

## Charlton Athletic Fans' Forum – Thursday, September 15<sup>th</sup>, 2022

### Chair

LB – Lucy Bishop – Fan Adviser

### Fan representatives

HA – Heather Alderson – Charlton Athletic Supporters' Trust, LC – Lewis Catt – Fan Adviser, TF – Tony Farrell – Charlton Athletic Disabled Supporters' Association, CL – Christine Lawrie – Reminiscence Group, PS – Peter Smith – East Kent Addicks, IW – Ian Wallis – Bromley Addicks and Charlton Athletic Museum, RW – Richard Wiseman – Charlton Athletic Supporters' Trust, JW – Jon Whitfield – CAFC Fans4Fans

### Club representatives

TS – Thomas Sandgaard – Owner and CEO (by zoom), RM – Raelynn Maloney – Ownership representative (by zoom), TR – Tom Rubashow – Head of Communications

### Apologies

SB – Stuart Binns – Charlton Athletic Museum, CH – Clive Harris – Armed Forces Addicks, RH – Rob Harris – Proud Valiants, SH – Sam Herbert – CAFC Youth Advisory Board, AP – Alan Pledger – Charlton Athletic Supporters' Club Maidstone and the Weald, JP – John Perkins – Valley Express, DW – David Wood – Charlton Athletic Supporters' Club West Country Branch

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Raised by</b>
LB introduced LC, who will be joining her as the club's Fan Adviser. The Fan Adviser role is voluntary and she explained there is more work to be done with the Fan Adviser role to support the club and the fanbase, which is why an additional Fan Adviser was needed. She said her and LC would be meeting with the club to discuss the structure of the role moving forwards.	LB
<b>Apologies</b> LB read out the names of those who apologised for not attending and read out an email from CH who said he viewed the Fans' Forum as a "futile, box-ticking exercise". He said the group would continue to support the team.	LB
<b>Senior staff</b> IW asked why more senior members of staff weren't present at the FF. TR explained he has been through the agenda beforehand and followed up with the relevant staff to get responses where possible. Owner request to comms that senior staff be invited to all future FF.	IW
<b>Non-executive director tweets</b> The notes from this section were covered in Friday's post-meeting update and <a href="#">can be read here</a> .	HA, IW, CH, JW
<b>Lack of investment for the club</b> The notes from this section were covered in Friday's post-meeting update and <a href="#">can be read here</a> .	JW, SH, HA
<b>Transfer policy</b> The notes from this section were covered in Friday's post-meeting update and <a href="#">can be read here</a> .	PS, CL, HA
<b>Sale of the club</b> JW asked if TS was planning to sell the club. TS said he wasn't planning to sell the club and his long-term commitment is to Charlton, and he wouldn't be spending all the hours on Charlton that he is, if he were looking to sell it. JW said the offer still stands for supporters, CAST etc, to help TS with the running of the club. TS thanked JW and said the advice and comments from supporters is important and factors into decision-making. CL said the only way to Fill The Valley is to get it right on the pitch first and foremost and then everything will follow on from that in terms of commercial revenue.	JW

