

Fans' Forum Meeting
August 27th, 2009 (6pm)
Boardroom
(Minutes taken by Matthew Dainty)

Attending:

Steve Waggott - CEO	David White - director
Stephen Kavanagh - MD	Geoff Billingsley - FF
Gary Davenport	Matthew Dainty - FF
Gavin Barratt	Tony Garrett
Apologies: Suzanne Hillcock, Dave Rudd	

Introduction: Steve Waggott asked if the Fans' Forum could produce the agenda for the next meeting well in advance to allow sufficient time for detailed answers to questions to be determined.

1. **Pigeon mess in west and north stands:** Steve Waggott acknowledged that the club had received complaints about the cleanliness of the stands after the Wycombe game. It was pointed out that due to cutbacks across the whole club the cleaning budget had also had to be cut. Stephen Kavanagh pointed out that members of staff gave up their lunch hours following the Wycombe game to clean the seats (which they didn't have to do), and that there weren't any complaints about stadium cleanliness after the Walsall home game. The pigeon netting which is present in the west and north stands is expensive to install and maintain.
2. **Shadowing: new ideas:** Steve Waggott pointed out that as long as there are clear benefits to be obtained by shadowing, then the club has no objections to this taking place. Steve Kavanagh thought the idea of shadowing the commercial centre staff on a matchday would be particularly beneficial and would help supporters to understand how this part of the club is operated.
3. **Dates to meet directors/chairmen:** September 3rd is too soon, the 10th is more viable but may have to be pushed back to the 17th. Steve Waggott said that the fans' forum organised question-and-answer session with the chairmen (Postponed from July 9th), would take place once the chairmen were free to say something.
4. **Takeover/transfer update:** Steve Waggott indicated that the talks between potential investors and the club were still ongoing. David White pointed out that there are many people working 18 hour per day on behalf of the club, seven days per week to try to attract new investment into the club. David White continued that the delays with any takeover have not been driven by the club itself and there are no internal politics. It was suggested that the club had attracted more than one investor over the last few months, David White said that in his opinion the quickest any deal at the moment could go through would be within the next month.

Steve Waggott reiterated that the club is definitely looking for investment, but so are many other clubs, and that the directors are determined to get the deal that is best for Charlton Athletic. Stephen Kavanagh said that the silence regarding the takeover is in the club's best interests and that the club would not want a situation like Newcastle United or Portsmouth, where the takeover is played out in the media.

On the playing side, only Mark Hudson and Andy Gray from the first-team playing squad have been sold since last season. The directors were in agreement over the deals, and that these were in the best interests of Charlton Athletic Football Club. David White suggested that it is likely two to three more fringe players would depart before the transfer window closes, possibly on loan. David White said that the media suggestion of a transfer embargo was incorrect and that the club isn't under any embargo. The Gray transfer deal was only held up due to protracted discussions between the two clubs (Charlton and Barnsley) and the player.

Steve Waggott said that the club's annual player wage bill is probably one of the highest in the division. Other clubs in the division have annual budgets of £1.5-£2million. Steve Waggott continued that there is no money available for fee paying transfers. Stephen Kavanagh said that in this division you don't need to pay transfers fees in order to sign decent players. It was pointed out that Jon Fortune had been released by Charlton and unfortunately had picked up a hamstring injury whilst on trial at Sheffield United.

David White said that on a recent visit to the training ground, the atmosphere was the best he had ever seen.

5. **Fixture list cards:** Steve Waggott pointed out that if the club were to produce fixture list cards, they would have to be made on laminated card to ensure that they didn't fall apart in people's wallets. To produce 60,000 cards (a sufficient number for all season ticket and Red Card holders), would cost the club £1,635. At present this was deemed as too expensive and the outlay could not be justified after so many members of staff had been made redundant over the summer. Stephen Kavanagh suggested however, that if a sponsor for the cards could be found, they may then be produced.
6. **Student ticket pricing:** Steve Waggott indicated that discretion is applied to those with extenuating circumstances over the club's ticket pricing policy. It is important that the club's ticket pricing structure is as clear as possible to all supporters. Steve Kavanagh pointed out that the NUS card system overcomes the outlined problems and that this may be considered in the future and has proved successful at other League One clubs.
7. **Stewarding (north upper):** Stephen Kavanagh pointed out that the training of CAFC stewards is among the best in the country and that this area of the ground has to be heavily stewarded. Supporters are encouraged not to stand on the ledge at the back of the north stand or to smoke as these are considered health and safety risks. The north stand is closely monitored by excellent CCTV and any persistent offenders can be easily identified.

