

Charlton Athletic Fans' Forum – Friday, March 18th 2022

Chair

LB – Lucy Bishop – Fan Adviser

Fan representatives

HA – Heather Alderson – Charlton Athletic Supporters' Trust, IW – Ian Wallis – Bromley Addicks, JP – John Perkins – Valley Away, CL – Christine Lawrie – Reminiscence Group, DW – David Wood – West Country Branch, JW – John Whitfield – Fans4Fans, TF – Tony Farrell – Charlton Athletic Disabled Supporters Association, CH – Clive Harris – Armed Forces Addicks, SB – Stuart Binns – Charlton Museum, AP – Alan Pledger – Maidstone Addicks

Club

TS – Thomas Sandgaard – Owner, CEO, TK – Tony Keohane – Chief Operating Officer, DJ – David Johnson – Ticketing Consultant, TR – Tom Rubashow – Head of Communications
RM – Dr Raelynn Maloney, KH – Kyle Henderson (via Zoom)

Apologies

SH – Sam Herbert – Youth Advisory Group, ME – Millie Edmondson – Youth Advisory Group, PS – Peter Smith – East Kent Addicks

<u>Topic</u>	<u>Raised by</u>
TS thanked the fans for attending. He said he appreciates working with the fans, with the club still at the early stages of a turnaround. He said it is important to hear from the fans. He said he wants to make sure the entire organisation listens to the fans.	
<p>Leadership structure</p> <p>JW said his questions aren't intended to cause offence, but they come from fans who travel up and down the country supporting the team. He asked how the hunt for a CEO was going.</p> <p>TS said the club isn't hunting for a CEO as he is filling the role of CEO. He said one of the reasons for that is because there is focus on turning around the business end of the club, he thinks this will take some time and he wants to be involved in the early stages of that turnaround.</p> <p>He said a formal search for a CEO has not begun yet. He said it is a deliberate decision to have not put in a CEO at this stage yet. He said considering what has been going on at the club for at least a decade business-wise, he expects to put his fingerprint on how things are run to stabilise for the future. He said he'll see when enough has been done and then will start a formal search for a CEO.</p> <p>He said it may be something he starts in six months, or it could be a year or two – he doesn't have a definitive date on it yet. He said right now he gets up at 3am every morning throughout the week and spends the first many hours of every day on things in London – he said it makes it a little bit easier as he is not quite as jet-lagged when he comes to London. He said it is important to him to participate and drive the turnaround he wants to see.</p>	JW
<p>Leadership style</p> <p>JW said that given some of the promises and ambitions outlined in interviews, when will TS drop his ego and be honest, rather than saying what people want to hear.</p> <p>TS said he has been successful in other businesses and is nearly 64 years old and said it is hard to change who you are. He said if you want to be truthful to yourself and those who you interact with, you are best to be who you are.</p> <p>He said he is too old to change and that his style has been successful elsewhere in business, so he hopes he can turn that into a positive outcome both on the football side and the business side.</p> <p>He said the expectations he may have instilled in the fanbase as a result of his comments have not turned out, he expected more from the season and so did the club's fans, especially when the club is sitting in 16th place. He said he tends to separate the two topics</p>	JW