<p>TS agreed, he said that is why he had spent money on the first team but added the club can't keep losing the money it was. He said the focus is on playing better football, getting results and cutting costs elsewhere to get the club closer to break-even and in a more stable position.</p>	
<p><b>Clarification of roles, responsibilities and recent sackings</b>  HA asked about recent sackings and asked who made the decision to sack Olly Groome. TS responded that individual matters are in process, and HA's choice of words were not correct. He said with any employee, current or past, he will not share specifics.  He said more generally, the club have said goodbye to numerous people in the past six months for various reasons, some for performance reasons, some for cultural fit reasons, sometimes simply because of restructuring, and so on. He added the club have some great employees in many positions. He said the club will continue to evolve. He said he didn't think it was right to comment on any individual situation.  HA said she hoped TS appreciated why fans wanted to comment on it.  TS said that it's an employment situation for individuals and it wouldn't be the right thing to comment on.  HA asked what is TS going to do to make sure there are people on the staff who really get Charlton?  TS said being a strong Charlton supporter and knowledge of the club is one of the things he looks at and sees as valuable. He said there are also other parameters too involved in doing their jobs. He said it takes many qualities to work for the club and Charlton knowledge/understanding is one among others.  HA asked for clarity on the roles of Leo Rifkind, Raelynn Maloney and Martin Sandgaard.  TS said Leo Rifkind is a non-executive director and is an adviser to him on the Board of Directors. He said LR has been pretty passive so far and doesn't get involved in much of the detail but will occasionally talk with TS on high-level topics but isn't involved in the day-to-day running of the club. He said the tweets during the week came as a surprise to TS. TS said where LR has been very helpful has been in legal disputes with Chris Farnell and others. He said having LR on the board, so the club aren't always paying an expensive law firm, has been helpful. He has also helped looking over sponsorship contracts.  TS said he thinks it is well known that MS is Director of Analytics and involved in the footballing side working with Steve Gallen and contributing the things he is good at. HA asked for an example of a decision Martin would make. TS said MS's job isn't to make lots of decisions. He said he looks after data which informs decisions that are made.  TS stated that RM represents the ownership and supports TS. He said she asks a lot of questions. He said she does not have a specific role in the club but helps out asking questions and getting answers on things where she can.</p>	<p>HA</p>
<p><b>Ticket pricing and distribution</b>  LB stated to TS that the general feel is that ticket pricing is a big issue and that the pricing is an issue, especially the surcharge when paying days before. TS stated surcharge has always been there but it used to be on the day and the club are trying to encourage people to make the purchasing decision a little earlier.  LB asked if it has been successful with more people buying early.  TS said the club are aware of the social media sentiment but said there hadn't been complaints at the ticket office. TS said he is not seeing a decrease in last minute purchases despite the surcharge, and its not impacting ticket sales.  IW said on the question of ticket prices that there were schemes last season that were the opposite strategy of this season. He said this season's pricing is considered expensive and not realistic within a cost of living crisis.  He said the prices for match tickets do not reflect fairly compared to the CharltonTV stream prices. He said he didn't see how the club would appeal to the casual supporter.  TS said he was a bystander to last season's ticketing initiatives, like the free tickets given, and said we all know most of them were not successful and upset fans. TS said the 3-Pack has been introduced as an option in-between a season-ticket price</p>	<p>PS, JW, SH, CL, IW, HA</p>

