

# **Birmingham City Football Club**

## **Quarterly Supporters Forum: Thursday, May 24, 2018**

Minutes

Location: Jasper Carrott Suite, St. Andrew's.

Chair: Colin Tattum (Head of Media and Communications)

Birmingham City FC representatives: Sharon Byrne (Head of Retail Catering), Wayne Cowen (Head of Ticketing and Retail), Michelle Daly (Head of HR), Dave Hoults (Safety Officer), Aamir Javaid (Ticketing Manager), Colin Tattum (Head of Media and Communications), Edward Zheng (Club Director, Assistant to the Chairman).

Supporters: AccessiBlues (Adrian Howell, Steve Portman), Blues 4 All (Bik Singh, Micky Singh), BCFC Forum (Dave Smith), Blues Trust (Cliff Horrocks, Richard Stanley), Joys & Sorrows (Russell Dempsey), Northside Blues (Chris Sinclair), Redditch Blues (Lynda Courts), Independent supporters (Stuart Brereton, Andrew Orgill, Emma Willock), Irish Brummies (Sean Guiden, Paula Wilson).

Agenda:

Introductions

Matchday, stadium facilities and safety

Ticketing

Retail

Catering

Media & Marketing

Human Resources and Supporters Clubs

Football

Finance

Miscellaneous

Another other business

### **Matchdays, stadium facilities and safety**

Will the parking restrictions and road closures still be in place next season?  
Redditch Blues

Yes, the same procedures will be in place. This is out of the Club's hands (Dave Houlton).

Will the big flag could come out for every game and not just the big occasions?  
Redditch Blues

If requested. There are difficulties unfurling it, particularly if the stadium is full, Dave Houlton noted.

There is rarely any soap in either of the dispensers in the gents toilets in entrance 6 concourse. How difficult is it to check the toilets and replenish as required? This is a health and safety issue so can it please be treated as such and corrective action be taken at the earliest opportunity. Redditch Blues

This issue will be taken up via Steve Pain, the Club's Operations Director, with Clean Event, our contracted cleaners (Dave Houlton). Other issues of a similar vein were also raised, which will be investigated.

Who regulates K2 stewards from the Club and are they customer service trained especially the ones at the turnstiles? This question is due to the many reports of problems at the last home game concerning supporters and K2 staff.  
AccessiBlues

Why don't we have more inhouse stewards? AccessiBlues

The majority of clubs rely on out-sourced stewards, due to the difficulties of keeping your own staff for this role, money they can earn elsewhere. Without K2 the Club wouldn't be able to stage games like the Fulham sell-out. Dave Houlton and the safety team 'regulate' the stewards and all are thoroughly trained. Any problems will (and always are) looked at and the necessary action taken thereafter if there could be better practice.

The lack of hot water and hand dryers in the toilets is still an issue. Can this be put as a priority? BCFC Forum

Answered earlier as above.

Will you be taking applications for disabled parking again next season?  
AccessiBlues

No, Aamir Javaid responded. We have a limited number of spaces.

In the last disabled supporters meeting we were told that the Club were going to review the parking criteria for the new season. Is this still the case? If so, when/how do we apply? AccessiBlues

The Club believes allocation is done in a fair way and it complies with EFL and LPF criteria. (Aamir Javaid/Michelle Daly)

## **Ticketing**

At the last forum, the Club said they were looking into the possibility of 'rolling out' season tickets that would include cup and friendly tickets? So you could buy said tickets and they would be 'loaded' onto your season ticket. Joys and Sorrows

Aamir Javaid said that, yes, this will be the case.

Do you still intend to continue with the free programme for Club Class season ticket holders? Redditch Blues

Yes, Aamir Javaid confirmed.

Is there a chance that the Gil Merrick Upper will be open for all matches next season? BCFC Forum

Doubtful, said Aamir Javaid and Wayne Cowen. If there is demand then yes but at present it is not cost-effective to open the gallery, in normal circumstances.

When will we be able to purchase season tickets for next season? Surely, it's within the club's interest for these to be available as soon as possible. BCFC Forum

Season tickets went on sale after this question was sent in and before the meeting was staged.

## **Retail**

Will season ticket holders be able to get (even a minimal) discounts from Adidas wear next season? Joys and Sorrows

No, said Wayne Cowen. Loyalty points can be used and the margins on training wear are very tight.

