

# CHARLTON ATHLETIC FOOTBALL CLUB

## FANS FORUM

Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> October 2016 @ 5.30pm

**PRESENT:** Charlton Athletic: Katrien Meire (KM), Tony Keohane (TK), Mick Everett (ME), Olly Groome (OG), Jack O'Sullivan (JOS)

Valley Gold: Sharron Sherress (SS)

Supporter Representatives: Steve Clarke (SCL), Christine Lawrie (CL), John Perkins (JP), Syd Cheeswright (SCH), Tony Farrell (TF), David Wood (DW), Ian Wallis (IW)

**MINUTES TAKEN BY:** Jack O'Sullivan (JOS)

**APOLOGIES:** Pete Catlin (PT), Craig Parrett (CP), Jean Huelin (JH), Keith Blair (KB), Vernon Roper (VR), John Bennett (JB), Rob Harris (RH), Matthew Ring (MR)

### MINUTES FROM MEETING

Agenda item	Discussion
1. <b>Attendance / Introductions / Apologies</b>	Introductions were made by Supporter Representatives.
2. <b>Approval of minutes of last meeting</b>	<p>KM explained that minutes for Fans Forums meetings would now be taken by the club.</p> <p>IW had spoken to CP (who previously produced minutes) and confirmed that this arrangement was acceptable.</p> <p>KM noted that some previously produced minutes were too brief so we would look to produce them more in-depth.</p> <p>SCH asked if all Supporter Representatives would be sent draft minutes. IW confirmed that this already happens and club confirmed that this would continue to happen.</p>
3. <b>Searches when entering the ground</b>	<p>Issue originally raised by MR and taken up by JOS in MR's absence. Complaint relating to a supporter not being able to take a bottle of water in with him to the ground that he needed for medical reasons.</p> <p>ME confirmed legislation around not being able to sell bottled drinks with tops on. Advised this is a licensing law, for a number of reasons – primarily so that they cannot be used as a missile, referring to incident last year when a full bottle was thrown and injured a young supporter. Also advised that bottles with tops still on are classed as a trip hazard.</p> <p>ME confirmed this isn't a new regulation and has been in place since 2008. Advised this isn't unique to Charlton Athletic.</p>

	<p>TF asked if the supporter in question was asked to take the top off of the bottle, or if the bottle was taken off of him. JOS advised that to his knowledge, he was asked to take the top off of the bottle.</p> <p>ME advised that if a supporter has a genuine medical reason requiring them to bring a bottled drink with them then they should advise the club of this beforehand so dispensation can be made.</p>
<p>4. <b>EFL Structured Dialogue with Fans</b></p>	<p>SCL advised that recommendations had been published for clubs to have a minimum of two Fans Forums/supporter meetings per season and asked what commitments club had made to fulfil all obligations.</p> <p>JOS advised that all EFL guidelines are being met – that we do run at least two fans forums/meetings per season; we do detail how we comply with requirements in our Customer Charter; the Supporter Reps are elected, selected or invited; the club is represented by the majority owner, board director(s) or other senior executive(s); the Supporters Trust are invited to attend; and that minutes are recorded and shared with attendees, with an agreed write-up published to a wider audience.</p> <p>KM advised that when these guidelines were published, the club checked that everything was being met to ensure we are compliant.</p> <p>SCL asked if minutes are published on the official website. KM advised that all minutes of previous meetings do get published on official website.</p>
<p>5. <b>Whole Game Solution</b></p>	<p>SCL raised as a discussion point both for the fans and for the club. SCL previously sent round a paper outlining Whole Game plans devised by the EFL, with proposals set to be voted on in June 2017.</p> <p>SCL explained key points of Whole Game Solution – domestic leagues rearranged into 5 divisions of 20 (which would, as it stands, result in the club losing 8 games per season); talk of introducing B teams; talk of teams potentially coming in from Scotland and Wales; and that the Leagues Two and Three would form a League Two North and League Two South and be regionalised.</p> <p>SCL also explained proposal of changes to the FA Cup, that rounds four and five would take place in midweek.</p> <p>KM explained that discussions within FL had taken place and was debated in June 2016. Advised that we said it is important to have discussion about these issues with supporters as it could impact them. KM advised she has a meeting with the Chairman of the Football League in November where this will be discussed.</p> <p>KM said League had asked for input on B teams – KM said we absolutely don't want B teams in our division. Also confirmed we voted against their introduction in the Checktrade Trophy.</p> <p>KM advised that whole reform is driven from the top and that it will probably happen eventually, but we need to influence the outcome that will suit our club.</p>

