kind of dialogue. She said there is an opportunity now to have best structured dialogue in the league should we choose to do it • TR said LB has consulted with supporters and reviewed the structure of the FF and will continue to review as part of her role as Fan Adviser • TS said this is the restart of the process of it and we'll see how it develops 	HA

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HA said fan experience at the heart of it is what you always want to have your finger on the pulse of. PS said it is important the supporter reps feed back to members to make people feel part of it • BR said he had reservations around the Fan Adviser being unpaid. He said the value of the group is improving fan experience. He said they are here to provide feedback and help with improvement • BR said he was frustrated there was no consultation on the supporter group affiliation. TR said an important part of it was bringing together the international fan groups, and with the increased international fan groups with more members, it has helped the club communicate with them and given them an opportunity to talk amongst themselves, which has helped the international CharltonTV numbers. BR felt supporters should have been consulted. PS said the affiliation made his group feel more part of the club. WM said he would follow up with BR • TF said there is still a lack of diversity on the Fans’ Forum. WM said he agreed, the club want to engage more with the local community and younger people from diverse backgrounds. TR said the Youth Advisory Group has been set up and they are set to meet every month. He said there is still a gap. TR said a member of the Youth Advisory Group would be invited to future meetings • BR said the club need to get into schools and local football clubs. GR said this is a topic the club are discussing. He said we are looking at how we get into schools and sports clubs from a football side and a fanbase side. He said a lot of the points raised tonight are similar to what are being discussed at the club. He said the club want a full stadium and a noisy stadium and that will help the team • JW said CACT run the Youth Service in Greenwich and that the discussion is taking place about how we can get more local people in. TS said it obviously isn’t working well enough and we, as a club, need to take the initiative. He said the Trust does a great job supporting the community but we, as a club, need more traction out in the community and not all of that comes through the community trust. JW offered his services to help in doing that. WM said he’s working with the trust and the council. He said his challenge to the trust is that they have to help us a lot more in terms of talking about football. He said hopefully over the next few months things will start to happen. He said TS picked up that we’re giving tickets to schools but not for gold games even though we aren’t selling out. He said they are the best games, so you want the kids coming to see the games. WM said we’re going to start simplifying things. WM said that still in the local area people don’t know what the Charlton badge is which we will work on • BR said the club are pricing people out of the market. He said the tiering of season tickets and seat prices doesn’t make sense. TS said there is a very clear strategy moving forwards – the first order of business to fill the stadium. Long term that will turn into more revenue. It might be revenue neutral or even at a small cost with more people coming in but the first order of business is fill the stadium, then we figure the rest out to make it more financially viable – it is not the other way around, the way it has been done before. BR said if you get the experience right and the price right, you’ll get bums on seats and it will multiply 	
Matchday programme	IW

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IW said there was no teamsheet or programme for the Crawley Town game in the Papa John's Trophy. TR said the teamsheet will be added to the match report and will be for future Papa John's Trophy games, with teamsheets also left available for supporters to pick-up upon entry to the stadium • CL praised the Valley Review this season. TR said he would pass on the feedback to Valley Review editor Benjy Nurick • IW praised the quality of the handbook. TR said he would pass on the feedback to the editor Olly Groome 	
<p>Season tickets/Early-bird discount</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PS asked if restrictions on discount vouchers in the club shop were just around the Portsmouth game. WM said the discounts were seen as a gift to the fans. He said he's since looked into the details and it is too complicated. He said the message was wrong and the club apologise for that. He said it was done with good intent to say thank you and welcome back supporters. He said it backfired as the club didn't deliver the message well enough. WM said he would look to see if the club shop discount could be extended 	PS
<p>Player appearance request</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PS asked who to contact for player appearance requests. TR said Dan Burke, who looks after fan engagement, is the point of contact for player appearance request. TR will copy him in on an email to supporter representatives 	PS
<p>Email response</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JW said he hadn't had a response from emailing info@cafc.co.uk • TR said he would follow up on this. He said the generic emails have been taken over by a member of staff in the last fortnight, so shouldn't be an issue moving forwards • JW said he wanted to talk about a mental health initiative. TR, said he would pick-up with JW after the meeting 	JW
<p>U23s reporting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JW said that for an U23s game against Wigan there wasn't information about the game. He asked if we champion things when are academy are successful but not when they aren't • TR said the club's coverage of the academy is good and includes match reports and interviews and he's speaking with Academy Manager Steve Avory about what we can continue to cover around the academy. He said the issue for Monday's game against Wigan was down to staff illness in the communications team and it was a one-off • PS said more needed to be communicated about attending the U23s game against Sheffield Wednesday on Friday, TR said the club would put out information on it 	JW
<p>Player of the Year dinner</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IW explained the history of the Player of the Year dinner. WM said he would meet with IW to discuss next steps on the dinner. IW said there is a Women's Player of the Year trophy board that can go up at the club. The club said they were happy for this to happen 	IW
<p>EDI</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HA said the club have a brilliant history around equality, diversity and inclusion 	HA

