



**Arsenal Football Club Supporters' Forum**

**12noon – 1.30pm March 10th 2019**

**Board Room**

**Highbury House**

**Supporters' Forum membership 2018/2019**

16-21 Year Old Representative	Mr	Zak	Wagman
Arsenal Supporters Clubs – Overseas	Mr	Lars	Lundstedt
AISA Representative	Mr	John	Williamson
Disabled Supporters	Ms	Anne	Hyde
Club Level	Mr	Steven	Downey
Family Enclosure	Mr	Ryan	Maskery
Gold Member	Mr	Robert	Kramer
Red Member	Mrs	Sarah	Coppock
Over 60s Representative	Mr	John	Thater
Ethnic Minority Representative	Mr	Vik	Dattani
LGBT Supporters' Representative	Mr	Dave	Raval
RedAction Member	Mr	Raymond	Herlihy
Shareholder Representative	Mr	Simon	Stern
Away Scheme Members	Mr	Soran	Hourami
AST Member	Mr	Steve	Cooper
Women's Representative	Ms	Suzanne	Goodband

**Arsenal representatives**

Arsenal FC (Chair)     Mark Gonnella  
Arsenal FC             Raúl Sanllehi  
Arsenal FC             Vinai Venkatesham

**Apologies:**

Steve Cooper – AST (Alternate attending)  
Raymond Herlihy – Red Action (Alternate attending)  
Simon Stern – (Shareholder)

## Minutes

### 1) Welcome and agree minutes of previous meeting (Mark Gonnella)

#### **Outstanding items**

Further to the last forum John Thater provided an update on a sub-group meeting around match day atmosphere. He explained that it was a productive session with several good ideas tabled. The group will be making a formal recommendation in due course.

### 2) Opening remarks Josh Kroenke, Raúl Sanllehi and Vinai Venkatesham

Mark Gonnella welcomed Josh Kroenke to the meeting who explained that he was there to represent his family. He made clear the ambition was to win trophies, with a first step being getting back into the Champions League, while upholding the traditions and heritage of the club. He said we are all passionate about Arsenal and share the same ambition for the club, and that he is excited about the future. He recognised competing for trophies is not easy but said it could be achieved by being efficient and focussed on our plan. He said we have great people in all areas of the club, and having undergone so much change in recent months were still recruiting for a small number of key roles. He also stressed the importance of the Academy in terms of players for the future.

Raúl said that it was clear from his time at the training ground that the players and staff are fully engaged and passionate about the future. He explained we are confident in our strategy but recognise this will take time. The important thing is not to respond overly negatively or triumphantly to the latest result, but to keep focussed on our plan.

Raúl outlined how a Technical Director would work within the club, working closely with the Head Coach, the Academy and other key football staff. He stressed no-one has yet been appointed but explained it will be a key technical appointment for the future. Raúl confirmed that scouting and recruitment would report into the Technical Director.

Responding to a question from **Akhil Vyas (AST)** on the role of the Arsenal board, Vinai explained that he and Raúl are entrusted to run the club on a day to day basis, along with the Club's executive team. He explained that there was regular dialogue with Stan Kroenke, Josh and the rest of the board. Practically, he explained that like most companies there are agreed thresholds on decisions which need board approval or can be decided at executive level, and outlined how that worked around transfers and the appointment of a technical director as examples. Josh Kroenke added that the approach is to hear everyone's opinion on the key issues at board meetings and to make decisions based on that insight

**Ryan Maskery (Family Representative)** asked about what we're doing to avoid players running down contracts. Raúl explained this is something we're tackling and the approach moving forward will be that when a player enters the final two years it will be a case of re-signing him or selling him, unless that player was approaching the end of their playing career. He accepted this would likely mean some tough decisions ahead, but that it would be the right thing for the Club in the long term.

**Vik Dattani (Ethnic Minority Representative)** asked about whether the arrival of a Technical Director would mean we still need a Head of Recruitment. Raúl said it depends on the person appointed, what their views on the matter are, but confirmed the scouting and recruitment departments would report into the Technical Director.

Vinai outlined that the supporters' forum was an important part of how the Club engages with its fans and encouraged members to share the content of the discussions with the groups they represent. He also explained that we would run a broader supporters event at the start of next season to allow a wider group of fans to hear from him and Raúl as well as can ask questions.

Vinai confirmed the club supported the extension of the £30 cap for away PL tickets for the next 3 years, and explained the reasons behind Arsenal's decision to reduce this further to £26 as further support to our away fans.

Following the opening remarks **Academy Manager Per Mertesacker** gave a powerful presentation on his ambition to make the Academy the most challenging and most caring youth development environment in the world. He described the framework that has been created to give our young players the skills and resilience for them to succeed on and off the pitch. This covers every aspect of young players' lives, ensuring everyone develops themselves in the best possible way. He wants to create student athletes, who are hungry to learn and develop. Not everyone can be an A grade student but he wants A grade effort from everyone. He pointed out that only 0.5% of the boys who enter Academies aged nine make it as professional footballers. We need to equip them to cope beyond the game.

