

CHELSEA FOOTBALL CLUB SUPPORTERS' CONSULTATIVE FORUM 2019-20, 2nd MEETING MINUTES

Meeting held in the Vialli suite, Chelsea FC at 6.15pm on Monday 11th November 2019.

Attendees	Club title/ group represented
Aljassim, Abdullah	Overseas branch
Atkins, Steve	Club Director of Communications
Barrett, Neil	UK branch
Buck, Bruce	Club Chairman
Cardwell, Judith	Away season ticket ("ST") holder
Chaoui, Sami	CFCUK
Daine, Nav	General Manager of Levy UK
Devall, Nick	Member
Field, Adam	Club Head of Global Fan Engagement
Gordon, William	Chelsea Pride/ LGBT
Gordon-Brown, Patrick	Away European Scheme
Karnik, Paul	UK branch
Kingsmore, Paul	Club Director of Operations
Last, Nick	UK branch
Laurence, Guy	Club Chief Executive Officer
Lewis, John	Accessible
Lister, Simon	Chelsea Supporters Group ("CSG")
Phelps, Mary	Hospitality
Puttock, Mark	Chelsea Supporters Club
Regan, Andy	Forum Chairman
Smith, Graham	Club Head of Ticketing and Supporters' Liaison
Stewart, Shaun	Family
Stroudley, Nick	Chelsea Supporters Trust
Thileepan, Tila	Home ST holder
Webb, Allan	Over 65s
Apologies for absence	
Churchill, Alex	Chelsea Football Fancast
Debono, Matthew	16-21's
Twelvetree, Gary	Club Director of Marketing

(Action points are underlined.)

The Forum Chairman welcomed new representatives to the meeting, adding that the Forum send their condolences to the families of Trizia Fiorellino and Joe Anastasi, previous Forum representatives, who each died recently. The CSG conveyed its thanks to the Club for being incredibly supportive with Trizia's funeral and Kingsmeadow staff had been fantastic. The event was a fitting tribute to Trizia's memory. Bruce Buck was also thanked for his programme article about Trizia.

MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING/ MATTERS ARISING

There were no changes to the minutes. Matters arising were as follows:

24-hour pre-sale notice

The Club confirmed this has been actioned.

Loyalty points for women's matches

The Club considered the issue but won't be implementing it given a concern that supporters may buy tickets for the points but not attend.

Non-monetary benefits for store spending

The Club is reviewing with the merchandise department and Nike as to what can be introduced; the issue can be addressed further at the Nike meeting with the Fans Forum in December.

Star on a Stool

The Club said that fewer than 30 tickets were sold for the last two events so didn't appear popular. It confirmed that the last event was organised by the CPO and the Club wasn't responsible for marketing. The Club will process refunds on behalf of the CPO. A representative said the last one didn't feature a big enough draw for fans and was on a match day so there should still be scope for better events. The Club will consider these further.

Season by season match footage archives

The Club commented that archiving is ongoing and greatest goals/ games will be rolled out in 2020. The archive is in different formats and has to be adapted manually. The most popular items for viewers are being prioritised.

Half-time interview acoustics

The Club has investigated this but was only acting on the feedback of one individual. The system is tested extensively before every home game but failed to work for one match.

Family stand signage

The Club was thanked for the new signage there by the family representative.

TICKETING AGENDA ITEMS

The Club clarified it would consider issues raised today for next season's policy.

Family Stand/ youth ticket age limit

The family stand representative commented on an increase in bad language in the area. The Club had dealt with the issue when a specific complaint was made but generally a reduction of the age limit from 20 to 16 may, according to the representative, eradicate the problem, in line with the age limit for most Premiership clubs. Older teenagers are generally to blame for the bad language according to the representative.

Another representative said that lower price tickets should be provided for more fans with an increase perhaps to the age of 25. He said the language issue could be dealt with by housing the older fans within that age group elsewhere in the ground. The Trust representative echoed that view as did the 16-21 year old representative (in writing). It was added that the matter was discussed in detail both at the last meeting and in the Forum last season - the Club was requested to take the views of the Forum on board for this season.

The Club confirmed it will look at the issue including the effect on finances and on the tickets offered to away fans. The Club had previously accommodated the Forum's wishes in increasing the age limit several years ago from 16 to under 20s.

Another representative added that a major reason they could support the Club as a youngster was due to the concession ticket price. He said the prices are a problem for those aged 21 and above.

