

**CHELSEA FOOTBALL CLUB
SUPPORTERS CONSULTATIVE FORUM
2007/ 2008 SEASON**

Meeting held at the Lord Attenborough Suite, Chelsea F.C. Hotel, at 11.00 am on Sunday, 11th May 2008.

ATTENDEES/ group represented

Alexander, James	(season ticket holder)
Brown, Toby	(CFCnet)
Fiorellino, Trizia	(Chelsea Supporters Group)
Gibbins, Jason	(member)
Goldston, Geoff	(over 60 age group)
Gourlay, Ron	(Chelsea F.C. Commercial & Venue Director)
Greenberg, Simon	(Chelsea F.C. Communications Director)
Hine, Lenny	(16 – 21 age group)
Johnston, Dave	(CFCUK)
Kenyon, Peter	(Chelsea F.C. Chief Executive)
Law, Matthew	(disabled section)
Lister, Simon	(member)
Marriott, Bryan	(family section)
Newby, David	(Chelsea F.C. Marketing Manager)
O'Brien, John	(non-UK branch)
Phelps, Mary	(exec member/ box holder)
Pickering, Trevor	(Chelsea Supporters Club)
Regan, Andy	(Electoral Reform Services, independent chair)
Smith, Graham	(Chelsea F.C. Head of Ticketing)
Smith, Ian	(member)
Sporle, Lee	(branch)
Thomason, David	(The Leadership Factor, guest)
Trenter, Peter	(home & away season ticket holder)
Whalley, Elizabeth	(season ticket holder)

Apologies for absence

Beard, Neil	(CFCUK)
Greer, Gary	(branch)

(Action points are in bold and underlined.)

INTRODUCTION

Chair: If agreed by the Forum, we will spend some time early on today discussing arrangements for Moscow, as I know some members have questions for the Club (agreed).

CHANGES TO THE MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING/ MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES

(There were no changes to the previous minutes.)

Chair: Of the action points from the previous meeting:

Chair to check with the Club regarding non-members of the Forum not being offered a ticket for the Cup match on the day of the last meeting.

Club: This was an oversight for which we apologise, but can't act retrospectively.

Chair: Club to provide details of Valencia report. Some Chelsea fans were hit by police at the Valencia ground, and our stewards were alleged not to have intervened.

Club to circulate the report on Valencia.

Chair: The Club were to investigate further whether radio commentary of matches can be covered on Chelsea TV.

Fans: The issue is whether it can be free on Chelsea TV.

Club to investigate whether free radio commentary can be offered as part of the package on Chelsea TV.

Chair: Trizia to circulate report of fan responses to Club media content.

Fans: Trizia will provide this directly to the Club for consideration.

Chair: Those were all the minuted action points.

Fans: We have discussed previously if season ticket renewals can be delayed if we get to Moscow. It's a very early renewal in comparison to other clubs anyway.

Club: We obviously can't guarantee we will be in future finals so will look at this year to year. For this year it will be 6th June for those who are not paying by instalments.

CHAMPIONS' LEAGUE FINAL IN MOSCOW

Fans: What is the situation regarding fans being herded straight into the stadium from flights, and being held in the stadium afterwards? We have heard that fans will be taken to the fan parks outside the stadium beyond the perimeter and then can't get out. Is it true that no metal can be taken into the stadium including coins and watches?

What is the situation with disabled fans' tickets?

How many tickets have been sold?

Club: Fans won't be kept in the stadium after. Fans from the two clubs will be going in different directions anyway.

Fans will not be taken beyond that perimeter before the match, so can go and see the city first. But once the ticket is handed over fans won't be able to leave that area. It's not a far walk to the city centre.

It's a major match though and there will be high level policing, around 6,000 of them. We expect policing to be good and are expecting a safe environment. They will enforce a drinking ban, especially around Red Square.

