



BIRMINGHAM CITY FOOTBALL CLUB

Birmingham City Football Club Quarterly Supporters Forum: Tuesday February 27th 2018

Location: Jasper Carrott Suite (18:30)

Chair: Rachele Johnson (SLO) – BCFC

WMP Representatives: PC Colin Barlow.

Supporter Group Representatives: Lynda Courts (Redditch Blues), Dave Smith (BCFC Fan Forum), Chris Sinclair (Northside Blues), Bik Singh & Colin Nelson (Blues4All), Tony Routley (Central Blues Travel), Richard Stanley and Cliff Horrocks (Blues Trust), Russell Dempsey (Joys and Sorrows), Steve Portman & Adrian Howell (Accessiblues).

Unaffiliated Supporter Representatives (2017/18): Emma Willock, Richard Cox, Clare Normanton.

Agenda:

1. Welcome
2. WMP - Villa
3. Club
4. Ticketing
5. Matchdays and Facilities
6. Retail
7. Catering
8. Marketing
9. Media
10. Safety
11. AOB

Welcome – Rachele Johnson

RJ thanked everyone for their attendance (especially given the snow!). Introduced Colin Barlow, Birmingham City's Dedicated Football Officer, to discuss the Aston Villa match and get feedback on the Policing Operation.

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WMP – Villa – Colin Barlow

RJ started by saying that the only complaint BCFC really received from the Villa match was the allocation. CB then began by reiterating that the allocation was 2,100 following Villa not agreeing to the offer of 2,500 by BCFC. There were no Blues arrests made and there was no disorder in the ground.

The only other complaint was a delay in the final “football” train but this was due to a fatality on the line during the match and couldn’t be avoided unfortunately.

Club

At the last meeting we enquired if supporter’s groups were considered stakeholders of BSH and if we could join the share option scheme. Has there been any updated information on this?

Unfortunately, Roger has been unable to get a definitive answer. Roger will chase, and RJ will update.

ACTION: Roger to provide update.

We have seen very little incoming activity during the last transfer window. Why?

RJ advised she spoke to Colin Tattum regarding this and he confirmed that we had 14 players sign at the start of the 17/18 season and 10 players in the 16/17 Jan transfer window. The manager would have liked to have added to the squad, factors such as availability, price of players, wages and financial considerations came into play.

Blues Trust, whilst very supportive of the supporter forums, has notified the Club many times that it has concerns it does not fully comply with EFL rules on supporter engagement. Has the Club got any intentions to implement any changes regarding fan representation or interaction with the Board?

RJ confirmed she spoke to the EFL regarding this and they clarified in terms of Regulation E111. The EFL confirmed that ideally, we need a Board member, Director or Senior Executive in attendance. RL has attended numerous meetings and as Senior Finance Officer filled the Senior Exec role. However, RJ confirmed she would do her best to get a Board Member at the meetings where Heads of Department attend.

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Ticketing

Why is it when you call the Ticket Office and go into a queue to talk to Customer Services, it times out after 14 minutes and forwards you to Ticketmaster who then say you need to redial for Customer Services!

Option 2 for Ticketing then Option 3 for Enquiries/Customer Service should not be transferring to Ticketmaster. Ticketmaster are sent the call through Option 2, Option 2 if it isn't answered within a certain amount of time as they can sell tickets, but any enquiries need to go through Option 2, then 3.

ACTION: Ticket Office to check with Ticketmaster.

Under 5s get a free Season Ticket with a full paying adult in the Family Stand – a great initiative but is it possible to roll this out for individual matchdays, even just a few a season?

Under 11s get a free Season Ticket anywhere in the ground, not just the Family Stand. This is to reward supporters but also to encourage the purchase of Season Tickets for children who are the future of the Club. The most an Under 11 will pay on a matchday is £5 (the only exception being Villa or Wolves potentially).

Why are disabled supporters charged for postage or collection when there's no option to buy online and print at home?

