



BIRMINGHAM CITY
FOOTBALL CLUB

Birmingham City Football Club Supporters Forum: May 2016

Location: Boardroom (18:30)

Chair: David Boston

Guest Speaker: Rob Smith

Confirmed Attendees: MD - Margaret Decker (Blues Trust), (AH) Adrian Howell - Blues Collective, LC - Lynda Courts (Redditch Blues), LB - Lesley Bott (BCFC Disabled Supporters Club), Russell Dempsey (Joys and Sorrows), DS - David Smith (Blues Official Forum) Bik Singh (Blues4All).

Agenda:

1. Introductions
2. Retail
3. Ticketing
4. Marketing
5. Commercial
6. Match Days
7. Fan Representation at BCFC Supporters Forum
8. Rob Smith – Concourse Catering Presentation

Retail

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- There has to be more stock available for the new kit for the 2016/17 season I know it's not really down to the Club but we need to make sure our replica kit is available for the whole season and it's not completely sold out by Christmas.
- **Announcement made following the supporters forum that next seasons home kit will be revealed on 06/06/16 and will be on general on sale in on 15/06/16. Further details will be provided on bcfc.com in due course.**

Ticketing

- We are aware of the club's constant reminder that Season Ticket holders get the cheapest ticket prices for the season (compared to match-by-match purchases) but once you have our money, some feel we aren't given a second thought despite the occasional 'we appreciate your loyalty' spiels.
- **A season ticket offers extremely good value especially when compared to other local Clubs. The prices have also been frozen for a third season. Under-11's remain free and significant concessions for disabled supporters (with free carer) remain. Comparable rates are not offered by a number of local Clubs and other teams in the Championship. Priority for away tickets, cup tickets and free Loyalty account, with associated benefits also provided. The request for enhancements to the current season tickets package to be raised with Wayne Cowen and Tom Rowell ahead of 2016/17 season.**
- Can 'kids for a quid' be extended, even if it's a low age threshold to qualify?
- **The 'Kids for a Quid' promotion was available at a number of home fixtures this season as part of the local ticketing promotions permitted by the Football League.**
- Savings scheme for season tickets please.
- **Proposal for savings scheme to be referred to Wayne Cowen and Tom Rowell for consideration ahead of 2017/18 season. There is however, an existing option for the purchase of a season tickets in instalments via V8 Finance (0%) over 8 months.**

Marketing

- Not to do with catering but the ticket purchasing website, loyalty website and online store would be much better off all implemented together as one website rather than having to go here there and everywhere to find what you need. Not sure how plausible it may be given that we use Ticket Master for our ticket sales though.

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- The Club is nearing the end of a commercial contract with Football League Interactive which expires in 2017. A full review of the available options is currently being undertaken.

Commercial

- Maybe organise concerts/gigs, charity football matches, outdoor cinema etc at St. Andrew's?
- We are open to concerts being held at St. Andrew's but with the current infrastructure these can only generally be scheduled for immediately at the end of the season due to the annual renovation works to the pitch which are required at the end of each season. We are looking at this longer term, in line with future investment to improve the pitch infrastructure (installation of the Desso system – a system where part synthetic fibres are stitched in with the natural grass). Such a system would better facilitate multi-use and enable us to host a concert when promoters prefer (mid-summer). The Club have hosted a number of charity matches including Help Harry Help Others, Football Aid, and one for Joshua Ribero. Again, pitch infrastructure restricts us generally to the period of commercial use immediately at the end of the season but we have and still do hold various charity football matches.

Match Day

- No problems with the safety but I know a lot of people are really eager to see a safe standing section for fans who want to stand up for the whole game, this may be a long shot but I'd like to see it happen myself in the near future for example if Celtics safe standing section.
- As discussed at previous forum events it is clear that installation of safe-standing into the stadium would come at significant cost and is not a straight forward issue. St. Andrew's has been constructed as an 'all seater' stadium with access and egress, turnstiles and infrastructure built for such (and in accordance with our Safety Certificate). There are many factors to consider and the Club and the FL are in regular dialogue regarding this topic which is deemed to be an ongoing issue.
- Flares thrown from stand, during Middlesborough match - how were these missed? With the history of vandalism from visiting supporters in the local derby, what precautions will be put in place to prevent a repeat?
- Sadly, the use of pyrotechnics is now a common problem across the whole of football – some flares can be as small as a miniature pen and extremely easy to conceal in underwear etc. We are extremely pro-active in this respect and call for good behaviour pre-match and make specific reference to pyrotechnics. We display a pyrotechnics message on the big screen every pre-home match and we have a "Stop and Think" campaign endorsed by Gary Rowett

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which we push prior to high profile matches. The club has pursued a vigorous policy of searching techniques and the Pre-event Briefing to stewards and security staff contains an item specifically associated with the problems of smoke devices/pyrotechnics. Prior to the Middlesbrough game, this policy has been largely successful and we were 60% successful in identifying visitors who did bring them into St. Andrews.

