



Birmingham City Football Club Supporters Forum: November 2016

Location: Legends Lounge (18:30)

Chair: David Boston (SLO) – BCFC

BCFC Representatives: Panos Pavlakis (Director), Roger Lloyd (Senior Finance Officer), Joanne Allsopp (Chief Coordinating Officer), Julia Shelton (Club Secretary), Ian Dutton (Head of Commercial), Colin Tattum (Head of Media & Communication), Jess Taylor (Marketing Manager), Dave Houtt (Safety Officer), Michelle Daly (Head of HR), Wayne Cowen (Head of Ticketing & Retail), Sharon Byrne (Catering Manager).

Supporter Group Representatives: Richard Stanley (Blues Trust), Lynda Courts (Redditch Blues), Russell Dempsey (Joys and Sorrows), Linda Goodman (Birmingham), Chris Sinclair (Northside Blues), Tony Routely (Central Blues Travel), John Griffin (North West Blues), Dave Smith (Official BCFC Forum).

Unaffiliated Supporter Representatives (2016/17): Sam Court, Paul Barber, Adam Pownall, Emma Willock, Clare Normanton, Brain Chapman, Andrew Orgill, Susan Smith.

Agenda:

1. Introductions
2. Parking Update
3. Ownership
4. Retail
5. Ticketing
6. Marketing
7. Commercial
8. Media and Communication
9. HR
10. Catering
11. Match Days & Facilities
12. AOB

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Registered Office
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Parking Update

- **David Boston:** Birmingham City Council have written to the Club and confirmed that the survey of local residents is complete. The survey received a return rate of just 15%. Of those who replied, 81% were against the idea of introducing parking restrictions to the roads around St. Andrew's. Given the lack of mandate from local residents BCC will not be perusing the permit scheme any further.

Ownership

- Like most Blues fans Blues Trust would like an indication of how things might change for the better under the new regime. (John Griffin)
- **Panos Pavlakis:** TTA began committing money to the club long before the takeover was formally completed this autumn. For the first time in several years, the club has more competitive in the transfer market and able to spend money on the playing staff, both transfer/loan fees and wages. There is further money available for players in the coming transfer window. They have also put money in to make refurbishments around the ground and at the training ground. These include the building of a dome at the training ground and stadium infrastructure. TTA remain committed continued investment into the club, both for player acquisition and capital expenditure.
- Is it true, as some reports have suggested that TTA's overall objective is to sell BIHL after putting it on a sound financial footing? How does TTA intend to do this, over what timescale, and how will this affect the football club? (Richard Stanley)
- **Panos Pavlakis:** TTA have been investing the Club for some time and there is no intention to 'cut and run' as has been suggested in some quarters.
- **Colin Tattum:** TTA have asked Gary Rowett what he needs at the training ground and what facilities require improvement and further investment. This is an indication that the new ownership is committed to sustainable improvements and development of the Club, not simply looking to make a 'sharp exit'.

- Are the new owners/management open to fan representation at Board level through a constitutionally structured fans representative body. (Richard Stanley)
- **Roger Lloyd: TTA didn't compulsorily buy minority shares, so fans do still own a stake in the club. In the short term, there are no plans for fan representation at board level. The Club however remain committed to the current programme of supporter engagement and encouraging continued dialogue between supporters and the Club.**

Retail

- Limited choice of ladies wear in the shop and no ladies fit replica shirts. (Lynda Courts)
- **Wayne Cowan: This is something the club is aware of, and it is not a situation that only affects Blues. Other football clubs have the same issues and the Club are led by the level of demand for Ladies wear.**
- Lots of new designs for men/ladies/kids just have the small sewn on rectangular badge not the proper ball & globe. Hats just have a metal badge attached!! Are fans ever consulted on what ranges are introduced?? (Lynda Courts)
- **Wayne Cowan: Some supporters want a larger, embroidered badge, but others prefer a less intrusive, smaller one. We are tied into a commercial deal with Adidas UK, who have a set range of designs, whereas Adidas Global, which clubs like Manchester United and Chelsea use, have more choice. We can submit requests for different range or style, but if it is a bespoke design that differs from other clubs using Adidas UK, then there is a greater cost implication and it is a greater financial risk. There will be a half season survey in January and we will consult and ask supporters what they would like to see in terms of retail items.**