Away ticket split

It was raised by a representative that the split should be changed between ST holders and members to a more favourable proportion for ST holders. At present the split is 60/40. The Trust representative said there had been an increase in support for a 50/50 split. A representative commented that ST holders should have not have additional rights for tickets beyond the ST. Another commented that members already have to compete for home tickets. Members who attend a lot of home matches still can't obtain an ST.

The Club said one approach is not to accept any new applications for the UK away scheme.

It was stated by a representative that, should ST holders have a more favourable proportion of tickets, it shouldn't be possible to pass on STs to others at the end of each season by means of a name change. The Club responded that the process was introduced as, after investigation, it transpired that many match attendees on a ST were not the individual named on the ST in a number of cases. At least the Club has correct data for each ST user now. All leading clubs have such a system in place.

The Club also clarified that if, for instance, 1,000 ST holders are provided with a chance to buy an away ticket for a match by virtue of their loyalty point total, memberships sales are calculated for the equivalent loyalty point total (in a 60/40 proportion). Thereafter ST holders

are brought back into the pot. This is to avoid the situation in 2011 whereby members with a small number of points could obtain tickets for the Champions League away match at Manchester United in comparison with the points required by ST holders. A representative added that ST holders needed 35 points more for that match. It was also raised that the majority of members in a supporters' club branch only want to go to one or two matches per season whereas an ST holder has committed to all home matches. Another representative commented that some members try to attend a large number of games but then have to compete with others for a relatively small proportion of tickets.

The Club was asked what its loss would be if the 50/50 proposal is passed and members don't renew as a consequence of having less chance to obtain an away match ticket. The Club responded that it's not a financial matter but rather a balance of interests. Some individuals obtain membership for touting purposes. The Club added that membership was around 80-90,000 when members couldn't obtain any away tickets. The system used to be 100% ST holders for away tickets, then 500 were allocated to members, then a 50/50 split and now 60/40. Everton away ticket sales this morning of nearly 3,000 were locked down in four minutes so demand is massive. Demand increased greatly when the price decreased to £30 per ticket. The Club used to take 1,500 for most matches and now always takes the full allocation of 3,000. The away scheme used to number 350-400 before the ticket price decrease. Travel subsidies for some matches further fuels demand for tickets.

The Club responded, further to a question, that up to 300 ask to change the name on their ST per season. Last year the figure was around 650-700. Where STs are given up, those members with the highest number of points are offered the ticket. It added that it doesn't want a closed shop if we carry over points from the previous season for all but the initial matches of the season. There are a range of systems at other clubs in place, including a closed shop or a ballot. Of the 3,000 allocation for a typical away match, 800 go to the away scheme, 12% go to hospitality in proportion with their allocation of home tickets and the rest are split 60/40. Of the 800 in the away scheme, 650 are ST holders and 150 are members.

(A vote was taken as to whether to move from 60/40. If the current split was outvoted, a range of options would be considered.

14 voted to keep the 60/40 split;
1 voted to change the 60/40 split;
2 abstained.)

Number of tickets per transaction

The Club was asked to review the limit of four tickets per away match purchase. It responded that the current system works well and if it's increased, tickets will be sold even quicker. As with the other issues, it can be considered.

Booking fee

The Club was asked by a representative to reduce or abolish it. A supporters' club representative stated he hasn't heard any complaints about it from his members. Another representative added that a fee is common to any entertainment ticket purchased.

Overseas/ True Blue tickets

A representative questioned the number of loyalty points needed to purchase a home ticket by a supporter from outside Europe. The Club responded this is an issue for the supporters' clubs' meetings and added that this issue only arises when overseas supporters want to come to the more glamorous matches.

The Club was asked about the delay in processing membership applications for supporters who wanted to attend the Baku or Istanbul finals. The Club said that for Baku, membership could not be taken out after February so it was too late to apply by the time of the final in May. For Istanbul there was a 48-hour turnaround to process applications. However, tickets were on sale for three weeks for Istanbul so there was plenty of time to take out membership. It was known since the end of May we would be playing in that match. 48 hours was the maximum turnaround. There is no instant membership for a match as, for instance, for last week's Champions League game against Ajax at home, the Club had to be sure who it was selling a ticket to.

