

Birmingham City Football Club
Supporters Forum: May 2017

Location: Jasper Carrott Suite (18:30)

Chair: Rachele Johnson (SLO) – BCFC

BCFC Representatives: Roger Lloyd (Senior Finance Officer), Colin Tattum (Head of Media & Communication), Michelle Daly (Head of Human Resources), Wayne Cowen (Head of Retail & Ticketing), Sharon Byrne (Retail Catering Manager), Aamir Javaid (Ticketing Manager), Dave Hoult (Safety Officer).

Supporter Group Representatives: Lynda Courts (Redditch Blues), Dave Smith (BCFC Fan Forum), Ray & Tina Hobrow (Blues Collective), Chris Sinclair (Northside Blues), Micky & Bik Singh (Blues4All), Linda Goodman (Birmingham), Tony Routley (Central Blues Travel), Margaret Decker, Richard Stanley & Phil Beardmore (Blues Trust).

Unaffiliated Supporter Representatives (2016/17): Emma Willock, Andrew Orgill, Clare Normanton.

Agenda:

1. Introductions
2. Ownership
3. Retail
4. Ticketing
5. Catering
6. Marketing
7. Media and Communication
8. Match Days & Facilities
9. Ladies
10. AOB

Introductions – Rachele Johnson



BIRMINGHAM CITY

Ownership

Q. Many Birmingham City supporters have said they would like the Club to communicate more, to talk about their plans & explain the reasons for their actions. Do the directors have any plans to increase their engagement with supporters next season?

Unfortunately the new board couldn't attend the forum as they are back in China so send their apologies. From a business perspective there are certain things that cannot be conveyed and advertised to supporters such as prospective players etc. However, Roger has advised he will convey the message that supporters would like more engagement on a personal level from the board perhaps in the form of statements directly to the fans.

Q. What exactly are TTA's plans for the future of the Club?

The objective is to get into the Premier League. Having Harry in as manager is the first step in making changes that will move us towards the Premiership which is the primary goal.

Retail

Q. Why has it taken so long for the new kit to be announced?

It hasn't taken longer than normal and there isn't a delay as the season only finished last week.

Q. Do we have dates for the replica shirt release & sale?

June and July for kit launch – we don't have exact dates yet but that will be announced via Club channels closer to the time.

Q. I've been really disappointed with quality of the Adidas kit and range of merchandise. Will this be better next year? I read somewhere that this year it was made by Adidas UK and this may have had something to do with it.

Unfortunately you can't please everybody however; it seems to have been very popular with the majority of fans. Our shirt sales have gone up 55% on last year and training wear has gone up 85% on last year. The figures are showing that people like having Adidas products.

Ticketing

The Villa ticket distribution was a debacle. Any plans to review this next year as most Silver Away travel members missed out and £178.50 for the corporate event was insulting to the fans?

The Villa match was sold in exactly the same way as every other away game and exactly the same as the Cup match last year. The issue was the reduction in allocation which meant that people who were eligible for tickets when the allocation was 2800 for the Cup match faced not being able to get a ticket as the allocation was reduced to 2000 this time. The decision was taken by West Midlands Police, the council, Villa and BCFC and it was agreed 2000 tickets was the limit. Being a member of the Away Travel Scheme does not guarantee an away ticket. We currently have 2500 members in the Away Scheme. We are looking into bringing a Bronze level for the Away scheme to make it fairer which will start from 3 games and Silver will start at 5.

What has been the delay in advertising Season Ticket prices? Huddersfield released early bird & extremely good prices regardless of division so I don't think our uncertainty over relegation or staying up would be an issue. The Villa Season Tickets are also much cheaper than an adult down at St. Andrew's & West Brom have cut early bird ticket prices due to falling attendances – will this also be addressed for cheaper Season Ticket prices at St. Andrew's for fans?

The delay was simply due to not knowing whether the Club would face relegation or not. We are currently awaiting confirmation from the Board as to what the plans are for Season Tickets.

Across the board BCFC are cheaper for Season Tickets. On the Villa website their cheapest ST for an adult is £322, Our cheapest ST is £230.

How is it possible for Away fans to purchased tickets in the Eze Group Stand (D Block) as this has happened at least 3 times this season – they are getting the tickets from the Main Stand Ticket Office.

We try to stop this where possible but it isn't always something we can stop from happening. For the big matches there is always a booking history where you can only purchase tickets in the home end if you have previously attended matches.



BIRMINGHAM CITY FOOTBALL CLUB

Catering

Q. I avoid Jacob's Ladder ribs as I don't think they are practical to eat at a football ground, particularly with no soap to wash hands. I mentioned this to the regular chef & asked him to pass on this feedback to his manager but I was told "I will pass on your comments but don't think much will change".