Ticketing

- What plans does the club have to increase attendances at matches? Does the club recognize that Supporters groups can help do this by strengthening the bond between supporters and club? If so, are the club willing to help Supporters groups by publicising their activities on its website, in matchday

- programmes, by adverts on the big screen and half time features (Richard Stanley)
- **Wayne Cowan:** We led a complete review of our pricing three seasons ago and the recent BBC Price of Football survey *we offer the cheapest single adult ticket in the division at £15* and the third cheapest season ticket in the division, behind only Wigan and Huddersfield. Blues have been praised for the cheapest match day experience with offers such as £15 anywhere in the stadium against Rotherham and 2-4-1 offers in forthcoming matches against Brighton and Ipswich. Blues have also offered free tickets to targeted groups such as troops, but the fact remains that approx 8,000 more fans came to the Aston Villa game than came to the Bristol City fixture.
- **David Boston:** Supporters groups are welcome to approach the Club with suitable ideas for appropriate advertising their initiatives, particularly if they support charitable organisations or would mutually benefit the club and group's profile. We have already done this by hosting a meeting of the Blues Trust at St. Andrew's, worked with Blues Collective organising events at the stadium and more recently, help to promote the work of Blues4All.
- Season ticket holders including myself have never received notification this season of their Away Priority as in previous seasons. A small point but supporters would like to know their status. (John Griffin)
- **Wayne Cowan:** An email is sent out with this information at the start of each season. It is suggested that supporters who did not receive it check that the email with which they are registered to the club is still valid. If in doubt, contact the Ticket Office.
- Attempted to book x4 tickets for Saturday but for 2 days now (Saturday/ Monday) nobody is answering the phones, the type of tickets we require can only be booked by phone. (Dave Smith)
- **Wayne Cowan:** The Ticket Office opening hours are 9-5, Monday to Friday. Outside those hours or during busy periods Ticketmaster are also able to take ticketing calls. This specific instance will be looked into, though it is hoped it is a 'one-off'.
- Suggestions of links with smaller local clubs like Redditch United and Solihull Moors - the friendly with Solihull was really well attended and so should have more like this, should be discounts for BCFC season ticket holders to attend their games when Blues are not playing or are playing away. (Lynda Courts)

- Wayne Cowan: Solihull Moors already offer a discounted deal. It can be looked at with other local Clubs, but the final decision would rest with them regarding discounts.
- Mobile tickets, surely in this day and age the club should be able to accept a copy of the ticket on a phone rather than it having to be physically printed? (Russell Dempsey)
- Wayne Cowan: Technically, it is possible to employ this system. However, having conducted limited trials there are some issues to consider. Sunlight can affect the scanner and fans will get frustrated if they have to wait a long time while the person in the ticket kiosk kept trying to scan a phone. The Club would need to be certain that it would work reliably and without glitches.

Marketing

- Why have the club removed the opportunity to earn Loyalty Points through the 'code' on the screen at the match? (Russell Dempsey)
- Jess Taylor: Loyalty Portal Redemptions were looked at as an alternative and different social media competitions were trialled. The half season survey will gauge fans' opinion on this issue so the club look forward to feedback.
- Loyalty Points - I don't like Loyalty Friday as it's not as easy to get points. There are limited ways to earn points now which is not as favourable, want points redeemable online (Lynda Courts)
- Jess Taylor: Again, we will listen to fans view on this and ask for suggestions about ways to redeem points in the forthcoming half season survey.

Commercial

- In the Wiseman lounge at half time, one TV has repeats of TV programmes on it but with no sound what is that all about? (Dave Smith)
- Ian Dutton: The club will make sure that is rectified ahead of the Barnsley fixture.



BIRMINGHAM CITY FOOTBALL CLUB

Media and Communication

- We are still only getting the time and the score on the big screen. Is it too much to ask for the team line ups to be shown during the match as it used to along with any yellow or red cards issued. We know the score but don't always know the other information. It is just a glorified score board at the moment. (Dave Smith)
- **Colin Tattum: We will look at potential for the inclusion of these features during matches in the near future. There is a range of as yet unused potential for the new screen, and the Club will be exploring this in the coming months.**
- Some of the adverts shown on the big screen are too glaring at night matches when they have a white background. They are hard to look towards. Have any players complained about this because it must be off putting to them. It's not like floodlights that are on all the time as the adverts flash on without warning. A darker background to the adverts is needed at night. (Dave Smith)
- **Panos Pavlakis: The big screen was an issue during the Preston game, and following feedback from supporters the brightness has been changed. It is not anticipated this will be an issue moving forward and the media team are now well aware of the issue.**

