



Arsenal Football Club Supporters' Forum

12pm – 1.30pm September 23rd 2018

**Board Room
Highbury House**

Supporters' Forum membership 2018/2019

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

*New member

Arsenal representatives

Arsenal FC (Chair) Mark Gonnella
 Arsenal FC Ivan Gazidis
 Arsenal FC Raul Sanllehi
 Arsenal FC Vinai Venkatesham
 Arsenal FC Sue Campbell
 Arsenal FC Alun Francis
 Arsenal FC Charlotte Kenny

Apologies:

Mark Brindle – Arsenal FC
 Steve Cooper – AST (replaced by Akhil Vyas)
 Dave Raval – GayGooners (replaced by Angus Moorat)
 Vik Dattani
 Simon Stern

AGENDA

1) Welcome and agree minutes of previous meeting

Mark Gonnella (MG) explained that there were no formal minutes from the last meeting as that had been a tour of the new facilities at our London Colney training ground

2) Welcome to new members

MG formally welcomed new members to the Forum – namely Zak Wagman, John Williamson, Robert Kramer, John Thater, Raymond Herlihy, Suzanne Goodband.

3) Ivan, Raul, Vinai intro

Ivan Gazidis gave the rationale behind his decision to move to AC Milan as Chief Executive. He explained that after almost 10 years at Arsenal it had been a very difficult decision. He said a huge amount of work had been done across all aspects of the club and that part of a Chief Executive's job was to manage themselves out of a role. He felt it was now important for the momentum and energy flowing through the club to be given further impetus by new people. He also felt it was right for him on a personal basis to embrace a new challenge. He was clear that in Raul Sanllehi and Vinai Venkatesham, Arsenal have two great people to push the club forward. They know each other well through their work on the European Clubs' Association and will work together effectively. He said he had complete confidence in them and in particular their values which fit with the club's entirely.

Vinai stated that it is an honour to have this role and was clear that the reason everyone is here is to win major trophies, namely the Premier League and the Champions' League. He recognises that is not easy but that is the ambition. It is also the aim to achieve these things by living the club's values and make all our fans around the world proud of their football club. He promised to do everything he can to fulfil the ambition and deliver pride to supporters. He explained his responsibilities cover everything off the pitch – operations, commercial, community and the club-wide functions such as hr, legal, finance.

Raul thanked Ivan for bringing him to the club seven months ago and said that he understood very quickly what a special club Arsenal is. He feels part of the Arsenal family and is looking forward to the future with excitement. He said he was very proud to have been given the responsibility and explained his priority will be the first team. He said he was confident we have made the right choice in Unai Emery and that the spirit and atmosphere around the team is very positive. In addition, he will have responsibility for the Academy which he said will remain important as it's right for us financially but also in terms of injecting players into the first team who understand what we stand for. He will also oversee our women's team and our high performance team which supports the players off the pitch. He will continue his work with the ECA.

John Williamson (AISA) asked whether there would be a Chief Executive and how Josh Kroenke fits in the structure.

Ivan explained that Raul and Vinai were sharing the Chief Executive duties between them. Josh Kroenke remains as a member of the board.

Angus Moorat (GayGooners) thanked Ivan for the support he had shown their group which is the first LGBTQ in the world.

Ivan replied that our work on equality, the impact of the Arsenal Foundation and Arsenal in the Community teams would always remain highlights of his time at the club.

4) Fan survey

Charlotte Kenny (CK) explained that a survey was sent out to 80,000 match attending fans and had a very high response rate. It asked supporters about food and drink in the stadium and what we can do to improve the experience off the pitch pre and post-match. CK said we are working through some of the ideas and have already introduced longer opening hours for bars after the game.

There was a discussion around what music could be played as the teams come out with the room agreeing there is a big split of opinion on what is appropriate.

ACTION: Raymond Herlihy (RedAction) agreed to pull together a list of music options which the group can vote on and we can then look to implement.