Individuals and their bags will be searched but there is no reason for those items mentioned to be taken away. We expect long queues for fans to get through each perimeter though. We would suggest being in the fan park at least an hour before kick-off and if each queue ahead looks sizeable then join the queues early. It could be slow and they will search everything.

We have had confirmation that there will be an allocation for disabled fans, at £67 per pair. There will be a refund for those who have paid more.

We have about 400 of 21,000 tickets left and they will be gone by the end of today.

Fans: When are the Thomas Cook immigration forms given out?

Tickets go on sale online at 7pm, but this has stopped in recent days. Why is that?

Club: Immigration forms will be handed out on the plane with the match ticket, and we will have spares. The forms are standard practice. You will need your ticket to get out of Russia afterwards though, as this is your visa in effect. Please resist the temptation to sell the ticket for a memento afterwards. It will cost you 70 euros to get out if you don't have one, and it guarantees you in the country for 72 hours. We suggest that if you think you may be in the country for longer you should get a visa to be on the safe side.

The 7 o'clock sales are back on now as we just had to work out the number of tickets left.

Fans: As regards transfers, there have been no confirmation times for some packages.

Club: All day trips will have transfers. We can't guarantee times as we don't have confirmation of flight times yet. We have been told that the authorities there will deal with transporting disabled fans to the stadium as well.

CHELSEA IN THE COMMUNITY

Chair: This was suggested at the start of the season as a topic. The Club will introduce it with details of what we do.

Club: The most fundamental aspect is with education. We now work with 200,000-300,000 children. These include social inclusion projects, sometimes working with external agencies. We work with socially disadvantaged children in boroughs around here, such as Kensington & Chelsea and Hammersmith & Fulham, as well as around Cobham. We run eight breakfast clubs and want to expand the areas we work in. We see ourselves as a pan-London facility and worked closely with the London Development Agency and the previous Mayor. We hope to have strong links with the new Mayor.

We also have our coaching scheme. We are trying to expand that into areas such as Essex and Kent.

We have two partners, namely CLIC Sargent who we have worked with for some time, and Right to Play for the last year. Right to Play is a six year partnership all the way to the 2012 Olympics.

As regards our community projects, we have appointed Simon Taylor as head of CSR. The whole area is huge now. Our CSR investment in 2005-06 was £4.3 million, or 2.8% of our turnover, which exceeds other companies of around 1%. We will produce another report to show what we did the following year. The report from 2005-06 is still on the website.

By way of comparison, we did a presentation at Fifa on CSR with Barcelona recently, and they provide 0.7% of their turnover. An international standard says companies should provide 0.7%, and British companies are encouraged to give 1%. Barcelona provide Unicef sponsorship on their shirts, but their players have no involvement. When we get involved in CSR, our players play an active role.

We don't donate money but we provide management time, players time and profiles, and facilities, and this adds up. We want to concentrate on getting people involved.

Fans: Presumably the Club is looking at an expansion of events as well as geographically?

Club: We are looking at new initiatives, for instance with a possible theme of ensuring children don't play truant and actually go to school on time. We want to start ideas locally then roll them out over London. We are working with London First on this. It would be easier to deal with schools directly in some ways, but we are happy to work with the local authorities.

ATMOSPHERE

Fans: There was a meeting of the atmosphere sub-committee recently and we ended up debating the 16-21 lower ticket price issue.

Club: We also went through the 10 point plan that's been presented. We hope to go back to the committee soon to go through the plan in more detail with the relevant people.

One issue concerns acoustics which we are looking at currently, as well as standing. We are looking at how to hold sound in the stadium better so that one end of the ground can hear the other, for instance.

Fans: There is a general feeling that the atmosphere in the ground is improving, though. Recent big games have been sold on loyalty and the atmosphere definitely seems better most of the time when we sell to members only. This is underlined by having great atmosphere at away matches in our section.

Thanks to the Club for the gesture in subsidising the away match at Everton.