<p>and match ticket price and that the club will continue to build more initiatives for tickets. TS said he agreed it is a lot of money for some fans and the club will look at ways to make it more affordable.</p> <p>RW said the CAST survey said that 41% of people surveyed felt the removal of the surcharge would make it more likely for them to come to games. He then raised the "Pack out PR" initiative at Ipswich Town where you can buy a 3 pack for £45 or pay £20 to sit anywhere.</p> <p>TS pointed out that Ipswich is in a different part of the country.</p> <p>RW said CAFC used to be compared to Ipswich in terms of ownership and strategy. TS said the club are watching what other clubs do and seeing what Charlton can take. JW said Twenty is Plenty and that it is frustrating being a Charlton fan. He said the common sense approach is that fans will not pay over the odds if they don't need to. PS asked if Charlton benchmark and compare against other League One clubs and TS said we have looked at the entire EFL and made a lot of comparisons. PS asked if other clubs apply a surcharge. TS said clubs do, and because the surcharge is an issue in itself, it will be reviewed.</p> <p>IW said he received his Bolton ticket on the Monday after the game. TR followed up with the Ticket Office Manager ahead of the meeting and she said postal strikes were an issue and the club were late in the distribution of some tickets. She said the club followed up with everyone involved and worked with team at Bolton and arranged duplicates to be printed.</p> <p>CL raised the issue around the transaction charge. She said some people have been charged transaction charges for ticket office purchase and some aren't.</p> <p><i>Post meeting note: The club charge the following:</i>  <i>£2.50 over the telephone per transaction</i>  <i>£1.50 online per transaction</i>  <i>The club do not charge a transaction fee when supporters come to the window. If they are inadvertently charged, they can contact the <a href="mailto:tickets@cafc.co.uk">tickets@cafc.co.uk</a> to resolve this. The transaction fee is removed if season-ticket holders are redeeming a free ticket as part of their four free ticket initiative through their season-ticket benefits.</i></p> <p>IW raised a query on Women's Season Tickets, he said he was asked by one of the volunteers in the museum, who bought a men's and women's season ticket, with the latter not required as men's season tickets include access to all games at The Oakwood. TR said the individual can speak to the ticket office to sort.</p> <p>CL raised issues on the free ticket offer for season-ticket holders for friends and family. She stated notice for Cambridge game was too short. TR confirmed next game with this initiative will be Cheltenham at home for the BTTV anniversary. He said anyone unable to redeem the Cambridge ticket should contact <a href="mailto:tickets@cafc.co.uk">tickets@cafc.co.uk</a>.</p>	
<p><b>Generous Robots</b></p> <p>IW noted that the Generous Robots sponsorship has been removed from shorts. He said there were initial concerns raised by the CAST regarding the sponsorship. TR confirmed the partnership has come to an end in a way that suits both parties. IW asked if Charlton were paid, TR confirm the club were paid. The company were impacted by individuals coming at them with comments and they did not expect this, and thought it best to part ways.</p>	IW
<p><b>Club shop</b></p> <p>IW raised that he would like to get his book in the club shop. Stated that in 3 months that nothing has happened. IW has had a response from Castore and he has referred it to their merch department. IW looked at Wycombe Wanderers' club shop and did market research and they sell considerably more than the current Charlton club shop.</p> <p>He said Charlton's club shop is only selling Castore kits and training wear. IW would like to know what the arrangement is regarding club shop. RM said she agreed with all points on this and lots of pressure has been applied on the supply of accessories. The club confirmed statement from Castore has been received ahead of the meeting: <i>"Supply chain issues off the back of the pandemic has caused a lot of delays to sporting retail partners. Castore are working hard to get desired products to Charlton fans as soon as possible"</i>.</p>	IW

<p>IW does not doubt the effort from the club but thinks Castore is a sorry state of affairs.</p> <p>LC raised issue with online shop having a lack of options with no training wear or personalisation which is available in store but not online.</p> <p>JW asked about what sort of items will be sold in the club shop. LC also raised issue regarding Castore pricing issues around kit and £90 jackets. IW asked how long the Castore agreement runs. RM and TR confirmed it is a multi-year contract.</p>	
<p><b>Catering</b></p> <p>LB raised point regarding overcharge for four beers in the Fans' Bar. TR said that the catering partner will host a focus group around catering challenges. He said that he'd had it confirmed by the club's catering partner that the tills in the Fans' Bar do show the quantities and totals. RM said that staff should be trained to say how much the amount is before card is tapped. LB continued with Maidstone and Weald group around slow service in the Lower West and added this was an issue around the ground. She said people leaving queues before second half starts. RM said pints were poured early last season but by the time they were purchased they were flat and warm. TR confirmed club are having regular meetings with the club's catering partner. JW has already met with Richard Craig from the club's catering partner. JW said the catering experience as a Charlton supporter at the moment is very poor. TR asked all to keep raising issues so they can be fed back and resolved.</p> <p>TF said the club's catering partner used to bring food to wheelchair seats but now do not. He said it is needed as some disabled supporters are unable to access catering and some carers or unable to leave them to collect food. TR said the club would raise with the club's catering partner and advised TF to emails fans email address to feedback.</p>	PS, JW, AP
<p><b>Ben Garner Q&amp;A</b></p> <p>IW stated that Bromley Addicks requested for a Q&amp;A with Ben Garner very early on but were told a joint Q&amp;A would be held at The Valley instead, which he felt hadn't been well handled. IW asked for confirmation that Bromley Addicks will continue to receive guests. TR confirmed they will and in this instance the club has had a lot of requests for Ben Garner so the club did not want to favour one fan group hence the club event on September 22<sup>nd</sup>. TR and RM requested that all player appearance requests are to go via Tracey Leaburn or <a href="mailto:fans@cafc.co.uk">fans@cafc.co.uk</a> moving forwards.</p>	IW
<p><b>Wheelchair bay</b></p> <p>TF has asked why covered wheelchair bays in the Alan Curbishley Stand are not open for cup games. He said the only stand that has been open has been those in the Lower West. He said this is an issue if there are poor weather conditions especially as we head into winter. He said this was offered last season but has not been offered this season. TR has spoken to Kishan Parmar and they will try to get this open for the Brighton game in the Papa Johns Trophy. RM asked TF to forward the email chain to resolve the situation.</p>	TF
<p><b>Museum update</b></p> <p>IW provided update for new space in the museum which has now become an archive room. This will be used to store historical items for the club such as old ledgers and programmes etc. It will be available for anyone who is a student or writer to use it. IW looks forward to the other store room becoming available. IW also mentioned the mural at the station. This has now been refurbished by the artist.</p>	IW
<p><b>Parking in Greenwich</b></p> <p>CL has raised the issue that Greenwich council are thinking about making the Greenwich a controlled parking zone. CL hope the club will push this back to the council as parking is already an issue for Charlton fans. TR said the club will look into it and follow up with Greenwich council.</p>	CL
<p><b>Marketing emails</b></p> <p>CL thinks the club is bombarding supporters with marketing. LB made the point that it is important the club does communicate directly with supporters. CL said people have struggled with purchasing ticket after opting out. RM has said the club would rather fans do not opt out as it becomes impossible for club to contact fans with the information they may want. TS and RM are aware of the issue and are reviewing</p>	CL

