

CHELSEA FC SUPPORTERS' CLUBS 2023/24 2nd MEETING MINUTES

Meeting held in the Britannia Suite, Chelsea FC with Teams attendees at 4.15pm on Sunday 5th May 2024

Attendees

Barrett, Neil
Carr-Smith, Gary
Cornall, Mike
Costello, John
Doherty, Tim
Elmes, George
Hillers, Karl
Karnik, Paul
Kasic, Allison
Konrad, Milan
Last, Nick
Levi, Yarin
Micallef, Chris
Oliva, Arthur
Pillai, Ram
Regan, Andy
Robinson, Adam
Smith, Graham
Toniolo, Luca
Warren, Andre
Wolff, Brian

Supporters' club represented/ Club role

Bedford & Rushden
Bristol, Bath & South Wales
Club Head of Supporter Relations
Carefree CA
Chelsea South West
York
Iceland
West Midlands
Mid Atlantic
Austria
South Dorset
Israel
Malta
Saffron Blues
UAE
Independent Chair
Eastern Blues
Club Head of Ticketing
Switzerland
Swindon
American Heartland

(Action points are underlined.)

Mike introduced himself as the Club's new Head of Supporter Relations.

MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The following change to the minutes was raised:

WhatsApp Group

There is no WhatsApp Group for all ticketing clubs. There are existing groups for UK & Ireland, India, USA, Spanish speaking clubs and 500 + digital members groups.

The following action points were reported on:

Rewards process

The Club said the topic is next in line for resources to be allocated and a working group will be set up at that stage.

Banner changes

The Club said its financial year ends at the close of June and we are awaiting review for the new financial year. The Club may not pay to return all flags as there are over 65, so collection may be necessary.

End of season dinner

We will have this early next season as we haven't had a chance to do so because of fixture dates. We will aim to do so early in following seasons too.

Members' renewal process

The Club said it will look to speed this up subject to the number of requests received at one time.

Distribution of membership cards/ packs

The Club said it will continue to distribute packs directly to fans and we haven't had membership cards for a number of years.

Portal suggestions

These are being considered for next season.

Tiers for supporters clubs/ allocation of tickets

The Club said this has been reviewed and will be announced in due course. There is still excess demand for tickets.

Pricing on the information page

The Club said this is shown.

Introduction of an online directory

The Club confirmed this is still the aim but there have been aspects to address as a lot of digital-only clubs have data stored in a cloud/ online system to which the Club doesn't have immediate access. There is a directory of ticketing supporters clubs and all clubs attending today have their club listed online now. The page is accessible on the supporters clubs area of the website.

Email address for marketing/ non-ticketing aspects

The Club said all enquiries should go directly to Charlie at Charlie.heyworth@chelseafc.com. The Club will ensure the marketing email address is monitored too.

Group discount for merchandise

The Club said this used to be arranged and marketing will readdress this.

West Europe clubs meeting

The Club it is happy to arrange this on further request or interested clubs can do so themselves.

Ticketing proposals

These are being considered for next season.

AGENDA ITEMS

Seating of groups

It was raised that requested tickets for the same family surname are allocated apart on occasion. The names are next to each other in the list submitted. This has happened for home and away matches.

The Club said seats in the corners are not numerical which may explain some instances. They are allocated next to each other where possible. It added that reassigning tickets is a major problem for clubs given the large number of requests being made. It's still in the policy for next season but that may need to change. It's also a large amount of extra work for secretaries. Touting is a major problem for these tickets – we are catching more than 10 per match. All tickets are likely to be collection only next season. We can switch to refunds only instead of reassignments if necessary.

A representative said it's clear that joining a club is a possible way to procure a ticket and sometimes that's not for legitimate reasons. Another said that partnering with the club to avoid this is important. The Club added that one supporters club in particular is making so many changes and missing deadlines which really adds pressure to the system. There is still the refund option which is easier.

Amendment dates for orders

The Club said the Premier League didn't hit its own release dates on occasion and there are no release dates announced now. It's always less than four weeks for confirmation. We haven't had a Saturday home game for some time. There is always 24 or 48 hours for clubs to make requests and we do what we can to assist clubs.

Addition of new members via the portal

It was raised that the portal ended for registration in late November or December. Fans can join as members until later than that as individuals so it would be beneficial to extend the clubs' registration date for members. The Club will consider this.

Match ticket delivery

The Club is still in early testing of the App. It is still being coded and ticketing feeds into that. Initial responses are good. We may need print at home for a while as well, with the two methods

running side by side; the first in the stadium with that code has the seat. There is a lot more testing to go.

They are QR-based tickets so the equivalent of the paper/ card versions. They can be downloaded prior to arrival. We are not risking full roll out until we are sure the App works. We won't be having tickets on the phone's operating system as we have no control of changes instigated by Apple etc. The App is intended to operate across various systems.