RJ confirmed that the Ticket Office are looking into the option for online ticket purchasing. The assignment of the free carer is what causes the issue but hopefully this will change soon.

Over the last few months we haven't had a mascot at our away fixtures. It's been said priority will be given to those who book for home games, but how do I go about checking and applying?

*Originally in the forum RJ advised that there was not a priority for those who had home games however, there has been an update and the policy is that there is a priority for supporters who have booked home mascot packages for away mascot.

Could the Club activate Season Tickets for Cup matches/friendlies to save on printing costs?

RJ confirmed this is something the Club is looking into. It was trialed with some staff tickets but unfortunately there were teething issues, so it wasn't rolled out. But it is something the Club want to do.

Matchday and Facilities

I've sent 5 emails to the club about getting a disabled parking pass on match day. I live in York so it's hard to park. Can you ask them why I've had no reply?

There aren't any spaces available and a waiting list is currently in place. RJ requested the supporter contact them directly as not having a reply following 5 emails is unacceptable.

The state of the ladies' toilets. I am a season ticket holder in Block 24 so I'm referring specifically to the toilets at Kop Entrance 5. Several of the units consistently get blocked, they don't flush properly and there are often leaks which spread to the floors of the adjoining toilets. There is also a lack of hot water in the toilets and a lack of hand driers.

RJ confirmed this question had been passed onto the Operations Manager for investigation with the cleaning contractors. The lack of hand driers will be looked at during the closed season, but RJ thinks the issue may be due to electricity output on a matchday.

I really don't like the fact that they use the big screen during the match for advertising lots of random stuff. It should just be for showing the score, line-ups and highlights etc - otherwise it's just a big, glorified advertising hoarding. What the board should show is a continuous live picture of the match, directly from the same cameras which provide BluesTV - and include replays, close-ups etc.

The comments have been passed onto the Head of Commercial who sell the space for advertising. RJ advised that the live feed cannot be fed into the big screen to be able to do the replays or have a live picture of the match.

At the Millwall match, programmes weren't available outside the Family Stand 30 minutes before kick-off. Perhaps sold out? Can the Club make sure they're always available or at the very least ensure spares will be sold in the Club Shop straight after the match?

Any programmes that haven't been sold before and during the first half are sent up to the Club shop ready to be sold. Programmes are ordered in bulk and we normally have some left over. There are sellers in most entrances around the ground and programmes are sold in the Club shop and Ticket Office. The only issue with getting correct figures for programmes is that they go to print 4 days before matchday so it isn't always possible to gage the crowd numbers in advance.

Retail

Why does the replica kit only go to XXL when the training wear goes to 4XL?

The training wear goes to 3XL but unfortunately, as stated before we can only sell what Adidas will manufacture. However, Wayne Cowen confirmed that the replica kit next season will go to 3XL.

Why do the club not have proper good quality BCFC bobble hats (they have a generic design bobble hat with the metal badge on it)? Every ground has supporters wearing bobble hats apart from Blues.

RJ confirmed that there are 7 different types of hat, 4 bobble style available in the Club shop.

As the kit is so limited on style and is similar to other Clubs like Forest (apart from the colour), would the Club consider doing an Adidas retro kit like they have done the Co-Op milk etc.

WC has confirmed that discussions have been held with Adidas previously regarding a retro style shirt but in order for them to produce this style we'd need to order thousands, more than we would probably sell.

Catering

Why can't we get chips in the Kop? They sell them in Tilton Corner but there aren't any available in Entrance 5.

RJ checked with the Head of Retail Catering and it was confirmed that there is no chip fryer at that kiosk and due to Health & Safety might not be possible to install. But it will be looked into.

Queues for beers despite low crowds remain. Too long. Choose between drinking or watching the game as you can't often do both.

Hawkers have been introduced in Tilton Kop Corner to help reduce this but in the Kop it is difficult due to the size of the concourses and the rules of drinking in view of the pitch being prohibited. We are hoping to introduce card machines to help but space is unfortunately an issue.

