

## Charlton Athletic Fans' Forum – Thursday, March 23<sup>rd</sup> 2023

### Chair

LB – Lucy Bishop – Fan Adviser, LC – Lewis Catt – Fan Adviser

### Fan representatives

HA – Heather Alderson – Charlton Athletic Supporters' Trust, SB – Stuart Binns – Fans4Fans, MC – Martin Carey – Armed Forces Addicks, VE – Victor Eriksson – Swedish Addicks, AF – Adam Ferris – Dubai Addicks, AH – Adrian Howlett – Scottish Addicks, CL – Christine Lawrie – Reminiscence Group, LL – Lars Liljegren – Swedish Addicks, ML – Martin Long – North American Addicks, SL – Simon Ludden – East Kent Addicks, JP – John Perkins – Valley Away, AP – Alan Pledger – Maidstone Addicks, BR – Bernie Razzell – City Addicks, CS – Claire Sadlier – Charlton Athletic Fan Group for Ladies, MS – Marc Stellmacher – International Addicks, IW – Ian Wallis – Bromley Addicks, JW – John Whitfield – Fans4Fans, DW – David Wood – West Country supporters' group

### Club

PS – Peter Storrie – CEO, DH – Dean Holden – Men's First Team Manager, TK – Tony Keohane – Director of Operations, TR – Tom Rubashow – Head of Communications

<u>Topic</u>	<u>Raised by</u>
<b>Takeover update</b> <a href="#">Click here to read the update from the initial notes published on March 24th, 2023</a>	PB
<b>Plan B if takeover doesn't materialise</b> <a href="#">Click here to read the update from the initial notes published on March 24th, 2023</a>	Club
<b>The future for Thomas Sandgaard (TS)</b> HA said supporters in general don't want TS to stay and have vocalised that, including on matchdays. She said if he does want to stay on and is not welcome, why would he. She said maybe the reason he wasn't attending the Fans' Forum was because he would have to answer challenging questions. PS said he didn't know if TS would or wouldn't keep a stake in the event of a takeover. He said TS is very busy in the United States and appointed him as CEO to manage the day-to-day running of the club. He said he is concentrating on the club and the planning for next season. He said he is not and does not want to be part of the deal discussion. He said the only reason he has had discussions with Marc Spiegel (MS) is because he is helping with the due diligence at the request of TS. He said he doesn't know what the terms of the deal are.	HA
<b>Recruitment</b> <a href="#">Click here to read the update from the initial notes published on March 24th, 2023</a>	JW
<b>Player injuries</b> AF asked why the club suffer from quite a few injuries. DH said he had been discussing that exact point with PS. He said the injuries are different and there is a difference between freak injuries that are difficult to control and players that pick up injuries more regularly. He said if you recruit players with a big injury history, then there is an increased chance that will continue. He said the club need to focus on players who have a good amount of games played. He said a good solid pre-season was also important. He said there will be an off-season programme personalised to every player so that when they come back to Sparrows Lane they are ready to go and ready to run and work. He said pre-season will be tough physically and mentally – including a couple of days back at the Royal Artillery Barracks in Woolwich. He said pre-season sets players up for the Saturday-Tuesday-Saturday which is important given the relentless nature of the division. CL asked if DH would modify training to help prevent injuries. DH said getting the conditioning right is important. He said the club are working hard to make sure the pitches at the training ground are right for next season which will help. He said it starts with signing players that are resilient and robust. CL asked if there is anything that can be done abouts Chuks Aneke. DH said getting to know Chuks, he really does care about playing football for Charlton. He said he's had a tough time with injuries. He said the club are working to find a solution for what's best. CL said the club seemed to find an answer to Ryan Inniss' injury.	AF