Ann Hyde (Disabled Supporters) raised a question whether a signer could be available so people with hearing impairments can follow pitch-side activities.

5) Club level refurbishments

MG explained that a huge amount of work had been done during the summer, including the completion of the first phase of a project to install 800 extra seats in Club Level. This will complete next summer. A major refurbishment of Dial Square has also been completed and more work will be done this summer on the new Avenell Club, plus the Highbury and Champions suites.

6) Questions & Answers

Raymond Herlihy – RedAction

What fan engagement/involvement is foreseen under the new “100% Kroenke ownership” regime? Clearly fans will no longer have input via share ownership, AGM attendance, etc – what plans (other than this Supporters’ Forum) are there to ensure fan involvement in the running of the club?

Answer

Vinai said fan engagement is critical and the supporters’ forums will continue. He and Raul intend to attend every meeting. He also said there would be more fan surveys similar to the one discussed earlier in the meeting. He said it is also important to remember our fans are all round the world so engagement is evolving. We will continue to have fan events on tour and senior executives will attend other events. Vinai also stressed the need for these meetings to be productive and with the intent of moving the club forwards.

Akhil Vyas - AST

In the takeover documents Stan Kroenke praised Usmanov but he didn't have a single word to say about the supporter shareholders many of whom have been custodians for generations and are now being compulsorily forced out of the club. Please can Ivan Gazidis address some comments directly to them?

Why did the Arsenal Board fail to recommend the Kroenke deal this time round when they recommended at the time of his first takeover offer? What has changed so they felt they couldn't give the recommendation on his last offer? Was the board truly independent then or did it just do as it was told?

In the light of this lack of recommendation this time what steps did the board take to act in the best interests of shareholders? Did they try to persuade KSE from enforcing the disgraceful squeeze out of supporter shareholders?

What steps are available to the board to try to maintain any last vestiges of independence? What is the future of corporate governance now given it has been less than adequate in the past? Given that the board has changed its view on what is in the best interests of shareholders what next?

Answer

MG said we understand the question and the sentiments behind them. The takeover process has not concluded and under the takeover panel rules we can't discuss it with any individual shareholders. The AST hold shares so we can't comment today. We would be in breach of the Takeover Code. He pointed to the Directors' statement in the takeover document which said the following:

The Arsenal Independent Directors consider that for some Arsenal Shareholders, Arsenal is a unique investment and are aware that some Arsenal Shareholders may have strong non-financial reasons for holding Arsenal Shares and wish to stay invested in Arsenal. Having considered the above options, the Arsenal Independent Directors, who have been so advised by Rothschild as to the financial terms of the Offer, do not believe it is appropriate to recommend any one course of action to Arsenal Shareholders. You should carefully consider each of the options taking into account the above stated issues and other factors such as your tax status, your views on the Offer and your investment in Arsenal and make your own decision according to your individual circumstances.

John Williamson – AISA

Why has there been no Members' Day this summer? Are there plans to retain Members Days in the future?

Answer

MG said that due to the stadium developments and the short pre-season there simply wasn't time to organise this event. It's something we will continue to look at in the future but it's worth pointing out this is something which has attracted smaller and smaller attendances.

John Williamson – AISA

As you may be aware, once a European draw has been made, fans like to book their away trips ASAP after, ensuring the cheapest deals. After this seasons draw, for the first time ever, two venues were stated as TBA. Whilst we understand that these could not be clarified at the time; would it be possible to send out an explanation. For example: Baku was always going to be the City for the Qarabag match, therefore to state this would reassure travelling fans, other than slipping it on the the fixtures page 8 days after?

Answer

Charlotte explained the stadium we were to be playing in was not confirmed until a week or so after the draw was made, with it moving from the Tofiq Bahramov Republican Stadium to the Baku Olympic Stadium.