<p>of the goal and what the plan is to get there. He said his goal is still the same: to be a well-established Premier League club as soon as we possibly can.</p> <p>He said the way the club ended last season gave him confidence, especially considering the season included a squad put together at the last minute, a change of manager during the season, the slow start and knowing what he had planned to do during that transfer window.</p> <p>He said he felt with some improvements we could get there. He said he realised, this season, that despite Nigel Adkins' resume, he wasn't right for us. He said the positive of a new manager, that we saw from him at the end of the previous season, had been lost when the season started. He said that his initial timeline is sliding a little bit because we've definitely lost at least a season.</p> <p>He said in terms of his plans he wants to get Charlton Premier League ready. He said 'Premier League ready' is a phrase he is using internally and that he wants to improve in many areas, including the service and responsiveness to fans.</p> <p>He said the club needs to crawl first before it can walk, but he wants everyone who works at the club to have that Premier League-ready mindset. He said he is putting things together behind the scenes – better recruiting, Category One Academy, a focussed sales/marketing team. He said he is looking at individual coaches to train specific areas – something that is used by a few Premier League clubs. He said the club has recruited someone with experience from higher levels to support the individual coaching, who will start soon and be announced in due course. He said the club are also using data to support what they are doing. He said in terms of being Premier League ready, improvements behind the scenes are being made. He said it is a process. He said that there are 23 other clubs in League One and 23 other clubs in the Championship, who have a say on if we can get promoted and all he can do is focus on improving the probability that we collect enough points to get promoted.</p> <p>He said that in the last two transfer windows the club has looked to build depth in the squad, so that when we have injuries the club doesn't suffer too much.</p> <p>He said the club are spending the third most amount of money in League One, but said unfortunately we haven't got much to show for that yet.</p> <p>JW said there is spending money and then there is spending money smartly.</p> <p>TS said we don't get them all right; he said there have been a few good signings and a few that haven't panned out. He said the club do a lot of work before signing a player, including the manager speaking to them to get a gauge of attitude and personality. He said Harry Arter was an example of this; he got rave reviews, was coming back from injury but was involved with the Irish national team. He said Nigel Adkins had a good talk with him before he signed but it didn't quite work out.</p> <p>He said that the circumstances around Charlie Kirk's signing and moving to a big city may have made it difficult for him. He said he is on loan at Blackpool now, playing in the Championship, getting assists and he has a manager who has coached him before.</p> <p>JW said he's probably being played in the right position which helps.</p> <p>TS said his confidence has gone up and now the club has a good kind of problem on their hands; do the club take him back and build on his performances or do the club leverage on his performances in the Championship.</p>	
<p>Recruitment</p> <p>CL said analytics don't appear to be working; do they show resilience, mental and physical strength, who the player is playing with and against, their injury record?</p> <p>She said when we go behind, we know we are going to lose and said that the players need to show more mental strength. She said can the club have more robust players, both mentally and physically?</p> <p>TS said he agreed the club needed to recruit players with a winning mentality.</p> <p>CL said if you scout, you may see those traits in person, but analytics wouldn't pick that up. She asked if Steve Gallen still goes out on the road scouting.</p> <p>TS said Steve Gallen is out on the road scouting a lot. He said Steve Gallen, Martin Sandgaard and Johnnie Jackson go out scouting a lot, driving around the country. TS said sometimes agents send him a player suggestion and once in a while, that player may be of interest and that Steve Gallen and Martin Sandgaard</p>	CL

<p>will get out on the road and scout the player. He said you have to see it yourself; he said you can't just rely on statistics and that videos can be deceiving too. TS said as part of the club's recruitment analysis, there is a team that reports to Martin Sandgaard, who are out there scouting all the time too. CL said the club need a player like Darren Pratley, a nasty player. CL asked why the club get so many hamstring injuries? Do you plan to review medical training methods? TS said it is a big focus. He said he brought a very expensive machine to measure hamstring strength and hopefully catch some potential injuries. He said other clubs higher up train with intensity and end up with fewer injuries. He said he has the staff working on getting habits changed, so the club can have players that can play more than 80 minutes without getting cramp. He said there are a lot of little habits throughout the club that he is working at getting to, one at a time. IW asked what is wrong with Chuks Aneke. Post-meeting note, the club confirmed he is out with a calf injury. TS said the club needed to strengthen up front in January with the injuries to Conor Washington and Jayden Stockley. He said the club looked at Aneke and felt even if he doesn't play every game, he is still worth 15+ goals a season. He said all the pieces came together, with Birmingham still seeing if they could get Lyle Taylor. He said hopefully with improvements in the training, the club can prevent more injuries to him moving forwards.</p>	
<p>Terry Skiverton JW asked what Terry Skiverton offers Charlton Athletic. TS said Terry specialises on the defensive side. He said Jason Euell's skills are on the offensive side, so they complement each other. He said Johnnie was clear they needed new coaching staff – he said he has known Terry for many years and was his go-to person.</p>	JW
<p>Charlton Athletic Women's Team IW said to follow on from the previous meeting, the Fans' Forum have bought an honours board which is now in Bartram's.</p>	IW
<p>Category One Academy plans IW asked for an update on the club's Category One plans. TS said the building work is 80-90% done and over the next few months that will be completed so the club can move the men's first team over. He said the Academy players will then go into the existing building. He said there are two audits coming up. The annual Category Two audit and then after that a Category One audit – with the date not set yet. IW asked if there was any reason why the club shouldn't pass. TS said there is a long checklist. A lot of it is having the right staff, with the right background. He said the club are adding staff to tick those boxes. He said some things need to be put in place in the following 12 months, so that is being planned. TS said he is hoping it will be achieved some time this year, maybe by the middle of the year, but it will be led by the timing of the second audit and how long it takes if there are follow-up questions.</p>	HA
<p>U23s and Women's match HA said it was mentioned at the end of the CACT Q&A with TS that there may be an opportunity for a day when both the U23s and Women's team play at The Valley in a double-header. TS said it was something he wanted, but that it wouldn't be possible for this season. He said the discussion had been around the last game of the FA Women's Championship season. Unfortunately, because all games have to kick-off at the same time it is not something the club can do on that matchday. He said it is definitely something the club will be looking at for next season. HA recommended the club make an announcement around it. TS said the club are working on getting support from the FA to have more games played at The Valley. This would mean a hybrid pitch with a heating system installed to support the increased number of games being played on the pitch. He said the FA have been very</p>	HA

