CHELSEA PITCH OWNERS

UK Company Number: 02800546
Director Meeting - May 2025

Date: 02.05.25
Time: 11:00am BST
Location: Stamford Bridge, Fulham Road, London SW6 1HS, England
Attendees: Chris Isitt, Etienne Trevayne, Ginette Gower, Mark Eyre, Miriam Greenwood, Paul Bufton, Sean Jones
Apologies: Harry Richards

I. Acceptance of Previous Minutes

The minutes from the previous meeting were accepted as an accurate record.

II. Chairman's Report

The Chairman's report was brief due to limited significant developments. A key topic of discussion included a summary of recent developments regarding the CPO's new logo. The consensus remains that the company shouldn't sign any agreement with Chelsea FC regarding the CPO's new logo and its use, as the CPO logo is already registered and no objections have been raised. It was decided that a letter affirming the company's position, as previously communicated, is sufficient. A disclaimer will be added to the company website to clarify that merchandise isn't associated with the football club. The board believes further negotiation is unnecessary and that the issue should be considered closed.

III. Stadium Redevelopment and Relocation

Discussions regarding the football club's stadium redevelopment or potential relocation highlighted several points:

Seat Relocation Concerns: Concerns were raised about the potential displacement of long=term season ticket holders in a new stadium to priories higher-paying customers. The impact on the current seat holders during any relocation was also discussed, with the fear that they'll be relegated to less desirable seats.

Uncertainty within Ownership: Concerns were raised about the lack of unanimity within the ownership group on a way forward, despite claims of "widespread" or "unanimous" backing.

Shareholder Influence: It was noted that shareholders who oppose relocation are more vocal and willing to purchase shares, whilst those in favour are less inclined to buy shares.

Timeline and Cost Projections: The mention of a "seven-year" timeline for a new build and the associated costs (up to a billion for land and 2-3 billion for the stadium) raised questions about the financial viability and logic of such a move, given the club's current financial situation and the limited return on investment for similar ventures by other clubs.

Football Regulator: Updates on the new football regulator suggested a more rapid progression than previously perceived.

Maximising Revenue per Visitor: The club's focus for any redevelopment is to maximise income per visitor rather than significantly increase stadium capacity. This was exemplified by the sale of dugout club seats at high prices, displacing long-standing season ticket holders. Concerns were raised about the impact on traditional fans and the ethics of this approach.

Match Day Presentation Issues: Frustration was expressed regarding the inability of pitch owners to access the pitch, while paid groups are allowed to walk across it for photographs, highlighting a disconnect in prioritising revenue over traditional fan engagement.

IV. Digital Ticketing

The implementation of digital ticketing was discussed, including challenges and potential issues:

Forum Discussion: A forum was planned to discuss digital ticketing, despite concerns that the decision to implement it had already been made.

Transfer Issues: An anecdote highlighted potential problems with digital tickets, where a single ticket was unintentionally duplicated on multiple phones.

Accessibility: Difficulties in downloading tickets and the lack of a paper ticket option were noted as potential issues for some fans.

V. Pitch Presentations

The success of recent pitch presentations, particularly with the surprise appearance of a former player, was noted. However, challenges remain:

Low Referral Rate: Only a small number of attendees have committed to booking for the next season.

Incentives: The potential inclusion of guaranteed tickets and tours to increase bookings was discussed.

Cobham Training Days: The idea of open training days at Cobham was deemed unlikely to be successful.

Re-launch: A re-launch of pitch presentations for the next season is planned, focusing on making it the best experience possible to maximise sales. Testimonials from positive attendee experiences will be sought for the website.

VI. Merchandise Sales Performance

Merchandise sales were reviewed, with the following key points:

Income: £7,000 in income was generated, including AGM sales.

Seasonality: Sales peaked in December for Christmas and significantly declined in March.

Email Impact: Email communication was identified as having a strong positive impact on sales.