	<p>KM advised Premier League has a problem with the number of fixtures that their teams are playing, especially with extra Cup games and that they are looking for a break over Christmas.</p> <p>On regionalisation, KM advised this may work for the lower leagues as would reduce travel/hotel costs, but said we also know that fans like to travel to new grounds.</p> <p>On a winter break, KM said she thinks football over Christmas is a good thing and a good opportunity for supporters to bring family to game. IW stated that traditionally, Christmas games are some of the best attended throughout the season. SCL pointed out that a winter break would mean a break in income for many clubs.</p> <p>SCL said that not good to lose 8 games per season and asked why the Football League has to take on the Premier League's issues.</p> <p>KM confirmed that club will not vote either way until all options/ramifications have been considered. KM offered to feed back at future Fans Forums any updates and will feed back how club vote.</p>
<p><b>6. Tickets / ticket office</b></p>	<p>CL asked if the £3 admin fee for tickets bought between 1pm-3pm on a matchday will be abolished any time soon. KM advised that this policy would stay and that the club want people to purchase tickets in advance and this has helped to avoid congestion on a matchday. KM commented that club are constantly monitoring how many supporters purchase on a matchday.</p> <p>SCL asked if the £3 admin fee could be a reason for crowds being down. KM advised that she doesn't think this is the case, and that there are other reasons for this. TK noted that looking at overall pricing is key and that club are conscious of pricing appropriately.</p> <p>CL said that non season ticket holders have difficulty in buying away tickets due to priority sales. CL asked why restrictions are so strict for away fixtures. ME advised that there are restrictions on sought-after games, and commented that those restrictions are often only for two or three days. ME commented that tickets usually always end up going onto general sale. KM echoed this point and that even for Gillingham there are tickets remaining.</p> <p>CL commented that supporters would like the ticket office open every day apart from Sunday. KM advised that this is being looked into and that changes are being explored.</p> <p>Regarding Valley Away, JP asked if it was known who would be replacing Steve Miller at the club. TK explained that interviews are ongoing and that a handover will happen.</p>
<p><b>7. Player / manager recruitment</b></p>	<p>CL asked why the central midfield position has not been fully covered. KM commented that the club had targets for recruitment and that Russell Slade is happy with the recruitment undertaken for this position. KM said that was at training ground earlier that day with Russell Slade and Steve Head and discussions were taking place about targets for January.</p>

	<p>CL noted that Alou Diarra would have been a good option to still have. KM said that Alou did not see himself as a central midfield player anymore and wanted to play as a central defender. He saw that there was a lot of competition in this area and subsequently asked to leave. KM reconfirmed that Russell Slade is happy with squad and that he is in complete charge of player recruitment.</p> <p>IW asked about rumours as to why Jorge Teixeira has not been featuring. KM explained that Jorge was injured in pre-season and that he is now back to fitness and can be considered for inclusion moving forward and that Russell will decide if he plays. IW asked if there is a financial reason why we cannot play him. KM said that's a false rumour.</p> <p>CL asked if applicants for the manager's position were told that a certain number of Academy players had to feature in the first team. KM asked reasoning behind question, CL explained that rumours had circulated that these requests were asked of managers and that a previous applicant declined the position because the owner would not put in writing that he would not interfere with team selection.</p> <p>KM explained that we had a contract ready, including wording that the applicant would be in full selection of the team and player recruitment, ready to be signed.</p>
<p><b>8. Programmes / website</b></p>	<p>CL said that some supporters feel that the programme is not good value for money and that it should be cheaper or have more content inside. CL asked if this is because of staff cuts that there is not enough time to do more, or if costs are prohibited.</p> <p>OG said that this was the first time he has heard this. OG said that we have gone down in pagination from last season, and have to balance out the hours that are being spent to produce the programme with other tasks and that he produces this mainly on his own apart from a few sections. OG asked what she thinks is missing from the programme. CL said would like more written content and that there are a lot of full-page photographs. OG said this is similar to other clubs. JP said that he goes to most away games and that ours is no worse. IW said that programme is better than it was a few years ago and is good value for money. OG noted that is has been nominated for awards.</p> <p>IW said that handbook was brilliant and is grateful for the work that went into this. CL commented that handbook is £5 this season whereas previously it was also £5 but was integrated into a matchday programme. TF explained that this wasn't fair on away fans. IW commented that by getting it out later (as opposed to previously on the first day of the season) this works better as squad is known and finalised.</p> <p>SCH commented that programme now is fantastic and articles, pictures and layout are very good.</p> <p>OG said likes to have as few adverts as possible within programme and that the ones we run are ones we are obliged to.</p>
<p><b>9. Sale of the club</b></p>	<p>CL asked if the owner has had a bid for the club that meets the asking price. KM explained that no, because the club is not for sale.</p>