Next season we will probably pick one supporters club per match to try the system. A representative said we have to avoid the club official being bombarded with problems as their members enter the stadium. The Club commented that some clubs don't even collect their batch of tickets on a match day.

The Club added that fake disability applications were reported recently at Manchester United and we have had such applications too.

Photo ID for collecting tickets is still needed.

Special delivery

The Club responded to a question stating that it is not aware of delays from the Post Office. As long as our post is collected by 3pm it should be delivered by 1pm the next day. We have received some away ticket batches late and we once had to go on sale prior to receiving the tickets, which is definitely not ideal.

We can provide your tracking number on request. An overseas representative said tickets arrive late when sent to UAE and a staff member had apparently commented that it's a waste of money even sending them. The Club said we can keep tickets for collection from Stamford Bridge. Even if the ticket office is officially closed we can make special arrangements for collection from here. They can't be collected from the away club. A representative said collection from our ticket office is presented as an option on the portal.

Quantity of tickets for home matches

The Club was asked about the 500/800 split and said the policy is not yet signed off. 500 is unlikely to change for AA fixtures. The allocation for non-AA fixtures may be reduced. The capacity of the stadium continues to be reduced and other groupings have lost tickets but we have avoided reviewing supporters clubs tickets for home games until now. The away allocation is unlikely to change.

Capacity has decreased from over 42,000 to around 40,000 for safety reasons and other changes. The GA capacity went down by 5,000 due to Westview and we lost 1,200 spaces with the access changes, for instance. A representative said that without the East Lower and Westview, there are 3,000 members tickets whereas there used to be at least 8,000.

A representative said it's better to receive a larger allocation for one match than smaller allocations for two matches in order to make coach arrangements financially viable. The Club was asked if a specific allocation for a particular game could be considered and responded that demand is so far in excess of the available supply that it's not possible at present.

The Club is looking at maximum order limits for matches too. It's 50 at the moment and allocations are reduced to that. A club said it had 60 members with enough loyalty points for today's match, for instance. The Club has more leeway on cup games. Points requirements have been looked at too.

Match price categories

It was raised that there have been changes in categories during the season. The Club said we communicate seven weeks in advance but only Bournemouth was changed during this season. Clubs should not be asked to pay before the category is confirmed.

OSC ticketing for the 2025 World Club Cup

It was raised that there is interest in travelling to the US for this, including from non-platinum club members. The Club said there is a policy in place but only if we are selling the tickets. The dates and teams involved are not decided yet. That is likely to only be finalised at the end of next season. We have a guaranteed place but some others are to be confirmed. It was suggested by a US representative that it may be easier to pick a venue or two and stick to those, as travel around the country will be expensive and logistically difficult.

The Club added that even for the 2022 World Club Cup we had to sell tickets for both the possible second matches and refund the one we weren't in after the first match. This will be far more complicated.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Merchandising

A representative asked what is being planned. Marketing is looking at rebranding this and will announce its policy in due course.

65 and over tickets

The Club was asked if the changes at Arsenal and Spurs will be replicated here. The Club said there is no comment on this currently. We have about the oldest average fanbase attendance in the Premier League and all teams are facing this issue.

Emails on the online directory/ listing by country

It was raised that email addresses are available and therefore junk mail and other unwanted communications can easily be sent. There should be a click function for emails instead.

A representative said a prospective member claimed to be rejected by another club and it's useful to know the secretary contact details of other clubs. Another said there is a list on the official site but an easier contact function would help. The Club will look into these issues.

Trivago supporters tournament

In response to a query the Club was asked about arrangements regarding travel, accommodation, strips etc. The Club will chase this up.

Season ticket details

The Club has no dates to announce regarding next season. Very few don't renew their season ticket and we allow name changes to ensure the names are correct.

A representative commented that last season the Club said results played a part in not raising prices so this season there may be no announcement until after the end of the season. The Club said we have sold out every game since around 2011 so that's a factor too. Once prices are signed off we have to build the programme for the new prices before going on sale.

In answer to a question, the Club said it monitors ticket use and you can transfer to another fan as long as there is no profit made. Some clubs insist on checking who receives the transferred ticket. Some penalise ST/ away scheme ticket holders and don't allow more than a match or two to be missed. Apps present their own problems too.

Ordering process

Steph and the team were thanked for their work this season. The Club said that, apart from amendments for ticket lists, the process is working well.

Two representatives commented there is inevitably going to be suspicion of some members. The Club is happy to keep a particular individual's ticket back for collection in the event of concerns about that person. Likewise if the Club uncovers some form of touting by a member it will take action against them and let their club know.

The meeting finished at 5.20pm.