Playing "One Step Beyond" is great but we could do with a small period of time with no music to let fans sing.

Club: We can certainly try having the quiet period after the match.

Club to experiment with a gap between final whistle and music.

Chair: The sub-committee has been running for a few years and was set up by the Forum. It's not a closed shop so if any Forum members are interested in joining they should speak to Dave Johnston or Toby Brown about it.

Fans: Thanks to the Club for looking into new banners. The one in the MH Stand can go to the Shed End if a new one is introduced. The one at Fenerbahce seemed to be on rollers in the stand!

Club: We are also thinking about replacing flags with scarves for big matches next season.

Fans: Simple bar scarves would be fine.

FORUM COMPOSITION

Chair: As you know we are losing about half of the Forum today, namely James, Peter, Jason, Lenny, Brian, John and Gary for those randomly drawn places. In addition, Trizia, Trevor and Toby are standing down from the reserved places for fans groups. Thank you for all you have contributed over the last few years.

The process has started for replacements of the randomly drawn places. Adverts have gone out on the website and in the programme, and the closing date is 30th May. We request that those stepping down wait at least a year before reapplying to allow new fans to join.

We have tidied up the process for local branches. Last year we said at least one of the branch representatives must be from overseas, but had placed no maximum on this. Common sense suggests at least one should be from the UK and at least one from overseas. Likewise in the future, we will change the season ticket representative balance to just stipulate that at least one of the three must be an away season ticket holder.

We will publicise the results to the Forum.

Fans: From those of us who are leaving, thanks to the Club for this.

Club: Thanks to those who are leaving for their contributions. There have been some big decisions taken, though we can't always agree, but we have valued your input throughout.

CLUB ANNUAL SURVEY

Chair: Welcome to David from The Leadership Factor.

Guest: This is the annual survey of fans' views on what matters to them in their match day experience, and we end up making recommendations from the results.

Non-corporate Survey

We sent about 6,000 forms out in January and received 1,564 back, with a response rate of 26%, up from 23% last year. It is a healthy sign that the response rate has gone up.

We measure issues that we established in 2005 and were identified by groups of fans. These include match tickets, atmosphere, booking fees and safety in the ground, amongst other factors. We also measure how important each of these issues is to fans. When we measure satisfaction, the more important issues are given a heavier weighting for satisfaction. Importance of issues doesn't generally vary much amongst fans from year to year.

Safety in the stadium is the most important issue and has the highest satisfaction. Cup ticket prices also have high satisfaction. Looking at the lower satisfaction issues, League ticket prices, booking fees and price of food and drink are there.

Compared to last year, satisfaction with atmosphere has increased, which suggests there have been initiatives on this, as with Cup match tickets. Some issues change dramatically, such as the positioning of away fans which increased in satisfaction when they were moved to the Shed End.

Control of racist and foul language has decreased in satisfaction. Price of Premiership and Cup matches, booking fees, all improved from last year to this year but may still be low on satisfaction levels in some cases.

The overall satisfaction level is up from 64.9% to 67.4% this year. This is an impressive increase. 72% is a key benchmark to try and attain.

We also break down the recommendations into different locations within the stadium. So for the East Stand Upper for instance, there is a problem with access.

Corporate Survey

Those were the results for non-corporate fans, and we have a separate survey for corporate fans. We wrote to all 1,243 of the corporate fans, with a response of 281 forms, or 22.6%. The rate was around 30% last year. The requirements are clearly different than non-corporate fans, so they identified service at bar areas, returning to seats for the second half in time, standard of catering amongst other issues. Importance should be around 7.5 at least for each issue, or that issue ceases to be very important. We do alter the issues if an issue disappears, for instance smoking is no longer a problem anywhere in the ground.

The highest satisfaction issues are match view, safety and access to a programme. Crowd noise and atmosphere also show an increase for corporates.