<p>supportive. He said it might still be difficult, but the club are working with them. He said it would be great to have more U23s and women's games at The Valley.</p>	
<p>Wimbledon away JW asked why the Wimbledon game was postponed. TS said there are rules and regulations that the club need to follow. He said the rules allowed for the club to postpone on this occasion and the club took advantage of it as they want to play the game with the best possible team. Post-meeting note, supporters can read Johnnie Jackson's explanation here.</p>	<p>JW</p>
<p>Free tickets HA said the topic is the first and foremost thing on Trust members' mind. She said Fill The Valley is an objective everyone agrees with. She said it is an experiment where some activity has worked but a lot, very publicly, has not worked. She said she appreciates that TS and the club have highlighted that not everything has worked and acknowledged Wayne Mumford's open letter to supporters. She asked what the plan is now and how can it benefit season-ticket holders in particular. She said maybe it is an opportunity to hear from DJ too about the strategy. She said it is worth considering how the fans can help because there is a lot of people with a lot of good ideas. TS said there has been a lot of initiatives in previous months. He said a few have given positive results, he said a few may not have been noticed and some have not been successful. He said the club has learned a lot. He said the club is now in a mode where it is trying to learn even more, he said the club are meeting with season-ticket holders. He said the club know what supporters don't like from social media. He said he has asked the team to focus on what season-ticket holders (STH) would like to see. He said something that is very important is that the club cater more to STH. He said STH are the core and the most important thing to grow at the club. He said the club will have a sit-down and have a better plan for next season. He said his feeling is that there will be a lot fewer free tickets (for schools, community groups etc). He said the club needs to get better at selling tickets and better at creating interest in the community and around London in coming to Charlton. DJ responded on the strategy used to date. He said the club has a big, very impressive stadium, and with the team performing in League One, with thousands of empty seats available, it presents an opportunity to get the fans of tomorrow in. He said previous owners haven't put enough focus on data (data harvest, data capturing), so the club's network isn't as strong as it was in the 1990s and early 2000s. He said data lapses quickly if not refreshed e.g. teachers moving to different schools, football coaches to different jobs. He said the club's network isn't as powerful as it was. He said the previous owners of the club haven't recognised that and didn't place enough importance on those areas. He said he's come into the situation with the club wanting to get more fans in, but with an absence of accurate data and with limited contacts in the community, the requirement has led the team to leverage external databases e.g. schools, to widen the net. He said the club had to start by building more relationships with schools, colleges etc. He said building relationships is important; it can't just be emailing them with them turning up or not. He said that is where the strategy started and that he appreciates it has caused frustration. He said those at the club are as frustrated as anyone when people don't show up, leaving seats empty on matchday. He said work goes in to contact schools, them requesting tickets, the tickets being processed, working with the schools on logistics and this it is a body of work, so when schools don't show up without contacting the club it is frustrating as a lot of time goes into it. He said the good news is that the club have managed to connect with over 150 new schools and grassroots football clubs – organisations we didn't have on our database before, which has more than doubled it. He said school groups and colleges are the fans of tomorrow, which is why it is a good thing to be doing. SB said schools from outside of London are being contacted. He said the club's most successful period was when the club harnessed supporters, working with the fan groups. He said he understood the no win scenario, with limited data to work with and seats to fill but said that the supporters could help with that. He said supporters would distribute flyers etc.</p>	<p>HA</p>