John Williamson – AISA

Whilst we know and understand the issues surrounding the match in the Ukraine regarding the venue and the problems in the region, we were immediately aware that the stadium is being rebuilt and the issues arising from this. Once again the Club could have explained this rather than slipping it onto the fixtures page 10 days after the draw?

Answer

Charlotte explained that whilst the stadium was initially confirmed for our match, there was speculation from the opposition that they may change the venue. However, they did not confirm the stadium would stay at Oleksiy Butovsky Vorskla Stadium until approximately two weeks after the draw.

John Williamson – AISA

Most fans going to Azerbaijan will be travelling early in the week due to the problems getting there, as it's a country most have never been to before, would you kindly ensure that the travel information is sent out to fans as early as possible?

Answer

Charlotte said that the fan guide information will be distributed to fans via email/sms and will be hosted on Arsenal.com as soon as the final details are available.

Robert Kramer – Gold Member

We were given the message for several years that the introduction of financial fair play would allow the club to become more competitive and that we might enjoy a return to the success seen in the latter years at Highbury. What do you believe are the reasons that this has actually seemed to have the reverse effect as the club has slowly declined in spite of FFP regulation?

Answer

Ivan made it clear that FFP has never been part of the Arsenal strategy. We have been trying to run a self-sustaining club where we increase our revenues and invest it back into football. FFP is not a strategy since it is not within the club's control, but an initiative launched at the European level to make football more sustainable. The club has supported FFP because it brings more stability to the game and indeed there are far less club insolvencies than there were prior to the introduction of FFP. He pointed to the fact that eight years ago clubs across Europe lost €1.8bn. That has now turned into a €600m profit. He accepted there have been failures within FFP but most clubs now operate in a more financially responsible way. Raul added that the environment FFP creates helps us as a club as it eliminates some of the crazy spending.

Akhil Vyas – AST

The price jump for tickets after the junior gunner / cannon club scheme membership ends into a full adult member is significant which is resulting in many younger fans being priced out. Many clubs now offer student discounts or discounts for those under 25. Would this be something Arsenal can look at as young fans are our future and we need to help keep them engaged and attending matches?

Answer

Charlotte said we are looking at this and concessions in general with the aim to do the right thing for everyone.

Akhil Vyas – AST

Can the Club provide a summary of actions taken last season in relation to curbing ticket touting and the number of memberships cancelled? What actions are planned for this season?

Answer

Charlotte said we have more sophisticated technology which helps identify ticket touting early. We work closely with the Police and Local authority and changes have been made to our terms and conditions which has given us more flexibility to ban offending memberships. More than 3,000 members were banned last season, the highest ever number. Our approach will be similar this year.

Anne Hyde – Disabled Supporters

ADSA understood that the Disabled Supporters website was going to be improved so that it was more accessible and easier for the disabled supporters to find information. When will this go live?

Answer

Alun Francis explained that the Disability Liaison Team and the web team are currently in the process of agreeing the final version of the layout and contents of the new version of the Disabled Supporters Information page which will then go live in the next few weeks.

Anne Hyde pointed out that the club website could be more user friendly for people with disabilities. Alun Francis agreed to pick this up with the web team who have looked at this previously.

Suzanne Goodband - Women's Representative

Periods and football: Meet the fans campaigning for free sanitary products at stadiums
For an update on how we are responding to this at the arsenal

Answer

Mark Gonnella explained that the club is aware of this initiative and others with regard to this subject. We met Martha Silcott recently who has developed an environmentally friendly disposal system for sanitary products. We are not changing our approach at this time but will continue to keep an eye on developments.

7) Per's trip to Jordan

Mark Gonnella outlined Per's trip to Jordan to open a new project in the Za'atari refugee camp. The film of his visit can be seen here. <https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=vWD1H6kg7a0>

AOB

Mark Gonnella advised members that the club has just been awarded the Premier League Advanced Equality standard in recognition of the work it does on diversity and inclusion.

Date of next meeting

Will be notified in due course.