Current Sales: Current orders total approximately £548.

Losses: The operation is currently operating at a loss of £1,500, attributed to setup fees and stock investment.

SKU Efficiency: A review of product performance is needed to focus on best-selling items.

Marketing Opportunities: Upcoming events like Father's Day (June 15th) and the start of the season were identified as opportunities to boost sales. A Father's Day promotion combining merchandise and shares, potentially with a free pin badge for a £50 spend, was proposed and will be actioned soon. Other seasonal opportunities like Mother's Day and Halloween were also suggested for future consideration.

Club World Cup & US Tour: Potential marketing opportunities related to the Club World Cup and US tour were mentioned.

VII. Digital Content and Social Media

The company's performance on social media, particularly TikTok, was discussed:

TikTok Success: Two videos, including one featuring a board member, went "semi-viral" on TikTok, gaining significant views (15,000 in an hour for one) and continuing to attract followers (60 new followers recently). This success is attributed to original content from the AGM.

Content Need: There's a clear need for more engaging content like the FAQ videos and VoxPops, as current resources are limited.

Facebook Challenges: Facebook was noted as a difficult and oversaturated market, with the company starting from scratch and struggling to gain traction (just hit triple-digit followers).

Content Strategy Options:

- Option 1 (Professional Filming): Dedicate a day to film Q&A and FAQ content with a videographer (estimated £300/day). This maintains a professional image and is seen as validating the CPO as an entity, especially to critics.
- Option 2 (Scaled-Down Event): Organise smaller events, potentially targeting young Chelsea supporters or teaming up with online streamers. These events would aim to generate content (VoxPops) and serve as advertisements for the CPO.
- Option 3 (Informal Videos): Create casual, informal videos using phones. While free, this could compromise the professional image of the CPO and raise concerns about the authority of individual board members speaking on behalf of the whole board without prior verification of facts. However, it was also noted that young people sometimes prefer less professional content.

Rich Content Sources:

- Strategy Day Filming: Future strategy days could be used as an opportunity to film structured video content.
- Pitch Presentations: Filming interactions with recipients of pitch presentations for short videos was suggested, potentially outside the pitch area due to rights issues.
- General Events: The positive impact of engaging events (like kids' first game content from Chelsea's TikTok) was recognised.
- Matchday-Centric Events: The consensus was that events should be organised around matchdays (before or after games) to maximise attendance and engagement, similar to how other fan groups operate. This offers minimal outlay (e.g., booking a room in a pub) and provides opportunities for visibility, awareness, and informal interaction with shareholders and potential shareholders.

Impact of Professionalism: It was agreed that maintaining a professional image through well-produced content is crucial for building trust with shareholders, especially when discussing sensitive topics.

VIII. Share Register and Computer Share

The challenges of maintaining an accurate share register and the move to Computer Share were discussed in detail:

Inaccurate Records: The current database contains approximately 2,600 entries marked as "deceased" or "gone away" due to historical informal processes. This prevents Computer Share from accepting it as a formal database.

Legal Implications: Concerns were raised about potentially "confiscating" shares from individuals who might be alive but uncommunicative, and the lack of specific provisions in current articles of association to address this.

Proposed Solutions:

- Board Resolution: A board resolution to formally declare these "dead" or "gone away" shares as null and void was suggested, aligning with practices of larger companies.
- Experian/Equifax: Computer Share's ability to use Experian/Equifax data to trace individuals with partial matches was acknowledged, but limitations exist for entries with minimal information (e.g., only a name).
- Article Amendments: Amending the articles of association to include provisions for forfeited shares was proposed, with a distinction between future cases (non-response to communications) and historic cases (publishing lists in the Gazette for non-contacted shareholders, with a six-month window before share cancellation).
- EGM for Article Changes: The cost of an Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) to amend the articles was noted, but the possibility of conducting it online was discussed.
- Flooding the Zone: Proactive communication through the Trust, program ads, website, and social media was suggested to encourage shareholders to update their contact details before any shares are cancelled.