When will the 2018/19 shirts be revealed and when will they be available for purchase? BCFC Forum

In June, and for purchase before Father's Day (June 17), said Wayne Cowen (home) and away shirt in July – the same as the past two years.

Could the Club push the sale and encourage the use of individual flags for as many supporters as possible? Redditch Blues

Wayne Cowen replied that the Club does do this. However, he also explained that they have almost become an 'expected freebie' and supporters are reluctant to spend money on them.

## **Catering/Kiosks**

Many problems reported at fans' forums from seasons gone by continue, as though they make no difference, which is quite frustrating. Queues are inevitable, but we had been promised stock would 'never' run out and yet... Joys and Sorrows

Sharon Byrne said it was 'quite surprising' to hear this. She said the Club is over-stocked and forward-stocked – and haven't run out. For the Fulham game, only soft drinks (pop) sold out due to the size of the crowd and weather probably, but levels are always monitored carefully and there have been no complaints about stock.

There are still no sign of chips in concourse 5 of the Kop? Redditch Blues

There is limited space, nowhere a fryer could be fitted in, Sharon Byrne revealed.

Catering still needs to be improved. It was very poor in the Main Stand for the Fulham game. BCFC Forum

A subjective opinion taken on board.

## **Media & Communications/Marketing**

Are renewing Blues TV customers getting a discount? It was mooted at the last meeting. Joys and Sorrows

It is an automatic renewal, Colin Tattum responded. There was no mention of this at the last meeting after checking the minutes. The Club is looking at various pricing packages, however, and is considering doing something for existing users.

Why does it seem that Blues TV doesn't work on some devices even though these devices are new and other video streaming has no issues? AccessiBlues

Clarification was asked for which devices exactly. For a Windows phone or Kindle it won't work because the app isn't available on these devices – and all live streams must go through the app for security reasons. Speaking to Stream and LiveU, Colin Tattum continued they are of the opinion that it is so-called 'user error' why the service isn't working for some and not others. He added that there was significant investment being put into BluesTV for next season to improve the technology for stability and reliability, a better production value – a planned pre-match, half-time and post-match show at home games – and a solution that automatically directs mobile users from the website to the app.

Why was there no Junior Blues Player of the Season ceremony this year? BCFC Forum

Due to the change in managers, training schedules and the fact Garry Monk wanted to concentrate solely on keeping the side in the Championship, said Colin Tattum. Dates in the schedule did not align but the Club is hoping to host something of similar ilk at the start of next season.

Some years ago the local radio stations used to host various fan forums where a player or member of the Board was present to answer questions. I believe Paul Franks of BBC WM has raised the suggestion of a football phone in with the Club, but the offer has been declined. This would be an excellent bit of customer relations. BCFC Forum

Colin Tattum said he had no knowledge of a request from Radio WM for a forum. As part of their radio broadcasting rights, they have a phone-in with the manager which the Club fulfils.

Are the Club looking into contactless payment at the kiosks? BCFC Forum

There will be news in this regard over the summer. The Club cannot say anything more at present, Wayne Cowen said.

## HR and Supporter Clubs

Will Rachele's role be replaced in some capacity next season? Joys and Sorrows

Why did she leave? She was seen as a vital member of staff between club and fans. Joys and Sorrows

Michelle Daly responded that, yes, Rachele would be replaced. She left due to the fact her fixed-term contract had come to an end. The Club are in the process of reviewing this role and are looking at making it more supporter-focused, akin to a Supporter Services Manager.

Would BCFC agree to meeting Blues Trust representatives and/or a representative from Supporters Direct to explore whether there are any additional engagement options that Birmingham City would find acceptable and useful to pursue for subjects that may have sensitive content that do not lend themselves to the open forum format? Blues Trust

Colin Tattum replied that this would be difficult to effectively take certain supporter groups 'aside' and in confidence and the answer is really provided in the very nature of the question itself; there are certain things which cannot be discussed and have to remain private. However, after discussion and clarification by Blues Trust, Michelle Daly confirmed that the Club would be happy to meet and enter dialogue, via the new Supporter Services Manager, to explore possibilities.

