

Charlton Athletic Fans' Forum – Wednesday, 25th September 2019

Fans: AD – Alan Dryland – German Addicks, IW – Ian Wallis – Bromley Addicks, CL – Christine Lawrie – Reminiscence Group, RW – Richard Wiseman – Charlton Athletic Supporters Trust, LH – Les Herbert – Maidstone and the Weald, RH – Rob Harris – Proud Valiants, PS – Peter Smith – East Kent Addicks, BR – Bernie Razzell – City Addicks, DW – David Wood – West Country

Club: LDT – Lieven de Turck, TK – Tony Keohane, RP – Ravi Patel, KC – Katie Cowling, TR – Tom Rubashow

Additional: DD – David Day – Creative, SA – Steve Adamson – Charlton Athletic Women

Apologies: Sharron Sherress – Valley Gold, Tony Farrell – CADSA, John Perkins – Valley Away

Topic	Raised by
<p>Fans' Forum Objectives and Terms of Reference</p> <p>TR referenced that talks about an independent chair for the meeting had been raised at the last Fans' Forum. He said it had since been discussed both internally and with individual fans that improvements can be made to the Fans' Forum structure. Areas for discussion that have been highlighted by fans:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Representation of fans • Diversity of the Fans' Forum • Chairperson • Publication of meeting notes • Role of the Fans' Forum/Terms of reference <p>The club will look at a restructure of the Forum but want to get it right. The club will canvass opinion of those within the current Fans' Forum and the wider fanbase AD said he felt a restructure should be accelerated with the aim to be in place as soon as possible</p>	Club
<p>Charlton Athletic Women's Team</p> <p>The Women's team promoted their game at The Valley in early October. Click here to get your tickets to upcoming Charlton Athletic Women's team games</p>	Charlton Athletic Women
<p>Performance of new caterers (Creative)</p> <p>AD said he wasn't impressed with the new caterers in terms of service and price of produce. He asked what Creative are doing about it PS also queried quality of the food and price of the food DD said the price of some products has gone up and that some others have gone down. He said the price of pints has gone up but is still under and in-line with a lot of other nearby London clubs DD said Creative are investing in the quality of the service. E.g. improving the beer quality which had previously been a little flat, particularly in the Fans' Bar AD asked how Creative were finding their first step working in stadiums. DD said Creative have a number of senior staff who have a lot of experience working in stadiums, he said the company also does other events where they are servicing hundreds of thousands of people a day. He said the service speed and transactions is well regarded DD said some of the produce has increased in price because the quality of the product has increased, for example the pies and the locally sourced burgers IW said he didn't have any complaints about the food but did about the bar staff in the Fans' Bar DD said it is not the first time the issue has been brought up and there have been a few issues in the Fans' Bar. DD said a new, improved till system has been brought in which has made things quicker for the most part but has taken some time for some staff to adapt to. DD said there are agency staff used and they keep a list of people</p>	AD, PS and IW

<p>that don't get invited back, he said they are recruiting more people. He said the staff and managers are fantastic and they are bringing in some really good people. He said fans will start seeing the same faces in the Fans' Bar</p> <p>DD said the new till system is having a big impact. He said it has only been in a few games and has provided a big uplift in terms of transaction speed</p> <p>RH asked why they ran out of beer at the Birmingham game in the Covered End Upper. DD said there were issues in the Covered End Upper but it shouldn't be an issue going forward</p> <p>RH said he really likes the new Apple pay option and said it needs to be signposted to stop people queuing up in the wrong area</p> <p>BR asked about a shorter pipe run. DD said it is what it is but Heineken are investing in some new kit, so there are new Heineken taps in the Covered End</p> <p>BR asked if the real ale bar was coming back. DD said they are looking at doing something but aren't sure what it is yet. He said for the moment they are focussed on making sure everything already in place is up to standard</p> <p>RP said with new caterers coming in, there are going to be teething problems and learnings in all areas. He said he sits down pre and post-match with Creative to continue to improve the service</p> <p>PS said he had a specific query around an individual's food at a recent game and he would pick-up with DD</p> <p>PS asked to ensure that experienced staff are cooking the food on matchdays. DD said that Creative have very stringent due diligence checks in place from delivery, through to storage, to cooking. He said everything they do is documented and recorded and that their Health & Safety Compliance Manager is at The Valley for most games. He said every chef has to have a certain level of food qualification</p>	
<p>Ticket office opening hours</p> <p>CL asked why there is a reduction in the ticket office opening hours</p> <p>KC said they tracked and monitored the ticket office over the last six-to-twelve months in terms of phone calls received and fans turning up in person. She said they found with so many more people purchasing online there are fewer and fewer people purchasing in-person or on the phone</p> <p>She said the tracking highlighted timings when calls and in-person purchases were particularly low and the ticket office hours were adjusted accordingly</p> <p>She said it is still important to cater for people purchasing in-person and on the phone which is why it is still open for much of the week. The ticket office opening hours can be viewed here</p> <p>TK said the ticket office closing mean the staffing resource could be re-allocated to make it more efficient. He said they aren't cutting back in staff but are using the time to make the service better. He said in the past staff would be sitting, waiting by a window</p> <p>CL said someone needs to stick up for the OAPs without computers and printers</p> <p>KC said the ticket office is still open throughout much of the week and that in her experience the older fans tend to purchase their tickets at the ticket office on a Friday before a game</p> <p>CL said the Reminiscence group meet on a Thursday and some had mentioned they'd like the ticket office open on that day</p>	CL
<p>Senior management attendance at Fans' Forum</p> <p>RW said it is advertised that Fans' Forum meetings will be attended by senior management and that wasn't the case at the last meeting but added there were plenty in attendance at this meeting. He asked that it be remembered that this is what "structured dialogue" as mandated by the EFL is all about</p>	RW