We will be reviewing all Cookhouse menus throughout the closed season and concede that ribs at a football match is not the easiest food to eat.

There were no food facilities in the Main Stand for the Burton game, why and when will it change?

At the Burton game, some foods in the Main Stand were sold out. But the staff brought over more from other stands.

Went to Wembley last weekend and they had beer dispensers that filled plastic glasses from the bottom up. The turnover was quick as the operator could place a glass on the dispenser up to 4 at a time. Could the Club look at investing in those?

We would love to do that but the kit is very expensive and would require some serious investment. Currently in some kiosks we have 6 and 12 pourers.

Are there any plans to extend the range of beer? Also, the hawkers are a great idea but every time I've used them the beer was flat and warm.

We are tied to Heineken as sponsors so it's something we can look into but for now will stay the same. The hawkers are based behind the Club shop and are very popular. If beer is warm, supporters should complain on the day so this can be looked into there and then.

At the last meeting my comments were brought up regarding the poor quality of refreshments. It was relayed back that the Club said there is a Cookhouse. Since then I have been to 3 home games (2 in the Main Stand and 1 in the Gil Merrick) and have not seen one. Are there plans to extend this to other areas of the ground?

There is a Cookhouse in the Eze Group Stand in D-Bar. The only stand to not have a Cookhouse is the Gil Merrick and as it stands we're looking into possibility of adding one in there.

We will look into posting more signage in the areas with a Cookhouse to advertise it better.



BIRMINGHAM CITY FOOTBALL CLUB

Marketing

EFL Digital has informed their subscribers that BCFC will be re-launching their website in June and that the Club will communicate details. Can the Club comment on why they have decided to stop using EFL Digital and what their plans are for the Birmingham City website?

The EFL website was expensive and clunky and the contract was due to run out. We will be launching a new website (hopefully) in June that has been designed by the Club and will provide better, more fan-targeted content which will also be available on mobiles.

I regularly use the Cookhouse but make other arrangements if I don't know the menu as the Blues News email isn't always sent out in time for me to read it before I leave, particularly mid-week.

For a Saturday match, the emails go out on a Thursday but it will be chased up with Marketing when the emails are sent out midweek. Will look at potentially putting the menu in the pre-match review as well.

Media and Communication

We've had the same programme cover for at least 20 years (a picture of a squad player). Could the theme be changed? Maybe next season concentrate on fans, the season after the staff, then the history etc.

Unfortunately we cannot justify the changing the cover of the programme due to cost. We will however, look at making it more "snazzy" and do what we can to change it up.

With the end of Blues Player, does the Club have any plans to replace it, and if so, what changes can fans expect? If not, will live commentaries be able to continue in some other way? Are there plans to show a greater length of extended highlights of matches than is currently available?

Blues Player will continue, just not under the EFL website. Commentaries will be continue and live streaming will be there for fans abroad when overseas television companies haven't already got the rights.

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BIRMINGHAM CITY FOOTBALL CLUB

Ladies

Q. Now the Ladies are fully incorporated within the Blues umbrella – standing contracts aside, could the Ladies play more games at St. Andrew’s? Bringing in another stream of supporters, regularly, into St. Andrew’s could have benefits down the years.

Historically the reason we have been unable to have the ladies play at St. Andrew’s is due to the pitch. This is not in the process of being changed to a synthetic weave which is more durable. We will see how it goes however; with the new Ladies season it will potentially clash with the men’s first team meaning we still need the second ground of Solihull Moors.

Match Day and Facilities

Is there a possibility of putting TV screens in the Eze Group Stand concourse/food area to watch Sky Sports pre-match and at half time?

That “concourse” area wasn’t built with that in mind – we can look into it but there is a very small possibility just because the area is so small and TVs could cause congestion and a safety issue.

Half-time entertainment has been a bit rubbish this season. Chip & win previously was more visible & quite fun to watch. Bring it back!

Unfortunately chip and win will not be coming back however; the Commercial team have been given the feedback and will look into ways to make the half-time entertainment more engaging and entertaining.

Gents toilets in the Kop Entrance 6 have no soap and generally the toilets are an issue but we were told they are being looked into during the closed season?

The toilets are to be addressed during the closed season and Dave Hault will be meeting with Steve Pain to discuss this and take the feedback on board. Will look into the possibility of hand sanitiser gel as well.

Having sat in the Lower GM I found it difficult to hear a thing that was said on the PA system. Are there any plans to invest in a quality PA company?

Dave Hault will give Dave his contact details so when the season starts again if it happens once more, Dave and a member of the maintenance department will go to the area to see what the issue is.

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