

Supporters Forum February 2016 1300 International Suite

Attendees: David Boston (DB), Tom Rowell (TR), Colin Tattum (CT), John Griffin (JG), Margaret Decker (MD), Linda Goodman (LG), Tony Routely (TYR), Bik Singh (BS), Chris Sinclair (CS), David Edwards (DE), David Smith (DS), Dean Lomas (DL), Ray Hobrow (RH), Lynda Courts (LC) Tina Hobrow (TH)

Updates from previous meetings: DB

Ball Boys: DB advised that ball boys are currently provided by the BCFC Community Trust. The supporter's observations have been fed back Dean Holtham and the CT staff. BCFC management have previously looked into the feasibility of using local schools or community groups for this function however this is not currently possible due to employment legislation.

Parking Permits: At the time of writing there has been no update from Birmingham City Council (BCC) about the proposed implementation of parking permits in the residential streets around St. Andrews. BCFC believe the public consultation is ongoing and will remain in dialogue with the Council on this matter.

Pedestrian Safety Bordesley Circus: The remodelled traffic island and pedestrian crossings will be in operation ahead of next season. It is hoped this will significantly assist supporters walking from Digbeth to St. Andrew's on a match day and increase the safety of those crossing roads.

Road Closures around St. Andrew's: Steve Pain advised that the Coventry Road must be closed as per BCC advice but there is no current directive re Cattell Road. Steve Pain and Dave Hault will refer back to the Council regarding proposed changes.

Vaping: Dave Hault (Safety Officer) to review current policy regarding all forms of smoking in the stadium bowl and this will be reviewed over close season. Any changes will be included in the Customer Charter 2016/17 and announced via the clubs media channels.

Hand drying facilities: Commercial and Operations department's are in the process of obtaining quotes to improve facilities with a view to installation ahead of next season.

Agenda:

Ticketing & Retail:

- Can BCFC influence the price of away tickets? We already have members who refuse to pay over £30 for an adult ticket and are therefore staying away when they would normally have gone to the game. **The club has no influence over the price of away tickets as per Football League rules on ticket pricing.**
- Can the Ticket Office issue a tweet whenever away ticket selling details are announced? **Ticket selling arrangements are already promoted via bfc.com and on**

our social media channels and this will be maintained.

- What are the Club doing to attract local youngsters to come and support the club? What discounted tickets are offered? **The Club continue to promote the popular Ticket Incentive scheme for local schools and community groups. The Club are working with Blues4All and ensuring that we provide marketing materials for use at local Temples and places of worship. The Club have hosted a number of local primary schools during educational open days during where each child was offered free tickets for the Family Stand which we hope will encourage local families to attend the Club.**
- Facility to redeem loyalty points at the online shop would be excellent.. It would be great after logging in to the online store, if I could see my points total & also have the option to redeem any points against the purchase of new merchandise. (Same goes for online ticket purchases, come to think of it). **Tom Rowell (Head of Brand and Marketing) advised that the current software and system does not allow this level of integration and without significant investment the Club cannot upgrade. However fans can log on to the Blues Loyalty portal and view your updated points balance.**
- Free club shirt with every season ticket brought, get some club colours in the stands again, we don't see shirts, scarf's flags etc. **Replica shirt sales account for a vast majority of retail income and there is no business case to offer complementary shirts for STH's.**
- Members with season tickets have seen that the club is advertising Beer and a Balti for Bolton when you buy your match ticket; they want to know how this works for them?
- How are Vegetarians being catered for - it only says chicken Balti, and the pies/hotdogs and burgers are not suitable?
- **The Club have been clear that this promotion is an attempt to improve attendance at St. Andrew's especially for a fixture which is not one that may ordinarily appeal to our 'floating' supporters who attend matches infrequently. The Club have a mandate to try new initiatives and promotions, and our fans regularly provide us with feedback that we should do more in this field. However, we have been clear that if this offer receives overwhelmingly negative feedback we will simply not run the promotion again. We sensitive to our season ticket holder's views and comments and we are willing to listen to their views and give them appropriate consideration. Extra stock has been ordered by Sharon Byrne, the Clubs Catering Manager to meet the anticipated demand. Vegetarian options (including a soup from the Cookhouse) will be available.**

Concourse Catering:

Over the next 6 months The Club will be conducting a review of the Clubs concourse

catering. All aspects of our matchday catering will be reviewed and the Club are focused upon providing a better and more efficient level of service at the concourses around the stadium. The Club have highlighted that a number of matchday and casual staff have been lost to venues such as Resorts World due to competitive pay rates. However, the Club are actively recruiting new staff and proactively filling any shortages as required.