<p>Centenary celebrations</p> <p>CL wanted to congratulate the club on the matchday programme for the centenary game which the Reminiscence Group thought was very good. IW agreed RW asked about the centenary gates. RP said a centenary dinner is on sale. He said the 60s and 70s night had sold out and that almost every month there is an event scheduled with some of the funds going to the Community Trust and some of the funds going towards the gates</p>	CL
<p>Ticketing survey</p> <p>RW talked through the results of the ticketing survey which can be found here KC said she was pleased with the positivity around the system and that hopefully working with the fans the service will continue to improve AA talked through upcoming ticketing marketing plans including the club's social media spend, the clubs email distribution and text message campaigns AA said more than 78% of tickets outside of matchday have been purchased online, with more recent games trending over 80%. Last season the average was 57.4% TK said of data captured from season ticket holders, the average age last year was 53. He said this year the average age is 41 IW and AD praised the current ticketing staff</p>	RW
<p>Concession controls</p> <p>TK said the club installed a new ticket monitoring system in the summer, so that when someone comes through the turnstile, a light system will highlight concession tickets TK said the purchasing patterns around U11 tickets was extremely high and didn't match other purchasing patterns. He said the club began tracking it and identified adults purchasing as U11s TK said as fans had been asking about it, he wanted to know if there were any questions PS said there had been some complaints about fans having to re-submit concession information KC said the change from the old ticketing system to the new ticketing system meant concession information wasn't able to be transferred which is why some fans had to re-submit. She said given the improved system it won't happen again BR asked how the club was able to track the trend TK said the club had tracked over a long period of time, as a decrease in average spend was seen. They looked at various options and one option identified was adults purchasing as U11s, which is why the club then looked into it <i>(Post meeting note: Based on ticketing data, estimates suggest that on average more than 180 tickets each game are now being purchased as adult tickets that were previously purchased as U11s tickets following the implementation of the controls)</i> RH said the club have strict rules on disability. He said the clubs need to think about what is and isn't a disability KC said these are the sort of topics the club look at in the summer. She said the club are in line with every other club. She said she'd picked up with the club's disability liaison office</p>	Club
<p>Safe standing at The Valley</p> <p>The Supporters Trust ran a survey a few years ago showing a high level of support for safe standing but also a need for more knowledge RW said a roadshow was planned but cancelled when Katrien Meire resigned RW said he believes there is a gradual shift towards safe standing and that the club and Trust will meet with safe standing experts</p>	RW
<p>Away ticket pricing</p>	RW