- Does the club have any intelligence as to the 'unnamed Birmingham club' photographed by terrorism suspect from Paris and Belgium attacks!? Whether this was St Andrews or not, it paints a worrying future for spectator sports in this country.
- The Club have no specific information about which Birmingham based Club was photographed. However, we remain in regular dialogue with the Government and West Midlands Police, as we have done since November 2015, regarding the current situation. Our search policy was reviewed and intensified following the Paris terrorist attack in November 2015, and the Club addressed the advice received from central government. Our search policy was broadened and strengthened from advice and visits by the local police Counter Terrorism Unit. Stewarding numbers were substantially increased from that point forward and this has been the case for every game since last November – exceeding those numbers recommended by the Safety at Sports Ground Act (the "Green guide") and by our club Safety Certificate.
- Any chance of training the security to be a bit more child friendly? We understand the need for increased security searches etc after recent events but members report of at least 5 children who had season tickets who have stopped coming since the introduction of the "pat down" searches on the gates as they found the searches and security too scary. Unlikely that those 5 are the only ones either!
- Minors (under 18's) cannot be searched by law and consequently they are not given 'pat down' searches. However children's bags may be inspected if a parent/carer is present. However, this feedback will be given to Safety Officer regarding steward interaction towards children.
- What is going on with the team entrance music? It's played FAR too early currently, only then to need to be restarted when the teams do actually emerge from the tunnel - wasting the fans' energy and ultimately causing a bit of a flatter atmosphere than if the music was played at the right time. Further on this point, are we looking to change 'The Tamperer' any time soon? Some feel it's awfully dated, and I'd imagine none of the players are even aware of its significance...Other than it has been played for years, what IS its significance?

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- The Tamperer was chosen as the team's entrance music by Trevor Francis' son nearly 20 years ago. Since then the entrance music has been changed on several occasions but the Club reverted back to The Tamperer some years ago. The annual Supporter Survey shows that opinion is evenly split with half of supporters enjoying the entrance music whilst the remaining half asking the Club to change. Gary Rowett and members of the first team squad have highlighted the entrance music as an area for potential review and consideration will be given to changing the walk-out music for something more motivational. The Club will be reviewing pre-match entertainment and the entrance music over the close season in conjunction with the playing staff and management.
- I would love to see the Half time Chip and Win be selected by block/row and seat numbers rather than handpicked to ensure a more even spread of who get's picked for example the top of the Tilton doesn't often get a look in neither does the top of the Kop. Also I'd love to see a half time competition for kids perhaps a penalty shoot-out against Beau/Belle/reserve goalkeeper?
- Changes to half time entertainment are planned ahead of the 2016/17 season. The Club are also reviewing the current match day activities for families and this includes potential half time pitch based events for children.

Fan Representation at BCFC Supporters Forum

Since August 2015 we have held quarterly (Aug/Nov/Feb/May) supporter meetings with our registered supporters groups to increase our engagement with fans.

As things stand, invitations to the supporters meetings are made to all registered supporters groups (UK-based only) who are asked to send x1 representative to each meeting.

This model has provided successful and allowed a structured and formal dialogue to be developed between the Club and increase our supporter engagement.

However, in line with recently published government recommendations the Club is keen to ensure that the forums are as democratic as possible and supporters who are not affiliated with a supporter group are provided with equal opportunities to interact with the Club.

Therefore, we will be asking for x8 supporters to nominate themselves for a fixed one year term at the supporter's forum running from August 2016 –August 2017.

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Ideally, we would like to launch this expression of interest by the beginning of June so that we can announce the new members by July ahead of the new season.

- We will consider how nominees are selected to ensure an unbiased selection process. Selection may be based upon choosing x2 representatives from each of the 4 stands and include a mix of season ticket holders and match-to-match attendees. An advert will be published on all BCFC media platforms in due course and Club are to enquire about advertising the initiative in B'ham Evening Mail to ensure the widest possible reach ensuring supporters who do not use the website or social media are aware of the opportunity.

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