The overall satisfaction score is 72.8, which is similar to previous years. We have identified from this that improvements in value for money, seating fans in time, bar service and access to non-corporate tickets matter most to these fans.

Discussion

Fans: How do we compare with other clubs? Aren't scores dependent on the success of a team and how good the fans feel about their club when they complete the survey?

Guest: We also do Manchester United and they are around 72% for non-corporates and have stayed consistent for around four years. So this has been a long-term project for them. Corporate scores are around the same there.

There is some truth about fans' feel-good factor, but as this is run over many years, that will even out. Also, the same issues are likely to bother fans regardless over a period of time.

Club: A lot of these results confirm what we feel may be a problem anyway. The three issues of prices, booking fees and food and drink confirm what we thought. So we are more proactive than that but it's good to back up our thoughts on what matters with statistics.

Fans: Value for money would also vary with the standard of football you see at some other clubs.

Corporate fans may not be bothered about costs as they are not paying individually.

Club: But value for money may even out. Paying for a ticket at half of our price at a bottom of the table ground may result in the same value for money.

Value for money has to be right for corporate fans, as the person buying the tickets there may need to justify internally to their employer why they are paying that amount. So we don't see that as of less importance for corporate fans.

Fans: Redevelopment issues have appeared again in the corporate issues. Will the Club address these?

If there are problems with racist/ abusive language over all, the chart breaking down issues around the ground doesn't show a major problem with it anywhere.

Club: The results are broken down into areas for this so we will focus on where redevelopment is a major issue. We know we are limited with access issues in some parts of the ground though.

We can tell from the results that the racist/ abusive language issue matters enough around the ground generally but is not a major problem in any specific area. It is enough of an issue in many areas instead and we are continuing to address it.

Fans: Are overseas fans surveyed as well?

Club: Yes, there is a range covered for non-corporate fans. All corporate fans are written to.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Club: As regards the Thursday night Everton match, we think this is just the start of such scheduling but have not had support on this from other clubs with our objections.

Fans: Sky are reportedly looking into making fixtures more fan-friendly.

When do Sky pick matches? Isn't it at the start of the season then half way through? The greater the advance warning the better to fix travel plans, and in particular flights for those travelling from abroad or internally in the UK.

Club: We have our doubts about the rumour from Sky that scheduling will become more fan-friendly.

In practice Sky pick their first matches before the season, then pick around October to February. This season is a good example where they can't be sure what fixture dates are available towards the end of the season, as we had four English teams in the quarter-finals of the Champions' League. Fixtures for many clubs had to be reassessed in the light of this..

We fully understand the difficulties fans have with long-term travel plans. We have spoken to Thomas Cook about helping out our fans when travelling from overseas but this seems very difficult to do in practice.

Fans: Fairer rules could be brought in at least, as regards not having terrible journeys at difficult times, such as Sunday evenings for instance.

Did the Club have much of a say in fixtures?

With the Middlesbrough home match this season, a date was picked for the match to be on TV but it was always clear the date was not going to be possible due to European fixtures.

Club: The other club may not care most of the time as they will be grateful for the TV revenue. The Thursday match showed that the Premier League could be on any day of the week; Sky wanted it on the Thursday or the Friday. At least there would be less pressure on fans in getting home if it was a Friday match.

We get fixtures first and have our input, and even before that we get some say. Newcastle wanted the match there at 8pm on the Bank Holiday Monday and we said it was unacceptable following the match time at Everton.

The problem with balancing TV fixture dates is the introduction of a second match provider with Setanta now involved. Previously at least Sky could move fixtures around their own possible dates but now each station wants to ensure they keep their own matches..

Fans: It seems unfair for other fans too. Wigan fans have to come down here on a Monday night yet their Club has been helpful to our fans when we have played there twice this season. Hardly any of them could get to our match at the Bridge.

We would like to congratulate Avram and the team for getting to the Champions League final.

Why is there no beam back for the match?