8. **Pricing of polo shirts at £24.99:** The price of polo shirts has been raised as too expensive by some supporters. Stephen Kavanagh pointed out that he was not aware of the suggested 33 per cent price rise, but would check. He did point out however, that the polo shirts had sold out very quickly anyway.
9. **International supporters' day:** The international supporter's day has been set as October 10th for the home fixture versus Oldham Athletic. Steve Waggott indicated that the club will supply passes for a lounge, most likely Crossbars, for those international supporters attending the match. The fans forum is to find a suitable package (flights, hotels, transport etc) for the international supporters' day, which can then be passed on to Steve Waggott for further discussion. Steve Waggott also indicated that a presentation on the pitch and a piece on the big screen may also be possible. The Red, White and Black Day (Kick Racism out of Football) has been set for October 17th versus Huddersfield Town.
10. **Updated schedule of dates for meetings:** The directors have copies of the dates and these will continued to be revised on a rolling basis.
11. **Fans' forum meet and greets/Q&As:** Steve Waggott indicated that meet and greets are a good idea and should take place as frequently as possible on matchdays. This would improve the profile of the fans' forum and would enable supporters to meet the group and ask any questions. The events could only be hosted in Bartram's due to access issues. The events will include the presence of members of staff/former players/current injured or suspended players in order to attract fans to the events. Steve Waggott indicated that 1-2pm would be a good time to host these events on each matchday.
12. **Pigeonhole for fans' forum at Valley reception:** Steve Waggott indicated that this was a good suggestion which is fine to proceed with. Supporters can send letters to the club addressed to the fans' forum at The Valley. It is also to be encouraged for supporters to drop of suggestions/letters directly to reception themselves. The letters would then be held at reception and Matthew Dainty volunteered to collect the letters on a regular basis.
13. **Programme article:** The programme article for the Brentford game has been completed and submitted. The article will also feature on the official website and the email bulletin. Communication between Matt Wright and Matthew Dainty have indicated that this will become a regular feature where supporter questions can be answered and fans' forum meeting minutes published.
14. **FAQ page:** A list of questions asked and answered will be added to the Fans' Forum website for supporters to view the club's response to any questions they may have asked.
15. **Charlton Athletic supporters' trust:** Steve Waggott said that the club is aware of the trust, but it would be wrong for the club to be directly involved in the group. Stephen Kavanagh said that it is important for any trust to be an independently run group, but that the directors are pleased that this shows the

supporters care about the welfare of the club. David White pointed out however that if a takeover proceeds the supporters' trust may not be recognised by a new investor.

16. **Wycombe commercial centre issues:** David White said that 2,000 walk-up tickets were sold on the day, which was higher than expected. However, the situation was dealt with using the club's contingency plans and any issues were resolved for the Walsall match. The Walsall match also saw 2,000 walk-up ticket sales. The queuing situation was much improved as the north stand ticket office was now open for cash-only sales, with 650 cash sales processed on the day. The club received no complaints following the Walsall game.
17. **Retail update:** Stephen Kavanagh indicated that the buying policy for replica kit this year will be a lot stricter. There will be no reduced shirts available at the end of the season. Stephen Kavanagh said that if supporters want a shirt, they should buy one whilst they can as once they have gone, that is it. There will only be one more delivery of the home and away shirts, after the current batch and that numbers will be restricted. There has been a sizing issue with the away shirt. This has led to an excess of away shirts available in the largest size. There will be no baby kits available this season, however an alternative may be offered.
18. **Next meeting:** The next meeting of the directors and the fans' forum will be on September 10th or 17th, with both Chairmen invited to attend.