- Why have they stopped selling soup in the concourse areas - the one that was £1, they did vegetable and chicken I think? **Soups remain available at Cookhouse outlets on the concourses at each home game.**
- Get some decent big screens in the bars to watch blues highlights (with sound please) before the match and at HT. The 2 bars in the kop are soulless places, plain, drab, cold, and couldn't be made worse. **New flat screen TVs have been installed in the concourse areas ahead of schedule and will be in place for the Bolton fixture on 23/02/16.**
- Could the Club make some provision for paying by chip and pin at the food counters? As far as I'm aware it's just cash only at the moment (Kop entrances 5 and 6). **The Club is looking at all options including tokens chip and pin, contactless payment in an effort to make the process more efficient and convenient for supporters.**
- Concourse catering - the areas are cold and sterile; the menus look as though they haven't changed from the 1970s/1980's. **The Club acknowledge that some parts of the stadium require upgrading. However, any changes or updates can only be implemented where affordable and where budgets allow.**
- Why are there no burger stalls in the ground anymore? The stalls outside the ground were doing a roaring trade again last week, is it because Blues don't need the money? **New burger vans were purchased by the Club over the summer in place of the previous burger vans which were provided by outside caterers. This investment ensures that sales and profit is returned directly to the Club rather than a third party. The Club are looking to invest in more of these vans over the summer and increase the amount of outlets available.**
- Real ale sold on the concourses please. Oxford Utd do real ale and cider as do Shrewsbury Town who have a mobile bar in the concourse of the West Stand with I think four pumps on the go. **BCFC currently have a commercial contract with Heineken, however real ale is currently available in Bar 8. The Club are looking to introducing beer and mobile food units and using "hawkers" to sell refreshments on the concourses. The implementation of these Hawkets has to date been restricted by a lack of available staff.**
- I went to Brighton away and the food there was exceptional, if Birmingham can provide a menu and cook it to the standards of what Brighton have done it would really speak volumes of what the club want to achieve with pleasing the spectators **The Club are restricted by the existing facilities and available space unlike Brighton**

and their new stadium which has more room for preparation and service. However, as part of the ongoing review the Club will review the types and quality of food on offer.

- More staff on at half time. Maybe alcohol can be served in plastic bottles instead of staff having to pour pints and take forever to serve people. Unless you leave 10 minutes before half time you will struggle to get a drink and have it before the second half starts. **It is acknowledged that service on concourses is an issue and this area of business is under review. Where possible the Club will revise current arrangements to ensure that waiting times are reduced.**

Ground maintenance & facilities:

- Some areas of the ground developed leaky roof syndrome at some of the games when it rained heavily - how is this monitored and will repairs be made? Leaks have appeared during recent spells of heavy rain. **This is in part due to the age of the Roof on the Kop and Tilton Road stands and the maintenance team have worked over the last 2 weeks to repair all known leaks. Should supporters notice a leak near to their seats they are encourage notifying David Boston who will liaise with the stadium maintenance team to ensure that repairs are made and the problem is addressed.**
- Why has the big screen and PA system been unreliable? Why doesn't the big screen show substitutions? Does a non-functioning PA systems breach health and safety regulations because it would be dangerous in an emergency where it was necessary to evacuate the ground? **The wireless microphone previously used had broken but the Club have invested in new equipment which has been more reliable and there have been no issues since it was installed. The use of the Big Screen is limited by the current software and the Commercial team are investigating the cost of both a new screen and upgrading the software used. At no time has supporter safety been compromised and the tannoy system used for evacuations and emergency announcements has remained in use and in full working order.**
- The state of the area around the ground. I know it's not something the club controls, but someone somewhere needs to lobby the council to do something about the fly tipping and general mess that can be seen everywhere - especially on the grass verge & corner of Coventry Rd where it meets Kingston Rd. I'm not sure what can be done, but I feel it really does paint the club - and the city - in a dreadful light for home and especially travelling fans. **The Club do pay to clean the footprint of the stadium and this is done prior to each matchday and following each home game. However, the Club have no control over condition of the surrounding areas of the ground for which BCC retain responsibility.**
- Maintenance issue: having been sent tickets for the other end of the Kop to where we usually go I struggled to find Block 20 because the plastic sticky numbers have all fallen off the backs of the seats. It's no big deal but I thought it made the place look really shoddy. **This has been flagged to the ticket office and the maintenance team**

and this issue will be addressed ahead of next season.

