

**Fans Forum Meeting – notes for CAFC website
The Valley at 6.30pm on Wednesday 23rd April, 2014**

Present:

Steve Bradshaw, Ken Sinyard, Ian Wallis, John Commerford, Jean Heulin, Syd Cheeswright, Craig Parrett, Matt Ring, Katrien Meire, Andy Curtis, John Bennett, Ben Kensell, Andy Curtis

Apologies:

Heather Robertson, Tony Garrett, Vernon Roper

1. Welcome, Apologies and Introductions

2. Matters Arising

Production of notes: The group aims to produce authorised notes of the meeting to appear on CAFC official website within 10 days.

Accuracy: SC submitted a written amendment to the January notes:

“It is appreciated that a few points included within the minutes/notes of the last Fans Forum held on 30th January 2014 included four minor administrative errors relating to Coach and Rail Travel. With one exception, the errors did not occur at source and, in each case, the appropriate corrective action was initiated to remedy the situation”.

3. Season Ticket Update (BK)

Research suggests most season ticket holders who have lapsed did so due to price point and performances on the pitch. The stadium has been reconfigured to (1) give fans more options; and (2) prepare for a Premier League return. Season ticket sales are going well so far.

The Early Bird offer has been extended as we still do not know which league we will be in. Therefore, it made sense to extend. However, the integrity of the deadline date needs to be considered for next season. BK is looking at ways to reward fans who renewed before the deadline.

4. Crossbars and Millennium Lounge Packages for 2014/2015 Season (BK)

It has been difficult to change a precedent that has been set for many years. Existing Crossbars members who do not sit in the north stand can renew for the same price in the Millennium.

The stadium Safety Certificate dictates that to get people out of Crossbars and into their seats so they must leave by 14:30. Therefore, Crossbars can only be marketed to those who hold tickets in the north stand.

The club is investigating opportunities to develop a hospitality area for families who come to the Valley with their children.

5. The Valley Pitch Update (Andy Curtis)

AC explained that he has been brought in as Head of Facilities Management and has focussed on pitch solutions and procurement of contractors. The club has engaged with a Dutch company, who will be contracted to carry out the works. [Since the meeting, the company has entered into a joint venture with a UK company, Greenfields (Sports Surfaces) UK]. The pitch will be renewed completely and will have the capacity for under-soil heating. Preparation work will take place over the next five weeks, the construction period is eight weeks and there is then a growing phase.

In terms of the wider stadium renovation, there will be a volunteer package to reward those who help termed "Value the Valley". There will be an open day on 24th May to recruit potential volunteers. Stadium steps and wrought ironwork will be re-painted.

There is a programme in place to replace bleached seats over the next three years. We will also review on-going issues such as the control of hot water in the toilets. A list of priorities is being set.

6. CAFC Player

It was felt that CAFC 'in-house' commentary is first class. It is accepted that there will be occasional technical issues that will need to be addressed "on the day".

7. CAFC Website

The group observed that the website is still sometimes out of date. It is accepted that the club is tied into Football League Interactive until 2017 and the format can be difficult to work with. There is still an issue that sometimes important stories are taken off-line by a carousel system after a short period of time. The website will be reviewed at the end of the season. There is also sometimes a delay in stories appearing and appear elsewhere first. This is because the club will not publish a story until it is fact.

8. The Club Shop

The shop is outsourced to Just Sports until 2016. The shop is not run by club staff at the moment, but the club does receive a percentage of the revenue. There is some concern about service standards and stock in the shop.

9. Group Rail Travel

The number of people travelling by train to matches is declining.

10. Valley Express & Valley Away

John Bennett is to be the new Valley Away and Vernon Roper the Valley Express representative. John has stewarded a coach from Larkfield for many years. JB will also represent Hastings and Bexhill.

JB's views are that we should aim to develop a database of users and to discuss timings of journeys with coach companies. JB said that the service has improved this year. The existing problems are small matters, such as whether a driver allows hot food onto the coach and a steward role specification would assist.

11. Charlton Athletic Museum Update

IW noted that it is taking longer than anticipated to establish the museum as a charity.

There is a need to spend approximately £10,000 on display cabinets. The museum will also need a very good security system. The management group is now working out how best to spend the money that is available. There are many excellent exhibits already donated and there will be an open evening on 30th April.

12. Player of the Year Dinner

Ticket sales are slower than last year as a number of people are staying over in Blackpool. Peter Finch and Dave Lockwood are MCs.

13. Fans Forum Email Address and Communications Received

There is now a general fans forum email address - cafcfansforum@talktalk.net. Some emails have been received, especially after Chris Powell's departure. A Sheffield Utd fan has emailed to complement our support at Brammall Lane. The email address could be publicised more next year.

14. Any Other Business

New supporters groups have formed and it is understood that they have requested meetings with the directorship. KM is still considering how to format discussions at the end of the season. There may be questions submitted or a Q&A arranged. The Fans Forum has offered to help to arrange it. It is something that is currently being worked on. JC read out a statement on behalf of East Kent Addicks regarding the G21 group.

The Pierre Bolangi memorial garden has now been restored by Fans' Forum member JH and CAFC staff. Most of the plants are now purchased, £250 has been spent, donated by Fans Forum. £250 was also raised from a separate auction. Fans Forum agreed to contribute a further £100.

Individual player shirt sponsorship has declined this year, perhaps because we haven't signed any new players. The benefits package will be reviewed over the summer and if new players are signed, it is expected that uptake will be greater. It was suggested that it should have more prominence in the Valley Review.

15. Next meetings - 4 September, 4 December