10. <b>Sparrows Lane</b>	CL said she was initially going to ask for an update on training ground works, but subsequently an article/feature had gone out giving an update. TF asked for a timescale on completion. KM advised 2018.
11. <b>Travel</b>	<p>SCH advised that he is happy, but cautious, about the CARTG co-ordinator role moving forward. SCH advised that had now spoken with TK, ME and OG and was aware of situation. A new system will be introduced and a draft will be shown to SCH to comment on.</p> <p>SCH said that fans keep losing money on away train travel on long distance trips. SCH noted Oxford United away match, where incorrect/errors in programme/Away Travel Guide meant that supporters travelling via this method. SCH commented that new system would hopefully ensure this doesn't happen again.</p> <p>OG explained that new CARTG system would invite fans interested in offers/advice to join a mail-out group and be made aware of this information. Information would also be included in programme when appropriate.</p>
12. <b>Post-match incident outside West Stand</b>	<p>SCL asked for a club response to questions raised about an incident involving stewards and a supporter after the match against Coventry City on October 15<sup>th</sup>.</p> <p>ME advised that a letter had been received from Richard Wiseman of the CAST and that a response had now been sent to them. ME said he believes that mistakes were made by the club and on reflection it should have been dealt with on another day. ME said that too many people on both sides became involved. ME said has viewed all footage and that the club didn't cover themselves in glory and let themselves down on a number of points.</p> <p>SCL noted that from what he had heard/read, the supporter had been troublesome and that some action was required. ME advised that the issue with the supporter was not purely only relating to displaying a flag, and that the individual had been banging reception windows, singing foul and abusive songs, standing on seats, throwing items on the pitch – separate to the pigs – blocking the view of other supporters and other issues. ME said that by the same token, the club's reaction was wrong and should have been dealt with when atmosphere was less volatile. Advised that lessons have been learnt and that comprehensive reply has now been sent to Richard Wiseman.</p> <p>SCL thanked Mick for his response and that they were happy with this. SCL also confirmed that his letter to TK did not need to be responded to as ME had now covered points.</p>
13. <b>Discussion reference abuse towards CAFC staff</b>	<p>TK commented that during matches this season, a number of staff have received abuse from individuals and that this does genuinely affect them. TK gave example of staff being abused whilst removing foam pigs from the pitch at the last game. SS explained that her Jackpot sellers also receive abuse on occasions and this could impact them. TF advised that this is a small percentage of fans and that if they have this mentality then it is difficult to deal with.</p> <p>SCL noted that supporters may not agree with the club on all football matters, but that abuse is unnecessary. KM said club accept people</p>

	<p>want to protest, preferably outside the stadium and not during the game but that protest leaders need to remind others that staff are just doing their job and to ask for respect towards them.</p> <p>IW agreed that abuse is unnecessary but it comes from individual people with their own agendas. JP asked if stewards could stand with Jackpot sellers. ME said is an option but needs to allocate resources accordingly and have to draw the line somewhere.</p> <p>SCL that Supporters Direct are spoken to, to see if they have experience with similar incidents at other clubs.</p> <p>TK asked for supporter groups to reinforce the message around this matter.</p> <p>TK explained that one member of staff had a bottle thrown at him whilst waiting at a bus stop close to the ground. TK explained that he was shocked by this, it was not known if it was a Charlton supporter and that it could have been anyone, but that now many staff are not wearing their lanyards outside of work and are conscious of being seen in Charlton workwear.</p>
<p>14. <b>Any other business</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) <b>Swindon fixture</b> – CL asked if this fixture would still go ahead, as is scheduled to be televised on Sky Sports but falls on an international weekend. Advised that this cannot be cancelled and match will go ahead as scheduled.</li> <li>b) <b>Crossbar Challenge</b> – SS asked for supporter reps to reinforce the Charlton Club Crossbar Challenge and to encourage entries and get more people involved.</li> <li>c) <b>Coach fares for away games</b> – JP asked why prices are dearer than other group(s) that run coaches. KM advised that Valley Express to home matches is loss-making and that needs to be balanced out with the away coaches. KM said that we want as many fans as possible at our games and we will keep trying to make it as affordable as possible for everyone. KM said that if there are suggestions to improve the service then these will be listened to. TK commented that similar questions were raised at previous supporter group meetings and that JOS was looking into initiatives to target football clubs, social clubs, schools etc into bringing more people to games.</li> </ul>
<p>15. <b>Date of next meeting</b></p>	<p>Agreed for February 16<sup>th</sup> at 6pm.</p>