I have noticed that the old BCDSC have reformed and started a disabled supporters association - BCDSA1875. What recognition will this group receive from BCFC? I've been receiving correspondence from them regarding a meeting/trips and am unsure as to how they got my information. Shouldn't they have gotten rid of my details as it was mentioned at the meeting with the police? AccessiBlues

This question was dealt with privately by Wayne Cowen due to sensitive and confidential nature of issues surrounding the situation.

Why are official supporters clubs coaches not official coaches? We had to sign an agreement that we were an official supporters club and would obey the rules and not bring the club into disrepute, we have a proper formal AGM with all accounts declared and yet we are not recognised as such and our members were discriminated against. Redditch Blues

The bottom line, bluntly, said Wayne Cowen was because the Club don't have any accountability for them and the problems that could potentially entail. He was, however, happy to have a conversation about this and also when free travel offers are made (for example 888sport to QPR), which also cropped up.

## **Football**

Can we have a statement - I know he has a clause if we had got relegated - that regardless of results (unless ridiculous of course) the manager has the Board's full backing for the contract agreed? And that the Board have no intention of changing - this would include no big name director of football? Joys and Sorrows

Is the manager going to be supported, including in the transfer market, with a view to the long term? Will we aim to get him the players he'd like, and not at the last minute, so that he can ideally have time to build his team? Are the owners going to back the manager with actions as well as words? Andrew Orgill independent supporter

Fans feel that we have a manager who can at last move us forward. Will the Board give him their full backing, so we don't have to suffer another season fighting against relegation? BCFC Forum

Edward Zheng replied: "Garry Monk has the Board's full backing. He signed a three-and-a-half year contract, which shows our commitment to him for the long term. We believe that Gary is the Manager who can help us improve and achieve. I think you will agree with me that we can all see he is a good fit for our Club. Together we are planning and preparing thoroughly for the new season. We have a very good relationship with Gary and his staff. Of course, none of us want to endure another last day drama and we are all working hard to ensure we will be more competitive at the right end of the table." Suggestions of a relegation clause were dismissed.

## **Finance**

Are the club anticipating any form of FFP penalty next season? Joys and Sorrows

Would you outline if /what impact the Financial Fair Play regulations are/will have on the Club? Blues Trust

Can we have clarification on how Financial Fair Play affects the Club because we keep hearing so many different things and don't know what to believe?

BCFC Forum

Edward Zheng commented that he understood Financial Fair Play can be very confusing and complex. It's something the Club - and every other Club in the EFL - is very mindful of. "All the clubs are in dialogue with the EFL, which is normal." Decisions on all aspects of the Club will continue to be taken that the board believe are in our best interests. He asked that supporters ignored a lot of unfounded and incorrect rumours. "There is nothing to say. We are continuing business as usual."

Is there any news regarding whether supporters groups could join the BSH share option scheme? Blues Trust

Not at present, Colin Tattum, reported. But it has not been ruled out. An explanation of BSH's standpoint was handed out to supporters. "The granting of share options to any participants are at the sole discretion of the board and ... at the moment the board does not have any plan to grant share options to external advisors, business partners, suppliers or customers etc..." Supporters can buy BSH listed shares at the Hong Kong Stock Exchange.

### **Miscellaneous**

Is Birmingham City still a voluntary subscriber to the 'Rooney ruling' as we don't think we've applied it since agreeing to subscribe to the values? Joys and Sorrows

It was pointed out that the Club did interview a BAME (Black, Asian, minority or ethnic) candidate after Harry Redknapp's departure and does so for coaching positions elsewhere, in the Under-23s and Academy. Colin Tattum and Michelle Daly answered.

Will the floodlights be adequate next season for goal line technology? BCFC Forum

After an upgrade in the lighting following consultation with the EFL and Phillips, goal line technology was in place from October onwards, reported Colin Tattum.

### **Any Other Business**

Resources and space were factors that have to be taken into account when improved disabled facilities was brought up, like a sensory room, for example (Wayne Cowen). Safe standing – apart from anomalies like Shrewsbury and Brentford, there is still no across-the-board legislation that will make this possible (Dave Hault). The Ticket Incentive Scheme is continuing and will be pushed next season (Wayne Cowen). Edward Zheng reiterated that the Club is fully aware of FFP responsibilities and the matter is being dealt with.