

Fans Forum - 8 July 2015

1. Introductions

Katrien Meire - **CEO**, Ian Wallis, Jean Huelin, Syd Cheeswright, Craig Parrett, Ravi Patel – **Hospitality Manager**, Christine Lawrie, Lisa Squires – **Club Development Manager**, Matt Ring, Mandy Anderson-Myers – **Ticket Office Manager**, Vernon Roper, Jack O'Sullivan – **Valley Gold Promoter**, Tony Keohane – **Head of Stadium and Training Ground Operations**, Pete Catlin, Keith Blair, Nick Richards – **DNC (Concessions Manager)**, Olly Groome – **Club Journalist**, John Bennett, Steve Clarke, David Wood

2. Minutes of the last Meeting

Approved. Helpful if they could be uploaded to fans forum area - the last ones were difficult to find.

3. Player of the Year Dinner and Vote

Event went well, 430 attendees with approx 370 paying guests. 4613 player of the year votes taken. Trophy will be re-presented on the pitch at the first home game. KM felt that the catering was insufficient and the trophy presentation was a bit confusing as there were two trophies. Catering will need to be reviewed as it was less than last year especially considering the price point. There was also quite a long wait for the players to arrive. There have however been no complaints from attendees. KM said that the event may be modified for next year, as not all the players were there. Might be easier to do something on a larger scale after the last home game, not necessarily a sit down dinner. CP said that the event has worked very well over the past few years and questioned the need to make changes.

4. Fans Forum Finances

Cannot finalise this yet, as ticket money from 3rd May has not yet been received. Figures to be provided at next meeting. Raffle helped a profit to be made. Currently the only revenue generator for the FF, not that it needs money per se, but funds are contributed to the club eg. Memorial garden, player of the year boards etc.

5. Catering

JH has heard complaints re food voucher system for last game of the season. NR said that he was fully briefed and the club has contacted everyone. Vouchers will be valid going forward. Will ensure quantity of food is sufficient.

JH said that there are a number of other recurrent catering issues. Has the review of the first year taken place? TK said that at second Saturday home game, the club will invite some fans to attend before the game to provide feedback. Issues at last home game were not acceptable. NR confirmed that the club is constantly reviewing and improving. TK reported that there are improvements taking place re the layout of kiosks and there will be new food options. Last year there was a 25% increase in products sold, but there is still room for improvement.

IW added that catering outside the east stand was very erratic. NR confirmed that there will be products available there next season and they will be good quality and value. IW said that the match day experience is important. In particular, 14 chips for £3 is just making people angry. NR spoke to the chef today, some prices have reduced, and quality and quantity were discussed and will be improved. Real ale bar will be added into the east stand. Addicks Ale

will be served. VR said it would be nice to have another vegetarian option. NR said that a beanburger will also be on the menu. Suggestions are invited re any good food options seen at other grounds.

NR confirmed that a pie and pint will be priced at £7 next season. SC commented that it is expensive compared to other grounds. However, they are benchmarked against comparable.

6. Programmes and Programme Sales

CL said that queues were very long at Bournemouth game, there were supply issues and the operation was inefficient. MAM confirmed that she is now responsible for programme sales. Not always a reliable supply of staff. Now addressed, and have a proper number of staff. Selling points will be more visible with an umbrella and a proper stand. There is another run of Bournemouth programmes available and the ticket office can supply any programmes that supporters are missing. Bournemouth supporters were buying up to 30 each! The sales will be improved for next season, and additional info will be provided for away supporters. IW said it would be helpful if sellers are always in the same place - often had to try to find the seller. TK asked for any locations where sellers have been missing where they usually are, and feedback was provided. It was also explained that when the operation was changed during the course of last season, some of the previous knowledge went with the change. However, improvements will be made. New units are very visible. OG said that the programme design has been overhauled and there will be new printers. The quality will be higher.