<p>DH said Ryan had done well and worked hard on his fitness.  SL asked if that meant players would be signed early this summer, as in the past the fans have been told that but it hasn't always happened.  DH said that was the plan. He said he never likes to put a timescale on these things. He said the club are looking to get ahead of schedule and have their list of targets.  IW said in 2012, the club got quite a few signings early that summer.</p>	
<p><b>January 2023 window</b>  JW asked what the thinking was about getting Macauley Bonne back.  DH said the club were in the market for a striker. He said a lot of clubs were chasing strikers and there were not many available, as is the nature of January. He said there were people that came in with him that are no longer here. He said Andy Scott was working with him, Steve Gallen and the scouts. He said Macauley became available and the club decided to bring him in. He said he doesn't think it has gone fantastically for him at this point. He said he still believes in Macauley and with nine games to go he can't be written off just yet. He said he's got nine games to prove himself, either for Charlton or another club. He said he is hungry to play.  He said he believes in all the players, he said not all are at the top level of their game and that they haven't been for the season which can be seen with Charlton in mid-table. He said it is important for him as a manager to show trust and positivity in the group.  He said after the run without a win in five games, they addressed the issues, which he believes is important and they have come out of that run with two good away wins.  He said he is fascinated by darts where a player can hit everything and then, with no change in variables (e.g. opposition, weather, referees), can start missing everything. He said he finds it fascinating how form can go up and down with confidence and thinks if Bonne scores one then he may well score a few more. He said he needs to keep showing belief and confidence in him. He said that's not just Macauley.  He said how much time and trust you put into players is obviously down to him as a manager. He said he has to keep showing belief in his players.</p>	JW
<p><b>Plan/budget for 2023/24 season</b>  JP asked if the budget is higher than this season.  PS said the club are going into negotiations to bring players in, so the last thing he wants to put out in the market is budget so teams/agents know roughly what the club have got, but given that the club will be bringing in players then the budget is likely to go up.  CL asked PS to confirm that the funding for the academy won't be cut.  PS said he could confirm that.  HA asked if Martin Sandgaard (MS) was involved in making plans for 2023/24. PS said when he came into the club he set up structured management meetings on the business side of the club and the footballing side of the club. He said he and DH meet on a regular basis with Steve Gallen, MS and Ron Dangerfield. PS said he makes the decisions on a financial structure basis with sign-off from ownership and DH makes the decisions on the footballing basis and whether the club want a specific player. PS said he didn't know what would happen when new owners come in, as they will make their own decisions on personnel.</p>	JP
<p><b>The Valley as a community asset</b>  HA said The Valley is current an asset of community value. She said Sparrows Lane isn't an asset of community value at this time. She asked if the club would support the fans re-applying for The Valley and applying for Sparrows Lane. HA said it not necessarily to have the club's support to apply for an asset of community value.  PS said he will come back to HA – as the decision has to be with the ownership. He said in his own view that he would but ultimately the decision lies with ownership.  He said owning The Valley and training ground was on the agenda for new owners. He said the number one priority once the new owners get control of the club is to get this club out of the division. He said he understands why supporters want to get ownership of the stadium and training ground. He said as CEO, his advice is to focus on getting out of League One first.</p>	HA
<p><b>Pitch</b></p>	IW

<p>CL asked if groundstaff will be given funds to improve the pitches at The Valley and Sparrows Lane this summer.</p> <p>PS said he has gone through what needs to be done at the training ground and activity is already approved and under way. He said there will also be work in the summer at the training ground and the pitch at The Valley.</p> <p>CL said there are lots of pigeons at games, she said it must be distracting.</p> <p>TK said the club has had a pigeon controller in at The Valley.</p>	
<p><b>Category One</b></p> <p>HA asked for the exact reason the club's category one application was turned down.</p> <p>PS said he didn't know the exact reason. He said coming in and seeing the academy that, with the personnel and size, it felt like a category one academy. He said he would check in and update.</p>	HA
<p><b>Season ticket pricing</b></p> <p>HA asked what pricing strategies were considered and criteria used in the decision-making process around season tickets.</p> <p>PS said the club had gone into great detail about where the club is and the position it is in and what had happened over the last year. He said the club also had to take into the challenges, such as club suppliers, as an average, increasing prices by 10-15%, the club's heating bill going through the roof in October and on matchdays the increase in minimum wage coming in will also impact costs. He said that whilst the club don't want to do anything that will come across as negative, the club is losing considerable sums of money. He said all the positive and negative factors had to be taken into consideration. He said he hopes the club have come up with the right balance and that supporters would be the judge of that.</p> <p>He said if the club priced season tickets to cover increased costs the prices would have to be put up substantially. He said that was something the club can't do. He said the lowest season ticket price comes out at just under £12.50 a game.</p> <p>HA asked what the aim of the pricing is.</p> <p>PS said the club has to get the best income for the club while at the same time getting the right balance for supporters. He said the club need the support of the fans and appreciate some supporters may not want to renew but that his and DH's job is to persuade the fans with actions. He said the club need supporters' help to do that too - to help convince people that we are moving forward next season. He said it has been a difficult balancing act but one that he hopes the club has got right.</p> <p>SL said he's seen supporters saying they may buy on a game-by-game basis.</p> <p>PS said he thinks some supporters will do that. He said he is hoping that, even if some supporters hold off initially with their season tickets, they will see what is happening in the summer and will want to buy their ticket.</p> <p>JW said attendances have been very low in recent weeks and that many of the empty seats are season-ticket holders.</p> <p>PS said the club's job is to try and persuade people by actions.</p>	Various
<p><b>Closing parts of the stadium</b></p> <p>AF said he knows the matchday costs are quite high and asked if the club had considered closing the West Upper. PS said it was one of the first questions put to him when he came in. He said there is merit in doing it but his overriding thought is that if we are about to have new ownership it would be negative to have part of the stand closed. He said it would have saved costs but it isn't the right time to do it.</p>	AF
<p><b>Season ticket-holders watching U21s games</b></p> <p>CL asked why season-ticket holders were now being charged for U21s games.</p> <p>PS said he had been made aware by the club's Fan Advisers, has followed up and season-ticket holders will be able to access the remainder of U21s games this season for free. He said this would be the same would for season-ticket holders next season.</p> <p>CL asked it to be made clearer who could and couldn't attend games at the training ground. <a href="#">Information can be found here.</a></p>	CL
<p><b>Senior Management structure</b></p>	HA