Bar areas in the Kop remain sterile, uninviting, freezing cold, nowhere to put your beer down (after queuing 10-15 mins for it) and no bins.

We can look to decorate the walls but the shelves, for example which have been brought up before, aren't possible due to Health & Safety. Depending on the height of the shelves etc. they could be dangerous.

Marketing

Lots of fans didn't get the mail-out advertising Huddersfield cup tickets. Missed opportunity?

A lot of attendees advised they didn't get them either – so this will be passed onto Marketing to look into.

Was requested that tickets be sold in order that they are to be played and not release ticket information the day they are to be sold as it doesn't leave much time.

ACTION: Send information to Aamir to see if this is possible.

Marching bands at half time and parachutists coming down was always exciting in my younger days at Blues. Long shot but has the club ever approached Jeff Lynn to play Mr Blues Sky live?

Jeff Lynne was responsible for 'Funky Moped' and the B-side 'Magic Roundabout' which was a hit for Jasper Carrot in 1975. How about a medley of Mr Blue Sky and the Jasper Carrot songs with Bev Bevan and Mr Carrot on the centre circle?

CT advised that Jeff Lynne rarely visits Birmingham – he advised the Club had spoken to him previously about a "Star of the Day" appearance but nothing has ever materialised.

I have 2 season tickets, have ordered many items from the Club shop including 3 shirts with printing and my loyalty points account shows nil points. I've called the Club and they say they've had "some issues" and it'll be resolved - it hasn't!

Marketing simply need proof of purchase and they can help with the missing points. RJ requested the supporter contact Marketing@bcfc.com with details and they should be able to help.



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Media

Blues TV was riddled with one problem after another, but they seem to have sorted and got their act together for home games. We now not only seem to get audio and video but also some replays and displays the score. However away games aren't too grand. Lately we only get video or commentary. But I'd rather have Blues TV than not.

Audio commentary is always available at away grounds. Sometimes, at away clubs if the filming gantry is on the opposite side to the press box and ISDN points it isn't always possible to sync up the two. However, this is rare.

I know other people have complained about Blues TV and I have also had problems with it here in Australia. But my biggest gripe is the reply to requests for credit or compensation. The 'apology' they gave for Sunderland was farcical as it was irrelevant what caused the problem.

The Club can completely understand the frustration that occurred when the signal went down for Sunderland. Although it was disappointing it was a technical fault completely out of the Club's control and was rectified during the second half. The stream has been fine since.

It was requested by some of the group that a discount be given next season and RJ advised this will be sent to the relevant departments for their consideration.

Safety

Ticket checks are confusing and inconsistent. My son will get refused entry for having a "wrong kind of ticket" at the turnstiles but then a supervisor will come down and let him in. This is by Block D.

RJ states it is difficult to be able to respond to this properly without full details on the Season Ticket used for entry and a definite why access is being refused.

Could the Club look into a registration scheme where registered users could anonymously report bad language, violent conduct, flares or "away fans in the home end?" This would remove stigma and fear of reporting incidents which have to be done in the open at the moment.

We are users of the Kick It Out app – this is more for homophobia or racism however, reports go straight through into the Control Room. Dave Hault has advised that his concern of a specific number is that if anyone sent a hoax message this could cause issues. But RJ will speak to other Safety Teams to see how they counter this.

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In the rare event someone with a child's ticket is questioned, it's always "My son must have picked mine up by mistake, he's already in there"
"Oh, OK then", and let them in.

RJ confirmed this shouldn't be happening. The question was passed onto DH to reiterate in briefings.

AOB

RJ advised that she wants to change the format of the forums. It is not always productive to have the Supporter Liaison Officer answer questions second hand as if there are follow-ups they cannot be answered at the time. Whilst RJ has an overall knowledge of Club departments any specific questions cannot be answered.

The idea is to hold 2 forums a season in which Heads of Department and a Board member, Director or Senior Executive attend but the other 2 could be more interactive, social and discuss themes – e.g catering, ticketing etc.

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