

Fans Forum Minutes – 18 July 2016

1. Attendances/Introductions/Apologies

In attendance: Craig Parrett, Ian Wallis, John Bennett, Pete Catlin, Lisa Squires, Tony Farrell, John Perkins, Syd Cheeswright, Christine Lawrie, Katrien Meire, David Joyes, Jack O'Sullivan, David Wood, Katie Cowling, Rob Harris, Steve Clarke, Darren Kent
Apologies – Target 20k, Jean Huelin, Keith Blair, Vernon Roper, Matt Ring

2. Minutes of last meeting

No matters that were not also in the agenda for this meeting.

3. Organisation Structure

SC: There have been quite a few changes. Is management team the same?

KM: The Senior Management Team is Katrien Meire, Tony Keohane, David Joyes and Chris Parkes. The team is supported by other departments.

SC: Can a structure be produced?

KM: Any queries should be sent to the Fans Email and will be addressed to the right department. The CAFC website and the match day program display the different departments with their key people and contact details, therefore there's no further need for a printed structure chart.

4. CADSA

TF: At the last meeting, the club was using DJ Coaches but wheelchair friendly coaches were not supplied. Was going to be a tender for new coach company.

KC: Steve Miller will deal with travel. DJ will invest in their fleet to increase disabled access.

TF: Catering facilities on wheelchair balconies. Would take orders just before half time, but that fell away at the end of last season.

DK: This will be fixed for next season.

TF: Disabled patrons of West Stand. Problem with lift. Letter will ask each fan whether they can leave in the event of an emergency.

KM: Club will check with any progress on lifts.

TF: Level Playing Field were going to do an audit on disabled facilities.

KM: The club will check where we are.

5. Owner's strategy

CL: There is a chance to put in equity to finance wages. Does owner intend to do that?

KM: The main aim is to build a team that is competitive while complying with the FFP rules of League One.

CL: The club is still selling our best players leaving us with a very thin squad.

KM: That's a bit premature at the moment. The manager identified players he wants, and those he didn't and the players that were sold, were the players who had the desire and ambitions to play in a higher league. But we're very happy with the signings we have made so far Russell, Steve (Head) and I are working hard to strengthen the team with further signings.

6. Playing squad

CL: Will RS have full control?

KM: Yes, as was said in the press conference Russell decides which players that were identified by our scouts he wants to pursue those he won't. So far every signing has his final seal of approval and it's all going well.

CL: Very disappointed about Nick Pope because he said that he didn't want to leave.

KM: At the time, Nick Pope said that there was probably not such a concrete interest. We refused several offers from Burnley and had meetings with Nick to convince him to stay but in the end it became clear that we couldn't stand in his way any longer.

CL: Will more be sold?

KM: Only those who are not part of Russell's plans.

CL: We have more long term injuries.

KM: Yes we're very disappointed that we're again confronted with many injuries however we have addressed some of the issues in the summer with the change of medical staff and I'm confident we now have a team in place that will do whatever they can to give the players the best medical treatment.

SC: We can find out more from the SLP about what is going on at the club than on the official website. KM: SLP also report rumours. We specifically have started the Media Watch on CAFC website so fans have an overview of what's being reported about CAFC. But obviously during this time of the year a lot of what is reported is speculation around transfers and we cannot confirm those things until it's signed. IW: You can get rumours on lots of forums, but not a fact until it's on the official site.

7. Staff vacancies

CL: Still vacancies to be filled?

KM: All positions on the footballing side now filled including medical staff. The new physio is Alastair Thrush and doctor is Chris Jones, who is/was working at Leyton Orient. I just want to put the record straight that last year we had a doctor in place, I even mentioned it at one of the Fans Forums. His name was Ian Beasley, the doctor of England's men team. Ian will still be available to us for the more complex injuries.

On non-playing side, lost a couple of staff but not replacing like for like. SMT manage communications team at the moment, temporary measure. **Post meeting note: The club are recruiting a Communications Manager.**

CL: What about the match day announcer?

KM: There are a couple of options we're investigating.

8. Sparrows Lane

CL: Are there any updates?

KM: We are finishing phase 1, the water reservoir delayed it a bit. We are behind schedule, but phase 2 will be starting soon, which is the community part. We are being audited for category 2, but once complete, may be able to buy an extra audit outside of the usual auditing window to assess for category 1. The criteria for category 1 keeps changing. Expected to finish work towards end of 2018.

9. Travel

a. Away Rail Travel Fans

SC: Fans are still losing money because of the club.

SC was asked to prepare details of how to get from station to ground, but OG would not publish until day before. KM will follow it up with OG.

b. Progress for successor of CARTG Co-ordinator

There has been some interest and 4 or 5 applications. Lungi Macebo and Mick Everett are coordinating it.

c. Away Fans Guide

SC: Written by Ian Cartwright, but published day before game. Could keep away travel guide as it is and publish at this time, but publish rail guide earlier, depending on the lead time for rail tickets before the game.

KM to speak to OG.

d. Valley Express tickets

PC: When can they be bought online?

DJ: Soon, reviewing it now, hopefully before first league game. No fee to book Valley Express over the telephone.

10. Supporter Lifetime Achievement Award

PC: Some of East Kent branch asked on procedure for nominating lifetime achievement award.

IW: no procedure, please let me know of any suggestions. Chosen by IW and JH.

11. Any other business

TF: Email from Mick Everett after Burnley game, suggesting free tickets would be given to those whose view was obstructed. Letter sent to everyone who was affected, and free tickets issued to those who replied.

When are season tickets being sent out?

KC: Started this week.

How many sold?

KM: 5,400 sold so far compared to 8-9,000 this time last year.

JB: Hastings and Bexhill sponsor a player each year. An individual also sponsored a player but was not treated well. No photograph with player, no response to messages/emails, paid a lot of money for nothing.

KM: The club will look into it.

Future of Valley Express

KM: Every year this has been raised and every year the club makes the same decision. We value the people who are using the service and although we subsidize the service we want to keep people coming to games and it makes sense to continue with it as we're doing again this year.

JP: We had a meeting a few weeks ago on travel issues. Will Steve Millar be taking on action points?

KC: Yes.

SC: Is Mandy being replaced?

KM: No, but KC is looking after the ticket office, she has been part of the ticket office for years and has more than enough experience to take on this role.

TF: The new admin fee on ticket sale doesn't make sense. A lot think it is £2.50 + £3. The website needs to make it clearer.

KM: This is part of strategy to get people online and therefore can be communicated with by email, extending the database. At the moment Charlton's database is around 40,000 while a club like

Birmingham City has hundreds of thousands of people on their database. In order for us to grow as a club we need to increase the size and effectiveness of our database. All purchases at ticket office will incur the admin fee.

JP: It is driving people away.

CL: It would be better to offer a discount if you buy online. It is not being presented that way.

DJ: There is nothing in the Football League rules preventing this. We also have one of cheapest season tickets and match day tickets in league. The fee is per order not per ticket.

JB: If you are doing this then the system must be efficient.

Post meeting note: After conversation and consultation including the Fans' Forum, on fan emails and fan communication with our ticket office, the feedback was that there are still a lot of fans who traditionally purchase in-person who don't have the facilities and/or knowledge to purchase online. The Club remove walk-up ticket administration charge following fan feedback.

Next meeting - 20 October