Joint Names: The existence of numerous shares bought in joint names was noted, and it was clarified that there is no legal impediment to joint ownership.

Share Certificates: The understanding that physical share certificates are primarily symbolic and the register is the legal record was affirmed.

Indemnity: The possibility of providing Computer Share with an indemnity to protect them during the interim period before full compliance was briefly mentioned.

Computer Share Expectations: Computer Share won't update the Companies House register on the company's behalf and expects the company to maintain the register of shares (A and B shares) with accurate monetary values and deductions from capital value, potentially on a monthly basis. This is unique for the CPO given its continuous issuance of new shares.

IX. Director Identity Verification

The requirement for directors to have their identity independently verified with Companies House under The Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Act was raised. Assurance was provided that this is being handled and that Companies House would directly inform organisations of this requirement.

X. Surplus Funds and Financial Standing

The current surplus funds were reported to be between £50,000 and £60,000. The impact of VAT on merchandise sales is still being assessed. Despite an anticipated loss rate, the company appears to be cash-neutral month-on-month, indicating that changes to share pricing and other factors are effectively sustaining operations.

XI. Scanning and Digital Document Storage

The scanning of documents is progressing well. Options for storing digital documents (cloud storage vs. OneDrive) are being considered, with a decision needed soon to avoid deletion of current cloud storage. The benefits of a centralised OneDrive for all legacy and current documents, accessible to board members, were emphasised for continuity and security.

XII. Events

The company's strategy for organising events was reviewed:

Past Event Challenges: The recent event faced significant challenges, including:

- Club's Ticketing Management: The club's handling of ticketing was "an unmitigated nightmare" due to legal hurdles, delays, and staff being on holiday.
- Late Announcement: Announcing and launching the event only a month out was too short a notice.
- Lack of Club Promotion: The club downgraded its promise to promote the event on social media to only WhatsApp, limiting outreach.
- Low Ticket Sales: Only 17 tickets were sold for a 350-person capacity, leading to the event's cancellation to avoid further financial loss.

Lessons Learned:

- Self-Control of Ticketing: For future events, the company should control its own ticketing (e.g., using Eventbrite).
- Audience Appeal: A key question remains whether the form and content of the cancelled event were genuinely appealing to people.

Future Event Strategy:

- Focus on Matchdays: Events should be centred around matchdays (pre or post-game) to increase attendance and engagement.
- Informal Approach: Adopt a more informal, "drop-in" approach, similar to CST events at local pubs, with minimal outlay (e.g., just booking a room). This prioritises accessibility and visibility over large revenue generation from individual events.
- Visibility and Awareness: These events will increase the CPO's visibility, approachability, and awareness among shareholders and potential shareholders, providing opportunities for direct conversation and content creation.
- Big "Hooks": For larger, money-generating events, a significant "hook" like a high-profile manager or player appearance is necessary to attract a large audience.
- Online Auctions: Re-initiate online auctions through professional auctioneers, promoting them via internal channels and potentially leveraging the club's WhatsApp channel for wider reach.
- Upcoming Season Dates: Pencil in some initial dates for next season's informal drop-in events, starting with the first game of the season.

Financial Consideration: The £10,000 deposit paid to the club for the cancelled event can be offset against future AGMs or other events, and the goal is to avoid further loss-making events. The focus for income generation will primarily shift to merchandise for now.

XIII. Costs and Potential Sponsorship

Postal Costs: Postal receipts for sending merchandise are being monitored weekly, and while prices are increasing, they are currently within an acceptable range. A summer review will assess if packaging and postal rates remain appropriate.

Sponsorship Opportunities: The possibility of approaching companies for sponsorship (e.g., insurance, travel, real estate) was discussed.

XIV. Closing of Meeting

The meeting concluded with a discussion about scheduling a strategy day to film content, and was closed at 01:03pm BST.