HA said that PS has passed the Owners' and Directors' Test which is a good thing given what the club went through with ESI. She asked if Ed Warrick and Jim Rodwell passed Owners' and Directors' Test. TR checked with Club Secretary Ron Dangerfield who confirmed that they did.	
<b>Charity tickets</b> JW said an individual hadn't been contacted asking about getting free tickets for charity after being told they would be. TR to follow-up with JW. (Post-meeting note: the individual has now been contacted)	JW
<b>Fan-led review</b> JW asked about the Fan-Led Review and having a shadow board or fan on the board. PS said the general view of the EFL is to support white paper. He said a lot of the focus is around redistribution of funds. He said from the EFL perspective they are behind the white paper. PS said he had sent it to MS, who had looked at it. He said it is a positive for Charlton and Charlton will support the EFL.	JW
<b>Food before game</b> IW said the quality of food in the Meantime Fans' Bar had been really good but has been worse the last few games. TK to follow-up with IW ( <i>Post-meeting note: a survey of supporters in the bar will take place around an upcoming game</i> ). PS said he recently had an open discussion with the caterers about what was and wasn't working for the club and caterers. He said they were open to change. PS encouraged supporters to send through feedback. LC said a few fans had asked about the Meantime Fans' Bar closing earlier in recent weeks. TK to catch up with LC. ( <i>Post-meeting note: the survey of supporters will incorporate queries on closing time</i> )	IW
<b>Club shop</b> IW said the general feeling is Charlton have the worst club shop in England. Various other attendees of the Fans' Forum said they weren't happy with the club shop and said that the hummel shop was better and they engaged with supporters better. PS said once the club is through the due diligence and forecasts, focusing on the club shop is important as he knows it is important to the fans and also to the club to help generate income. Everyone agreed the situation needed to improve.	IW
<b>Player of the Year Dinner</b> IW said the POTY Dinner is April 30th. ( <i>Post meeting note, tickets are now on sale – <a href="#">click here to purchase a ticket</a></i> )	IW
<b>Transaction charges at the Ticket Office</b> CL asked for clarification. TR to follow-up with the Ticket Office.	CL
<b>Ticket for Troops</b> MC has said he has noticed the club doesn't do Tickets4Troops anymore and asked why. PS said the club would look into it and update.	MC
<b>Youth tournament</b> LL said there is a big annual youth cup in Gothenburg. He said he thinks it would be good for Charlton to take part, especially given the tournament attracts teams from around the world. PS said it was something the club would look at.	LL
<b>Fan feeling</b> BR said he felt the elephant in the room was that the club is in a period of transition with minimal budgets. He said he doesn't think people will have much faith with what is going on at the moment, until at least a takeover happens and even then people don't know what that will look like. He said that fans have been putting up with this for years and he can't see people spending money on season tickets like they have in previous campaigns. PS fans will make their own individual decision on that and he understands and respects that. He said it is the club's job to try and show fans that things are changing and that it is actions supporters want and not words and that he and DH are looking to be positive.	BR

DH said the country is going through crisis and that football is a reflection of society. He said that even before issues with the club shop or food in the Meantime Fans' Bar, supporters are turning up at games half angry already because of what is going on in their world. He said actions speak louder than words and that he and people at the club are committed to giving everything and improving the football club. He said all he can promise is hard work and graft and that hopefully people within the club are good enough to build a team on and off the pitch. He said the club is nothing without supporters and that's why he has tried so hard to try and build that connection. He said he will never take supporters or managing Charlton for granted and that PS is the same.

BR thanked PS and DH for their answers and said he hoped what was being said would factor into the time supporters would get to make their decision about season tickets.

SL said a recent survey showed people do put off buying season tickets until they see what action is happening in the summer.

CL wished good luck to PS and DH and said she was impressed with what they had to say.

IW said everyone was on their side.

DH thanked everyone for attending.

**Date for next Fans' Forum**

- Currently set for Thursday, June 15th

Club