<p>RW explained the Premier League had brought in an away ticket pricing cap of £30 and there had been movements to bring in a similar cap in the Championship RW said he had a useful meeting with TK and AA and then the Football Supporters Association to learn more about it RW said it is complicated with concessions etc and he added that ticket income is a higher percentage of total income in the Championship than in the Premier League RW said Leeds' cheapest ticket for away fans appears to be £37, while Sheffield Wednesday's most expensive games is £42. He said Bristol City charge £15 for some games and Reading is £20 for all away tickets RW said rather than a cap coming in to play, clubs are encouraged to adapt reciprocal arrangements. So that if Charlton fans only pay £20 for an away game, it wouldn't be unreasonable that Charlton offer the same option to away fans at The Valley RW said the Supporters Trust will continue to look to work with the club on this topic and will propose a reciprocal arrangement for the Reading game next April</p>	
<p>Position of stewards during games PS said stewards helping late arrivers to their seats, sometimes stand in front of fans. He said it was noticeable at the Nottingham Forest game (on a Wednesday evening) TK took note of location and said it would be felt back to stewards</p>	PS
<p>Valley Pass LH said you can't hear the questions on Lee Bowyer's press conferences TR said the club are aware of the issue and looking at what can be done around it</p>	TR
<p>Supporters Survey RW said there had been an EFL Supporters Survey in January and asked if the club had feedback TR had the full booklet, which is quite general and can be shared with fans that want to see it TR said the club also had a separate club specific slide which included: Highest rated areas (from last season)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety in stadium • Ease of ticket purchase • Atmosphere inside the stadium <p>Lowest rated elements (from last season)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Price of food and drink • Quality of food and drink <p>RW to meet with club to go through survey</p>	TR
<p>Network Rail line closures CL asked for more information to be made available to supporters after issues around a recent game TK said any maintenance work on the lines is normally planned well in advance long before the fixtures come out TK said there is a TFL representative on the club's Safety Advisory Committee. He said the club will follow-up about getting more real-time information that can be communicated TR said the club would look at options for including on their communication channels AD said it also worth speaking to away clubs so they are aware of potential transport problems</p>	CL
<p>Reporting abuse on a matchday</p>	Club

<p>TK said the club are looking at their processes around reporting abuse on a matchday</p> <p>RH said no club is doing this perfectly because there is no one simple answer for example, some fans don't feel comfortable reporting abuse to a steward</p> <p>RH said Charlton is one of the better clubs. He said he meets other teams' supporters who seem to experience worse but that work is still needed at Charlton</p> <p>AD said he'd like to see the Covered End Upper stop singing "the Adams family", he said it's an embarrassment. PS said this is why he doesn't bring his grand-daughters to a game</p> <p>It was agreed that a well-publicised number which supporters could text to report abuse during a game would be a good idea</p> <p>LH said there is a certain amount of lad culture which you always get at football matches, you may well do more harm trying to ban certain songs</p> <p>RH said the "Oh South London" song is offensive</p> <p>RH said by educating and explaining things can change</p>	
<p>Management team/player contracts</p> <p>CL said Lee Bowyer and his management team and possibly some of the players should be given longer contracts</p> <p>LDT said the owner is aware of the contract situation of Lee Bowyer and the rest of the management team. He said the owner is very happy with Bowyer and the management team. He said it is something that will be looked at as the season progresses</p> <p>LDT gave the example of appointing Steve Gallen as a director because of the positive impact he's had on the club in the last few years. LDT said he will make it clear to Roland Duchatelet that it is a concern of the fans</p> <p>CL asked if they'll wait until the end of the season as they did last year as they fear Bowyer will be gone by then. LDT said that will not be the case this season</p> <p>RW said any new owner would be mad to replace the current management team and therefore, if they were under longer contracts, he didn't believe it would be an obstacle to sell the club</p> <p>IW said that, if LB left the club, he would inevitably be moving up and that a longer term contract would at least protect the club in terms of compensation</p> <p>The fans attending the meeting unanimously agreed that the urgency of the situation should be stressed to the owner</p> <p>LDT said he would pass the message on to the owner</p>	CL
<p>Takeover update</p> <p>Click here to read the update</p>	
<p>Director attendance</p> <p>BR asked about director attendance at Fans' Forum meetings</p> <p>IW requested that the timing for the next meeting be scheduled around Steve Gallen's availability</p> <p>IW asked if Richard Murray was going to attend Fans' Forums</p> <p>TK said director attendance could potentially be captured in the aforementioned terms of reference. He said that Steve Gallen and Richard Murray could potentially alternate</p> <p>BR asked if the club were in breach of the EFL regulations by not having a CEO. LDT said there had not been any complaints or comments from the EFL about it. RW said when CAST met the EFL, they confirmed the club was complying with EFL regulations</p>	BR
<p>PA announcements</p>	CL

CL said there had been complaints about being able to hear the pitchside announcer. AD said he hears the announcer only too clearly. IW said it seems worse in the West Stand TK said he'd look into it	
Proud Valiants TR said the Proud Valiants, Charlton's LGBTQI+ friendly fan group, won the Fans For Diversity award for League One last season	Club
Covered End signs RW asked why it said Covered End and not The Covered End IW said he would raise the point with the Centenary Committee RH asked where the fans flags would now go TK said the club will look into it	RW
Fans' Forum bank account IW to provide statement at next Fans' Forum meeting	LH
Player appearance requests TR said different fan groups get different players for different meetings TR said some fan groups are getting more players/coaches because they know who to contact TR said an option would be for the Fans' Forum to manage the distribution of the player appearance requests.	TR
Next meeting agreed for December 12 th 2019 (<i>This has since been moved to December 9th 2019</i>)	