Matchday entertainment:

- The 'Tamperer music is diabolical and I feel dejected when it droans on around St. Andrews before the match, it doesn't motivate players or fans at all. Speaking from a personal point of view anything but 'The Tamperer' would be preferable. Try reverting back to Mr Blue Sky by ELO or try a modern twist with an oasis hit (although their man city supporters).
- We need better sound system in ground. Also need more rousing music (e.g. B'ham bands like UB40, ELO etc) before kick off to get crowd going and generate atmosphere. Music is barely audible and cannot hear half time announcer when interviewing ex players. **The half-season survey reflected that supporters are divided over the entrance music with 50% wishing to keep the current arrangement and viewing it as part of the Clubs identity. At present there are no plans to change the Tamperer however; the Club will monitor responses to our annual surveys. Pre-match music has been changed to improve atmosphere and the volume levels adjusted to try and find a better balance as some supporters find the music very loud and others cannot hear it.**

Supporters groups & Government report on Supporter Ownership and Engagement:

- Suggestion that that the different supporters' groups should try to agree on a co-ordinated approach to the City Council to seek to prevent the imposition of parking restrictions. This is an opportunity for supporters and club to co-operate.
- What is the club's view of the Final Report of the Government Expert Working Group Report on Football Supporter Ownership and Engagement? In particular, how will it implement the recommendations in 3.33 -3.36?
- *"3.33 The Leagues will recommend to their member clubs that the 2012 undertaking and the subsequent application of the relevant League rules will be met by meeting a representative group of supporters at least twice a year to discuss major issues. – **This recommendation is already in place and the Club have committed to quarterly meetings with representatives from supporter groups.***
- *3.34 The Leagues will recommend that this representative group of supporters includes the club's Supporters Trust. The Leagues will advise clubs that no individuals should be excluded from the meetings without good reason, and, if attendances at these meetings is restricted to a small group of supporters – which is the preference of SD/FSF– a significant proportion of this representative group of supporters should be elected, selected or invited to these meetings in line with basic democratic principles. **The Club currently invite representatives from supporters groups to attend quarterly meetings held between August and May. From May 2016 the Club will seek x8 volunteers to represent unaffiliated supporters at the supporters meetings in addition to the existing supporter group representatives. The Club***

believe that this is a fair way to ensure the supporters meetings are representative and accessible to as many supporters as possible.

- 3.35 *Senior representatives from the clubs – either club owners/directors and/or senior executive management should represent the club at these meetings. The Group recognises the importance of Supporter Liaison Officers and their roles in providing a key interface between clubs and fans on a wide range of issues - and this should continue - but this formal, structured dialogue should be led by owners / directors / senior executive management. Meetings held since November 2015 have featured different representatives and several heads of departments. This will continue for the foreseeable future where departmental leads can provide specific updates on their area of business. It is planned that at the meeting held each August representatives from the Clubs board/senior management will attend and be on hand to discuss issues and provide answers to any questions.*

Policing and safety:

- I keep hearing about cars being broke into during match days, are the club aware? **The Club have not been made aware of any specific incidents around St. Andrew's and will work with Colin Barlow of West Midlands Police wherever possible should this trend continue.**

Disabled supporters:

- More coach capacity for disabled supporters wishing to attend away fixtures. The Club currently provide completely free away travel to all disabled supporters. **Free away travel is available for ALL disabled supporters subject to capacity. The challenge the Club face is managing the demand and ensuring that all those who express an interest in away travel can be accommodated. This is being reviewed ahead do next season in conjunction with the Clubs Disabled Supporter Liaison Officer, John Starkey.**
- Shelter from the elements at the front of the GML for us wheelchair supporters. At present there is nowhere for us to move out of the rain and I've had complaints many times with regards to me taking in a brolley to keep me dry. **The Club do provide free ponchos' for disabled supporters and we also provide free hot drinks at half time for supporters in wheelchairs. Ponchos are available for disabled supporters on matchdays from the Ticket Office or SLO 'Info hut' located near Kop Entrance 6.**
- To add to this, disabled at football not just Blues is always about the physical disabled, but what about people with mental health disabilities. Considering all the talk from Government and media, the players and people in the game who have spoken out on the issue or those that have committed suicide; football, the FA and

Kick It Out do nothing for fans with mental illness, I don't even think the disabled fans club engages with mental illness but i may be wrong, so I don't go anymore, it's easier to travel 30 miles in my car to go to work on a Saturday than go to the match.

The Club recognise that mental health conditions do impact upon the match day experience of some supporters and that reasonable adjustments should be considered wherever possible. To date the Club have not been notified of any specific requirements but if contacted are very open to discussing options and solutions to ensure no one is precluded from attending St. Andrews.