Club: There are problems, the first of which is starting work on the stadium straight away. We would also have to arrange stewarding. There may be an issue with TV rights as well.

Fans: If we win, when will the parade be? Some fans will still be in Moscow if the parade is on the Thursday.

Club: We would want it to be on the Thursday evening, partly because you should parade a trophy as soon as possible, and secondly because the players disappear on international duty on the Friday so there would not be many left for a weekend parade. Nothing official has been agreed though, and it would probably be the usual route. It would take place if we win either the League or the Champions League.

Regarding media issues for next season, the website is being relaunched in the summer as part of its evolution. We can discuss this next season. The main change is an HTML flash mix to make navigation easier, with better graphics, easier searching and better content. We will also be launching a kids' website later this year.

Fans: The email links directly to Forum members from the website result in many individual requests to each Forum member. If we answer individually, the recipient will have our individual email address. Could they be sent centrally?

Club: Emails sent to a central point didn't work previously as there were too many. Toby can set you up with a separate individual address so the recipient does not see your personal address when you reply. There is also an automatic reply that the recipient receives saying they may or may not get a personal response from the Forum member.

Fans: We are waiting for sign-off but hope for the Cobham tournament to be played on 5th July. Teams from CSG, CFCUK, CFCNet have entered so far, but we are open to having more teams. We are hoping for coaching sessions and events for children.

Club: We will try and put a Club team together – amateurs only!

Fans: Nigel Spackman recently said he was a die-hard Liverpool fan. We would like the part of the ground named after him to be renamed. It could be renamed the Hockings Bar after Ron Hockings.

Club to consider changing the name of the Spackman Bar.

Fans: Why has the Club announced that the home strip will change every season from now on?

Club: We looked at the market and believe it is the right thing to do. Most clubs won't admit they do this but do so anyway. Ten clubs have changed their strips in the Premier League at least three times in three years. There is a change of sponsor anyway at the moment. At the kit launch we were going to make the change of timing clear.

Fans: How will turnstile access work next year?

Why was the Mega Store not open early today?

Club: Season tickets will be a swipe card, and individual match tickets will be an insert. We will have extra stewards helping at first.

The Mega Store always opens at 11 on a match day Sunday. We are restricted with total opening hours on a Sunday.

Fans: Can the Club look at the cost of kits for children and look at reducing prices for members to get the best prices.

Club: We have to price our goods ourselves and are not allowed to price based on others. We have to take a commercial view on these.

Fans: We have had requests for improved signage for the East Stand as some fans don't seem to know where to go in the East Upper. Maybe this is a matter for better stewarding as the signage seems quite good.

At the end of matches, access is not helped by some fans standing around the exits to watch the end of the game. The situation is also not helped by announcements about tube station problems so fans want to move towards the exits earlier.

We were disappointed that the Club didn't introduce the 16-21 ticket price range. We got the impression that the Club were likely to bring this in. Even if the cost is a maximum of £4.5 million over five years as the Club has stated, we will be bringing in £20 million from League finishes and cup runs this season so surely it's an investment for the future.

What is happening to corporate prices next season?

Club: We said we would look at the issue of 16-21 year old ticket prices, not a guarantee that it would be introduced. We can't keep holding most prices level and start reducing tickets for many fans. We still have a debt to turn around.

Corporate prices will go up next season.

Fans: We would like to raise the issue of game 39 as Richard Scudamore said it was a Club issue and wouldn't discuss it at a meeting with the Football Supporters' Federation.

Club to consider a separate meeting/ discussion in the Forum on game 39.

Fans: Thanks to Graham and his team as the ticket office have been really helpful this season.

For looking at travel plans in the future, Etihad do flights to the Middle East and Far East. Can we look at special arrangements for fans, especially as the team will be going to Malaysia.

Club to consider arranging travel for fans to non-European matches, possibly through Etihad.

(The meeting finished at 1.05pm.)