Sale of family stand tickets

The Club was asked why tickets couldn't be sold together or, alternatively, the classification of the adult ticket switched for a resale. The Club said the majority are sold in pairs or child tickets are sold separately as a 14-year-old or above can attend by themselves. You can't purchase a single adult ticket. The Club aims to protect the number of concession tickets by ringfencing them and not transferring the concession ticket to an adult purchaser.

Online ticket sales timing

A representative suggested having an application system for away tickets to avoid the 7am start. The Club said we don't sell many matches on points so don't have an application system.

It was raised by a representative that the 7am onsale time may not be ideal for many fans. The Club stated that the thought process behind a 7am start is clearly to complete the process before most fans go to work. It could be 9am or 10am but those travelling to work or at work may not be able to purchase.

(A vote was taken as to whether to move the sale time from 7am. If the current time was outvoted, a range of options would be considered.

8 voted to keep the 7am start;
8 voted to change the 7am start;
1 abstained.)

The Club said it would consider the issue with alternative suggestions, perhaps 7am and 10am, and propose a revote. There are internal issues to clarify before offering specific times to the Forum.

Ajax

A representative commented there appeared to be more touts for that match. In the East Upper, there were about 18 Ajax fans sat together of whom only half were ejected at first. Another commented the situation was much better for Ajax than at the Eintracht Frankfurt match. The Club responded that UEFA sponsors received tickets which is probably how they obtained them and those who were clearly Ajax fans were removed, either immediately or at half-time.

There were a range of measures to ensure that members didn't join just to purchase a ticket for that match. There were many checks and the Club worked with Ajax on the issue. It's easier to have an away allocation in some ways as they can be more easily policed. 250-300 fans were refused entry in the home areas, including in hospitality, as they were touted tickets. There was a big improvement from the Frankfurt game as shown by the lack of celebration of Ajax goals in the home areas.

Some of those who may not have been home supporters were asked to collect their tickets with ID. This applied to 570 attendees and a special kiosk had to be opened for this. Of those, about 70 tickets were collected and a refund was not provided for the uncollected tickets. Those individuals who didn't collect tickets will have to repeat the process for future matches. Checks conducted beforehand are carried out manually by ticket office staff. Foreign credit cards have to be checked as well. There is an increased risk of fraud if we don't have the 48-hour checking system for membership.

The Club added that touts now receive a cease and desist letter and, if they commit a further breach, the Club instigates legal action and tries to secure payment for judgments. We had a successful season in that respect last year so there are fewer touts this season. We are aware that there are touts outside the Fulham Broadway entrance.

Further to a question, the Club said it's aware of fraudulent tickets offered for away matches. Fraudulent tickets are stopped at Stamford Bridge and we attempt to trace them for away matches as well. Often there is no ticket provided to a supporter by the dubious source, even when payment is made. There are adverts online for away match tickets where the Club doesn't even have the tickets yet. Members who contravene our rules are immediately suspended, as is any potential purchaser from the same address.

At the last Premier League meeting, 19 out of 20 clubs rejected having electronic entry via a home ST for away matches. A steward at that ground would have no idea which cards have that match loaded, which would cause major problems for ingress. However, the Club is introducing electronic tickets on phones in the future.

NON-TICKETING AGENDA ITEMS

Media relations

It was raised by a representative that there have been a number of comments made by Dan Levene who appears to have an agenda against the Club. Does the Club intend to take any action? It responded it's aware of his comments and tweets. As a member of the media he has publicly stated on a number of occasions he would report discriminatory chants if they are sung, which he considers he is doing. We all want an end to discriminatory chants. The Club has been discussing the issue with him as it would like to defuse the issue for the benefit of all, not least because it is difficult for the Club to deploy more effective messaging on the issue of discriminatory behaviour while this situation persists. One representative asked if he was a Chelsea supporter. The Club responded that Mr Levene could speak for himself on this matter but it believed that he was.

A representative stated that fans were annoyed about a social media report of bad behaviour in Budapest last season which they didn't recognise as having happened. The misuse of social media doesn't help. The Club said that Dan is encouraged to report bad behaviour to them directly or to the police where appropriate. He has reported other clubs' fans on occasion. We take action against fans when such behaviour is proven and the individuals can be identified as ST holders or members.

The CSG representative said that Dan contacted them but wouldn't accept that fans were singing "Vialli" rather than something offensive at a recent match. Dan had then contacted a supporter separately in an attempt to question the CSG's position.