<p>SB asked about the large wedge of tickets on social media. RM confirmed that was the tickets around the Nepalese community, that Wayne Mumford addressed in his letter. CH said the Armed Force Addicks could have helped out with that particular element because of their links with the Nepalese community. CH said use us, we're here. DJ said he wanted to reach out to as many group conduits as he can.</p> <p>HA said while social media can be impactful, the current supporters all live in neighbourhoods too, so would be able to flyer. Supporters can support through their own networks, be it physical or digital.</p> <p>DJ said the club want to build through all networks and he would follow up with the groups represented.</p> <p>JW said the club has a massive network (supporters) and that the club need to use that. CH said Charlton Athletic is Community.</p> <p>DJ said he is still learning his way into the role.</p> <p>He said in the medium term, now that there are 150 contacts, the club are going to be cracking down on no shows, so they don't get tickets again. He said the club would also crack down on junior groups that do attend but then cause trouble inside the stadium. He said he has spoken to teachers who are mortified when they hear about poor behaviour at the game from their students. He said the longer term strategy on this topic would support a more reciprocal relationship with schools whereby, for example, regularly attending schools could be rewarded further through receiving a player visit etc.</p> <p>HA talked about a supporter who attended the Oxford game with school tickets. She said the boy had a great time. The best thing is the teacher said they wouldn't have taken tickets elsewhere. The teacher felt the brand and the community were where they wanted the school to go.</p> <p>CH said the greatest asset is The Valley. He said it is an arena.</p> <p>JW said he brought his brother-in-law who is a STH at West Ham. He said they love it and keep coming back. He said not once has the club followed up from the initial visit.</p> <p>RM said the club would look into it to ensure there is a follow-up.</p> <p>JW said STH haven't been happy with the deluge of people coming in and sitting in and around their seat.</p> <p>DJ apologised and said he is trying to build a longer-term scenario where the club have enough junior group conduits to go to, so the club can get reliable schools in blocks in the corner, so they aren't in the way of STHs.</p> <p>CL said it is great to get in as many people as you can. She said it was important to get lapsed fans back too.</p> <p>DJ said that those who we can talk to, we will continue to follow up with. He reiterated that previous ownerships haven't invested enough time or money on maintaining and building the database, meaning the club can't talk directly to some of the lapsed fans.</p> <p>IW said three years ago we took 40,000+ to Wembley. He said the simplest way to fill the stadium is to win football matches.</p> <p>DJ referenced on the Wembley visit that if there had been a data capture challenge around the business, nobody would have walked into that end of Wembley without the club capturing their data. This was a one-off opportunity to capture the data for the +1s and +2s within group bookings such that we would then hold a relationship with these people directly going forward from that point.</p> <p>TS said that the good news is that the fans are there and the club now needs to reach them.</p> <p>LB said the Fill The Valley steering group was going to be reconvened (March 24).</p>	
<p>Fan-led review</p> <p>JW asked what lengths the club would go to, to establish a shadow board, highlighted by the fan-led review.</p> <p>TS said, since he has taken over, he has wanted the club to try to engage fans more and better than before. He said he doesn't think it will be exactly like a shadow board, but instead fan meetings and working alongside fan groups. He said that the Fan Adviser, LB, is doing a lot to make sure we engage.</p> <p>TS said that one of the things in fan-led review that caught attention was squeezing more money out of PL. He said he was on Zoom calls with all those people, including the EFL,</p>	<p>JW</p>