HR

- Do Blues pay the Living Wage to all employees? (Russell Dempsey)
- **Michelle Daly: We comply with all statutory guidance on the minimum and living wage and will continue to do so.**

Catering

- Half time catering - despite assurances at recent meetings, certain items are still running out (we were told that overstocks would be preferable to running out!) (Russell Dempsey)
- **Sharon Byrne: We have a new system, which will help us to keep more stock of most popular items and less of the least-selling items. It is inevitable that from time to time stock will run out, but it is in the Clubs interests to minimise how often this happens and something that requires improvement.**

- Contactless payment/ card payment in general - could this be implemented in the bars at all? In Belgium they have a system that is simple but very effective - they don't take cash or cards or anything else at the point of sale. Instead they have kiosks around the ground where you pay for what you want and you are given a ticket (or multiple tickets) which you simply hand over in exchange for your drink or burger or whatever – no change to sort out, no card machines and no queues. (Russell Dempsey)
- **Roger Lloyd: At the moment it would be too expensive to set up because of the equipment needed and the fee the club would have to pay for contactless payment, so it won't be implemented in the short term, but it is not ruled out.**
- Real ale - serve straight from the keg beer festival style and as done at Fulham and Wembley (Dave Smith)
- **Ian Dutton: It is something the club would like to implement eventually. Although it is not the same as pump pulled beer, the club does now have bottled beers of the real ale type. The problem with real ale is that it has a short shelf life, but in the Happy Abode the club is looking at a new cooling system and intends to introduce real ale and see how it sells.**
- Mobile vendors need to walk up the aisles more to cater for more customers (Dave Smith)
- **Sharon Byrne: This is something they did at the start, and should already be doing, although some fans complained that they were restricting their view of the match. It will be mentioned again to the vendor staff.**

Match Day and Facilities

- More hand driers required, particularly in ladies toilets by entrance 5 - there is 1 hand-drier - but 3 sinks and 8 toilet cubicles!! (Lynda Courts)
- **Roger Lloyd: This is something the new board wants to improve as a priority and they are looking to upgrade facilities throughout the ground.**

- You still need more shelves for drinks round circular pillars and along walls in concourse areas (Lynda Courts/Dave Smith)
- **David Boston:** This is a capital investment issue. And again, one that will be addressed along with upgrade to existing facilities in general.
- **Dave Hault:** There are health and safety issues to consider such as height of shelves and the requirement for minimum space/clearance in concourse areas which needs to be kept in mind when thinking about new shelving, etc.
- Is there any talk of the Main Stand being re-developed or is this some way off? (Dave Smith)
- **Joanne Allsopp:** At the moment, although not ideal, it is still some way off. The priority at the moment has to be improvements to the playing staff and other improvements around the ground as already mentioned.
- Is there any chance of some small ground improvements? Such as floodlighting (always seems sub-standard) or some new goal nets? The place seems tired and run-down and a bit of a spruce up is required. (Dave Smith)
- **Julia Shelton:** The current floodlights, whilst not top specification, do meet minimum EFL requirements, so they are not a current priority. However, they would need to be upgraded upon promotion to the EPL. New goal nets are on the lengthy shopping list.
- We have never had any sound on the old and single TV in the Kop bar and when they moved its position before this season they didn't bother turning it on until one home game last month. They have then turned it off and its not been on since so since the season started its been on once. Big Screens with sound and turn them on and then play lots of the best moments of our glorious club. You may actually start to create a nice atmosphere before games and at HT or is this too much to ask? (Dave Smith)
- **Dave Hault/Ian Dutton:** This will be looked at and rectified, as will the positioning of the TVs. The TVs which were previously positioned by the turnstiles or serving areas were causing congestion as people lingered near the entrance and by the concourse bars rather than moving into the ground or to the other areas.



BIRMINGHAM CITY FOOTBALL CLUB

AOB

- Despite the club banning e-cigarettes from the ground, there are still people who are ignoring this or are unaware of the rules (Dave Smith)
- **Dave Hoults: All forms of smoking in the stadium bowl are banned. Signage needs to be made more prominent and stewards will be proactively monitoring the stands and instructed to be more proactive to help this situation.**

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