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • She asked if people are responding to the EDI survey. TR said the club has received a really good response to the survey • She said some supporters are still booing the knee and asked what can the club do about that. ME said that it isn't illegal to boo the knee but the club are focussing on education around why the players are taking the knee • TR said the club would continue to monitor the situation and potentially coincide communication around the announcement of the club's new EDI strategy 	
<p>Supporters financially supporting the club</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HA said the fans want to support the club. She asked if now is the time for the owner, fans and club to join together with the objective of 27,000 fans in the stadium. She said there should be a shared objective and fans need to feel part of something. JW said the supporters feel ownership of the club and play their part. He said when 27,000 people are in the stadium, The Valley is something to behold. IW said whatever resource the club need, it is out there in the fanbase. ME said the original target groups worked well with supporters and club staff working together • TS said he was excited to hear the way people are talking about this. He said it is the biggest strategic issue – filling The Valley is so important for the club and can play back into the team's performance • TS said he is open to ideas as the priority is filling the stadium, even if it doesn't work revenue wise initially • IW said TS has an army of people behind him • LB said she would look to coordinate a separate meeting to bring the campaign together 	HA, JW
<p>Ticket office opening hours</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CL said the ticketing office hours weren't clear and didn't make sense. WM agreed and said the hours would be simplified 	CL
<p>Valley Express/Away coaches</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IW had been contacted asking if he could make sure the club go in the right direction on coaches • WM said he had been working on coaches with Rick Everitt and he liked hearing about how the fans helped market the coaches. He said some changes were implemented for Wycombe on the back of his meetings and further coach travel improvements will be made 	IW
<p>Loyalty points</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IW said he tried purchasing for a friend but the ticket office member of staff didn't input the loyalty points correctly • TR said he would pick up with the Ticket Office Manager 	IW
<p>Season ticket movement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PS said some fans want to move season tickets because they are worried about Covid • ME said there was a section for supporters concerned about Covid, where masks have to be worn and that the club had good feedback on it 	PS
<p>Valley Gold</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HA said Valley Gold is precious to the club. She said there is a confusion of Valley Gold vs. membership. She said the babies and dog memberships are great, they feel really Charlton, but the adult membership was confusing. WM said the club want to simplify it and are looking at the membership. He said the club are looking to work very closely with Valley Gold 	HA

TS thanked everyone and was pleased there is a joint focus on filling the stadium	
CL asked that Steve Clarke, who attended many Fans' Forum on behalf of Charlton Athletic Supporters Trust, be remembered in the notes, following his passing last year	CL
Date for next Fan's Forum <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thursday, December 9th 	Club

*Club's Player Related Expenditure (Permanent Over 21 contracted players, plus Loan players (any age) shall not exceed the sum of:

1.2.1 60% of the Club's Relevant Turnover for the Reporting Period, plus

1.2.2 100% of the club's Football Fortune Income (Actual transfer fees received in period, Cup/Trophy prize money, Parachute money etc) for the Reporting Period.