The Club reiterated it wants to cut through the difference of opinion in order to focus on more effectively removing discriminatory chants.

Offensive chants

In response to a question, the Club clarified that the "pikey" song about Frank Lampard is discriminatory and Frank has made it clear on a number of occasions now that he doesn't want it sung, and sung about him for that reason. The Met Police has been in contact enquiring as to how the Club will deal with that chant. The Club will continue to make its position clear to fans regarding the song, particularly with the West Ham fixture soon.

A representative asked how away fans are policed with regards to discriminatory songs such as the "Chelsea rent boys" chant. The Club responded that it encourages supporters to report all discriminatory chants. The Supporter Liaison Officer for the away team may be at the match at Stamford Bridge so there can be a debrief after. Our matchday safety team liaise with the away team beforehand. We eject fans from the away end and didn't let some away fans in for the Manchester United Carabao Cup match, for instance. The police support us in taking action against discriminatory chanting. The Club was asked about hand gestures and responded that, even if an action is not illegal, it may still not be permitted on the Club's

premises. There is CCTV evidence to follow up on and half-time affords the opportunity to take action in some circumstances. If a group of fans are misbehaving it may not be the best course of action to eject them then.

A representative commented that, in the family stand, an incident regarding an offensive chant at the Newcastle match was excellently dealt with by a senior steward and the representative wrote to the Club about him. The Club confirmed that it informs staff who are referenced personally in such feedback. A number of staff can end up dealing with a particular piece of feedback from supporters.

The Club was asked if it could take the lead in initiating new songs and responded that there is a Trust-associated group called “We are the Shed”; the Club proposing songs would not be welcomed by some fans.

Representatives asked what its stance is on poor taste songs such as the celery and “United, West Ham, Liverpool” chants which could be considered offensive. Other representatives said the former song is hardly sung these days. The Club said it should be emailed about songs in poor taste. The Club considers each song on its merits but there may well be fans or staff who find the celery song, in particular, offensive. As society changes, the Club is aware that songs previously considered acceptable may no longer be so. A representative added that it may be stirring a hornet’s nest to impose a ban on some songs.

Safeguarding

The Club was asked about safeguarding issues regarding taking photos of children, particularly in the family area. It responded that it’s highlighted in the ground regulations that photos may be taken in the ground for marketing material.

Standing in away end

A representative asked why away fans aren’t made to sit. The Club responded that the most important issue is that walkways and vomitories (exits) are kept clear. This is addressed if there’s standing in the home or away areas. Manchester United were given 4,000 tickets rather than 6,000 for the Carabao match partly as their fans tend to block walkways and staircases.

John Boyle

A representative asked the Club whether it was true John was refused tickets when he went to collect them for the Newcastle match and if he has not been allowed to take part in legends events. The Club responded that, as regards the Newcastle match, John and his companion said they were former players when they arrived at the ground but didn’t have tickets or ID and therefore security refused them entry. The Club said it would be contacting John directly to rectify this and invite him back for another match. The representative added in regards to the legends issue that John had been unable to get a response from the Club when attempting to contact it. The Club will investigate this.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Celebratory events

A representative commented that, as a way for fans to feel closer to the Club, special events marking the 1970 cup win and another to celebrate the 1960s promotion team were popular and could be repeated for other eras. Both events appeared to be sold out. The Club will review this, not least as it's harder to entice players from more recent eras to attend events given the increased rewards in the game.

Thomas Cook

The Club was asked about travel arrangements going forwards. It responded that Manchester City away details will be announced this week once finalised. Travel will still be £10 until the end of the season. It added that all clubs are in the same position as they relied on Thomas Cook, but the quality of the new partner has to be right. The new partner will be announced later this week.

Ajax – West Stand access

The Club was asked about access problems and responded it slowed the walk up intentionally as there had been an unrelated fatality on the stadium site. If there is a problem generally, supporters were advised to contact the Club straight away so it can resolve the situation quickly. The ID checks slowed down some access too.

VAR screen for European matches

The Club said, in response to a question, that it owns the VAR screen but UEFA takes control of it during their matches. For the Ajax match, the main screen wasn't working but there was a spare screen underneath that the referee was looking at. There appeared to be an operator error with the main screen.

Manchester United home match

The Club confirmed it has publicised the fact that the match could be on either 8th or 15th February weekends depending on how the Club is affected by the mid-season break.

The meeting finished at 7.50pm.