7. Stadium Issues

a. Safety Rails East Stand

PC says that somewhat older supporters struggle with the incline of the stairs. Some are considering not renewing as they find it difficult to get to their seat. Other stands have handrails with gaps to allow sideways movement in an emergency. Suggested that there could be one section with safety rails. TK said that the council do not see it as a safety issue, but the position will be reviewed. The east stand is the steepest in the ground.

b. Tannoy System

PC said that it has been reported that those in the west and north hear a very distorted tannoy. TK has heard that it is loud in some areas, not in others. Has been serviced and will work much more in conjunction with the screen next year. Pre season checks have taken place. SC confirmed it is very loud in east stand.

c. Millennium seating capacity

RP said it was busy last season. Crossbars has changed for this season so likely to take 30% from millennium. Capacity will now be 180-200 this season and there were around 250 last season. Sold just over 150 so far. Going forward will review seating plan in millennium. Still serving coffee and tea at half time.

8. Online purchase of season tickets

PC said that people were impressed this season, and the system knew Valley Gold members. However, one person ordered online and then received a receipt for more than they thought. Transpired they were charged for a telephone reservation. MAM said it is unlikely to happen to one, but will review the case. There will also be a facility to print tickets at home. The purchase of valley express tickets is also being worked on - not online at the moment.

New season cards being printed tomorrow morning and sent out next week. Will be an oyster card style entry system, or a barcode on the card can be scanned. An a5 flyer will be sent out so supporters know what to expect. Tickets can be upgraded as usual if for example a child cannot attend and there will be the option to print that upgrade at home. When an adult scans, a green light will appear inside but if a child or concession ticket is scanned, an amber light will appear so the stewards will be aware if an adult uses a child ticket. The friendlies will be a paper ticket, but they can be printed at home. For cup games, for later rounds, it is hoped that it will be possible to load your seat onto your card for that game.

9. Pierre Bolangi Memorial Garden

£600 spent so far, including £400 on hedging. £350 received from FF and £250 raised elsewhere. The weather can be damaging, so JH asked for £50-75 to replace some hedging. JH is happy to continue maintaining. £75 was agreed.

10. Fans Forum Minutes

Covered earlier.

11. Organisation Chart

SC has raised it before. Hasn't yet appeared on website. KM said two important positions are vacant - commercial and communications. No chart produced yet as shape not yet finalised. TK said that there is a large team and the structure is quite flat. KM does not want to include every employee's name. Might be better to have a single communication point. This will be done as soon as possible. IW -said that the problem is that we don't know who deals with what at the moment. LS confirmed that we do have an interim supporters liaison officers - Lewis Uphill (lewis.uphill@cafc.co.uk).

12. Update of Supporters Groups

No comments.

13. Travel

a. CARTG - Rail Travel

Will continue to operate, there are some reduced numbers.

b. Errors on 'Away Fans Guides'

The problem arises with information on how to get from some stations to the grounds. The information must be available in house. The information for Birmingham for example is insufficient. Suggested that SC writes away travel guide - SC agreed to produce rail travel information for next four games, including how to get from station to ground and this will be published online.

c. Steward's Job Description

SC said it is time to make progress. JB said that Dhiran had drawn up a list of responsibilities, useful to back up decisions made by stewards. JB said that there was a problem of drivers not knowing where grounds were and that the home club rarely had anyone at the ground who could direct the steward/driver where the coach should be parked.

Mandy said that the police have a football liaison officer and it is up to us to liaise with him at the away ground. He will be used to help us.

Dhiran's knowledge (when he left) not fully passed on, but work on filling the vacancy is underway. Supporters are asked to be patient while the new recruit settles in. The coach service is also out for tender at the moment.

14. Any other business

At West Ham game on 25 July, it will be the annual club day. Funfair rides in car park for children and open from 12pm. FF asked to help collect data - if they could email Lisa Squires if they are able to help, or any proposals or suggestions for the day. The kick off is 3pm. TK said it's important to bring in potential long terms fans, and to be able to communicate with those. The fanbase needs to be grown. A key area for the club and FF to work upon. Happy to consider ideas to recruit more red card holders and to capture data. West Ham are a potential threat, but we can offer a different experience.

15. Date of next meeting

Thursday 15th October, 18h30