<p>the marketing efforts with the team. JW raised that two new season ticket holders had not received any marketing, but this was resolved with RMs help and the supporters were grateful.</p> <p>RW fed back a positive story that a Syrian fan has purchased a season ticket and that a Charlton member of staff had followed up directly by phone. TR explained a member of staff had come in to improve the club's direct contact with supporters. Fans can email <a href="mailto:fans@cafc.co.uk">fans@cafc.co.uk</a> and Christos Apostolopoulos is the contact for all season-ticket holders.</p>	
<p><b>Remote link</b> The Proud Valiants suggested setting up a remote link for the Fans' Forum in order for more to attend. TR stated this is not the best quality. Suggestion of pre written questions rather than joining audio. Supporters attending the meeting agreed this sounded like the best way forwards.</p>	RH
<p><b>Previous actions from the last Fans' Forum</b> The club updated a draft ticketing strategy was circulated to CAST and the Fan Advisers but the club were working on it ahead of publication. The issue of unreserved seating at away games is a tough issue to resolve. CAFC are still working on this but this is in the control of the home team. Ticket pricing caps. The club had said it will be raised with EFL but there has been now EFL meeting since issue raised. It will be raised at the next meeting. CL asked if supporters could attend U21s games at Sparrows Lane. These are now played at Princes Park and open to the public. This will be confirmed on the team's individual fixture list. U21s home games also available on CharltonTV. CL asked if turnstiles in the West Stand had been fixed. CL has not tried original but TR said improvements have been made. Post-meeting note: It was confirmed the club have had minimal queries from supporters on this during the 2022/23 season to date.</p>	LB
<p><b>AOB</b> LB provided update on 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Back to the Valley. LB asked for feedback on a legacy piece to mark the occasion. Only suggestion so far is another mural. TF stated gates would be a good idea. JW stated about fan ownership of The Valley. RW stated mosaic could be part of the commemoration committee which will be fan funded. RW gave a nod to the CAST event on October 21st. PS raised lack of Charlton Athletic presence in local area. TR raised new fan engagement team are in place and player appearances in the community are on the up e.g. Conor McGrandles, Chuks Aneke have been out at recent community events.</p>	LB
<p><b>Date for next Fans' Forum</b> - Thursday, December 8<sup>th</sup> @ 6pm</p>	Club