#### **Pre-submitted questions**

##### **Sarah Coppock (Red Member)**

What is the process of being a Red Member and upgrading to a Silver Membership - if there is a process at all?

##### **Answer – Mark Gonnella on behalf of Membership team**

**Red members are allocated a waiting list position when they join. Silver membership qualification is based on the amount of consecutive years a Red level member has held their membership, generally the number of places available is determined by the number of silver memberships not renewed in each season.**

##### **Steve Cooper – AST**

1. Despite the issues with the early kick off time vs Bate in the Europa League, a positive development was that the Ticket Exchange scheme got more coverage and use, which the AST was happy to support. It did, however, bring more questions from our members. The exchange closed at 10am on the day of the Bate game, which we understand is in line with what usually happens for weeknight games. Can you clarify when the exchange has to close before fixtures, and why those particular times? For a Sunday 4pm game, the exchange closes at 3pm on the Friday, which seems very early. (In our opinion, it should always be open until as close as possible to kick off on the day of the game, as many last-minute problems may prevent fans from attending games.) Also, is there is any update on a 'donate' option which Ivan Gazidis said was being introduced? When is this going to happen?

**Answer – Mark Gonnella on behalf of the Box Office**

Each match day closing time for TX is based on the processes that need to be completed by teams to deliver the service. That said it has always been the Club's ambition to extend the service improvements have been made to reduce the manual dependency. This should be ready for testing during the summer. It is our aim that the TX service would run up until the morning of a weekend game and possibly up to 3hrs prior to K.O. In respect to the donation option the enhanced TX service took precedence, so this piece of development is still ongoing.

2. At the last Fans Forum, Vinai mentioned safe standing and potentially doing something in a working group in the future - which is extremely positive as 97% of Arsenal fans surveyed by the AST were in favour of safe standing. Many other clubs are working on this, including Spurs in their new stadium, Wolves and Manchester City. It would be great to see Arsenal be ready for this. Has there been any development on this from a government / Premier League point of view and what is Arsenal's stance on having a safe standing area?

**Answer – Vinai Venkatesham**

**As you know the government is considering changing legislation to permit safe standing, but there is no clarity as to when this will conclude.**

**There have been several high-profile fan behaviour issues across the Premier League, which as mentioned at the last forum will likely not be helping the case for legislation to change. We should use this as even more motivation to eliminate these types of fan behaviour issues**

**Should legislation change we would be supportive, in principle, of implementing safe standing at Emirates Stadium. The words 'in principle' are important as it is a very complicated issue and the pros and cons would need to be evaluated fully and weighed up in conjunction with fans.**

**He said an example of a challenge is that our stadium was not designed for safe standing. At best safe standing maintains the same capacity (as 1 seat = 1 standing space), but due to the shallow nature of the lower tier there may be sightline issues for fans that remain seated behind or adjacent to standing fans. There would likely also be seat loss for segregation. We would obviously need to carefully consider the impact of less fans being able to watch games at the Emirates vs. the benefits of safe standing.**

**Another example is it is possible that we would be required to rigorously enforce sitting in other parts of the ground, so depending on the size of any safe standing area we could end up with fewer fans standing than present with safe standing. A final example is that the costs of implementing safe standing may be significant.**

**He stressed he didn't want members to take from the examples that we are not supportive of safe standing – we are supportive. Examples were used simply to illustrate it needs proper evaluation. That evaluation may find ways to solve these specific issues for example. The evaluation will be completed and discussed further in a future forum.**

3. The issue of away match tickets being listed on touting sites continues. (The work being done on the home ticketing covered by Ivan W is really great to see.) Can Arsenal confirm that

addressing this remains a priority? Can the club also explain how the person who the AST discovered had sold four tickets for the game against Southampton had four tickets to sell? How does one person get hold of four tickets? What action is being taken to remind those who buy away tickets of their responsibilities? Might it be worth having some random ID checks on entry to see that the person buying the ticket is the person using it?

**Answer – Mark Gonnella on behalf of the Box Office**

**This was covered at the last forum. The incident was at the Bournemouth fixture. The four were all members of the away ticketing scheme who have since been banned. The Club does take this seriously and has made a commitment to buy away tickets periodically on the secondary market so they can trace back and take the appropriate action.**

**AOB**

Mark Gonnella pointed out that three members – Lars Lundstedt, Ryan Maskery and Soran Hourami are due to step down from the forum at the end of their three years' service. He thanked them for their contributions and said the vacancies would be advertised in due course.

The next meeting will be in September. Members will be asked if doing this on a non-match day would be helpful.

**March 13<sup>th</sup> 2019**