<p>and most of the conversation was about that. He said he is supportive of better distribution of finances. He said he wants a better pyramid system and a better distribution of the money. He said he has had conversations with Rick Parry and Tracey Crouch about that. He said he wants to create a real pyramid. He said the PL was a great creation to create the best league in the world. He said all clubs in the EFL are on the same page.</p> <p>He said some of the lower league clubs are either owned or are close to owned by fans. He said fan involvement might be something that each club has their own form of if that works for them. He said he agrees that the more input we get from the fans the better, he said the fans are the core of the club, where it all starts. He said each club will have a different situation and we'll see how it develops politically. He said he is watching the situation and trying to be as supportive as he can be.</p> <p>JW said he is a big advocate of the 50+1 model in Germany. JW said the club used to have a fan on the board and said he would like to see that back. He said it was important that the fans are represented.</p> <p>TS said we can continue to talk about it. He said he is following how the initiative is developing and that he will provide his input to be part of.</p> <p>JW said we have to be careful about who owns football clubs in this country from a moral perspective.</p> <p>TS said he hopes he falls on the better side.</p> <p>HA joked that the club had a good yardstick from recent years of bad owners.</p>	
<p>Valley Away</p> <p>TK said the club have been contacted by fans who are concerned about behaviour on Valley Away coaches. He said that there is a proposal for the terms and conditions to change on the travel, with supporters having to provide a name of individuals travelling, which previously wasn't in place. He said that makes it easier for the steward on the day. He said the change will be implemented for the Doncaster game.</p> <p>TR added that fan behaviour in general had been highlighted by various supporters and staff. He said the club are looking at a potential social media policy and would pick up with CAST and the Fan Adviser to put something together that creates a safe environment for supporters online and on a matchday.</p> <p>HA asked if the hate number, used on a matchday is being used. TK said it is minimal. He said the club do get reports. He said in recent games the club have had one/two times when a steward has been placed in general clothes to follow up feedback from fans. TK said there has been an increase in poor behaviour but that is in football in general, not just at Charlton. He referenced the EFL's For Football's Sake campaign.</p> <p>TR said the club are speaking with Her Game Too, an initiative to support women in football, about how the club can support their campaign.</p> <p>LB updated on the campaign and said that the club are working with Her Game Too ambassador Tash Everitt on the campaign.</p>	Club
<p>Stewarding</p> <p>TF said he's received questions from members regarding stewards in general. He said the main steward in the North West has been moved on and not replaced. He said the steward knew supporters by name and conditions suffered. TK said he would look into detail as to why. TK said he was aware change in controls around the lifts and the access. He said people were using the lifts that weren't supposed to be. He said people were using the area to come out to smoke. TK said he would look into the move.</p> <p>TF said he appreciated there had been problems with supply and demand of stewards. He said the influx of new fans are asking stewards where they should be sitting but that the stewards don't always know. He suggested some signage that goes up at the base of each staircase. TK said he would look at the signage.</p> <p>JW said fans may pay for their names to be put on their seat.</p>	TF
<p>Museum lift</p> <p>IW said the lift that goes into museum breaks regularly, which he believed was the caterers' fault. He said it happens all the time. He said it properly broke the previous Friday.</p>	IW

TK explained this time the damage was greater. He said parts are arriving on March 28 th . He said it would be fixed then but he thought IW's idea about limiting access to the lift was a good one.	
Matchday entertainment: Addicks to Victory JW asked if Addicks to Victory can be replaced with London Calling immediately. TF asked why they wanted the change with that particular song. JW said he was repeating a fan question. TS said the club could look at a way to incorporate London Calling.	JW
RSK partnership HA asked for an update on it. TS said Wayne Mumford has done a great job in getting the club better sponsorships. He said the RSK deal was a good example of that. He said the sponsorship revenue is much increased. TS said the deals show that Charlton is an interesting club for sponsors because of how big the club and the fanbase is. He said having Wayne Mumford in allows the club to maximise that potential with sponsors. TK said that the club have moved to 100% recyclable energy. He said RSK are helping the club with a move to zero landfill – he said this will be in place by the summer.	HA
Player of the Year vote and dinner IW said the vote will be go up in the next few weeks. TF said the disabled supporters have started their voting too. IW said the dinner will take place on Sunday, May 1 st .	IW
Museum storage area IW thanked the club for giving additional space for a museum storage area which is set to be in place during the summer.	IW
Programme CL asked for a page to be reintroduced into the programme on the U23s and U18s, with their fixtures in. TR said he would speak to the programme editor. IW praised the programme – he said the player appearances at the back are quite small.	CL
Website CL said sometimes details on away tickets get missed. TR and DJ said the club would look to send emails around away ticket news so supporters are aware.	CL
Centenary gates CL asked if the gates were still going up. TK said that was under previous ownership, but the discussion could be reinstated.	CL
Season-tickets CL asked if season-ticket prices were going up. TS said that a decision has not been made. He said the club are faced with costs going up for everyone – supporters and the club. He said the club are in the final stages for getting ready for tickets going on sale. He said the club are looking at a modification to the different sections around the stadium. He said the hopes that the club end up with no increases for at least early-bird purchasers. He said the club may have to increase prices for those that don't get the early-bird discount – to keep up with inflation. He said his take on it, based on early discussions, is that there is no justification to increase prices for the early-bird. He said it hasn't been finalised but the staff at the club are working on it.	CL
Next season's kit SB asked if there is fan involvement next season's kit. TR said he would get Wayne Mumford to follow up with SB.	SB
Flags SB asked about getting fan flags in place of the sponsor boards in the Covered End Upper. TR said again it was for Wayne Mumford and he would coordinate a follow-up.	SB
Armed Forces CH said that various members of the Armed Forces Addicks were heading out. He asked if the club could do anything. TR to follow up with CH.	CH
Date for next Fans' Forum	Club

- Thursday, June 16th @ 6.30pm