



NOTES OF CPISA MEETING WITH CPFC 19 DECEMBER 2023

PRESENT

Sharon Lacey	CPFC	Chief Operating Officer
Nikki Gibbons	CPFC	Supporter Liaison Officer and Disability Access Officer
Sarah O'Connell	CPFC	Executive Assistant
Paul McGowan	CPFC	Head of Ticketing
Ben Collins	CPFC	Head of Security and Safety Officer
Clive Mitchell	CPFC	Health and Safety Coordinator
Steph Pavesi	CPFC	Public Catering Operations Manager
Patrick Moore	CPFC	Operations Administrator
Keith Powell	CPISA	Chair
Ian Weller	CPISA	Treasurer
Peter Saysell	CPISA	Vice Chair
Sue Maisey	CPISA	Secretary
Sandy Weller	CPISA	Membership and communications

INTRODUCTION

Following welcomes and introductions, the opportunity was taken to thank the club for the sympathy and support for the wife and family of a well-respected Ray Wright, who represented Palace supporters in meetings with the club for the Crystal Palace Supporters' Trust, but who sadly passed away in early December.

SURVEY

CPISA conducted a survey of members on a number of topic items. The responses and comments from the survey formed the main points raised at the meeting and copies of the survey findings were presented to the club at the start of the meeting. CPISA agreed to contact fans whose individual comments were raised at the meeting and provide individual feedback and with their consent pass on their details to the club so that the club can manage issues raised.

TICKETING

Fixture Moves - changes in dates and times of matches were a significant concern and causing costs to supporters, who wished to know what the club were doing about the situation. The moves are outside of the club's control and affected the club as well, such as their arrangements for safety and security and the matter was raised at Premier League (PL) Safety and Security Meetings.

The club will refund tickets when supporters were unable to attend due to changes, and pointed out that refunds for travel and hotel deposits can be sought from the operators once changes are announced. The proposal for establishing a compensation fund has been raised in PL meetings, albeit that it has not been pursued.

Digital Ticketing - the digital system was providing a problem for a number of supporters and requests for cards to be available instead or as well as digital ticketing. In line with PL policy the club will be moving all ticket holders over to digital ticketing, even those that currently have a card. The club are aware that not all fans have a smartphone and are exploring other options to enable fans to still be able to attend.

The use of digital ticketing is considered to give quicker entrance. However, it takes longer when supporters wait to try to find the digital ticket at the turnstile. Fans can help this by checking their digital wallet in advance of arriving and ensuring the correct ticket is loaded before accessing the turnstiles. Fans do not need to open the wallet, simply holding the phone against the scanner will work. There is a technical team at matches to help and there is also an online video on looking after the digital ticket on the mobile phone.

Digital Ticketing however is here to stay. It is easier to track and trace tickets and therefore helps prevent the touting of tickets.

The club viewed the queues at the turnstiles in part as due to later walk ups at matches and are looking at ways to encourage earlier attendance.

If family members become separated on each side of the turnstile, when a minor is involved the club policy is that they should be reunited immediately by staff at the turnstile and the ticket issue sorted after they are back together.

Also if anyone has any disability or sensory issues and has difficulty with the digital ticketing, then they should be referred to Nikki Gibbons – Supporter Liaison Officer and Disability Access Officer, or Rhianna Odartey - the Disability Liaison Officer, for support and resolution of the difficulty.

Phone Charging - associated with digital ticketing was the concern that the phone charge might run out before reaching the turnstiles, especially for those with long journeys to matches. The club undertook a survey on distances but no-one raised the issue of running out of charge. It was suggested that charging points would be useful around the ground. The club had not planned for this, but were willing to look at the feasibility.

Away Supporters in Home Areas - there appeared to be an increase in away supporters within home areas. In some cases this may be an away supporter accompanying a relative or friend who is a home fan but often this is not the case.

Where fans resell on social media and fan forums the club will not be aware who attends and the club feel this is leading to away fans gaining access to home areas. The club are confident that tickets sold through the club's resale scheme are sold to Palace fans and should not be available to away supporters. The club are aware that there is the possibility of screen-shotting of tickets but they are looking at ways to control this to prevent tickets being transferred against club policy.

When an away supporter is recognised and ejected, their ticket is retained and the club investigates how they obtained the ticket and trace back to the ticket holder who may receive a warning or have their season-ticket or membership cancelled.

If away supporters are seen in home areas, Palace fans should text the alert number - 07507 477 669, giving details of location and any other relevant information. The text goes through to the control room and directions given to stewards to intervene.

Assault Situation – an incident of verbal abuse and later assault by a Spurs supporter towards a Palace fan in the Whitehorse Lane family section was raised. The situation was observed by a steward, but not dealt with effectively. CPISA agreed to put the club in touch with the fan who raised this in the survey.

Since Covid, the club explained that experienced stewards had been lost and there had been a complete new recruitment, with stewards from age 18 years to those more senior. Some stewards were there to open gates and not to respond to situations, although they should report incidents and seek assistance of a senior steward

In such circumstances and indeed any safety issues, the club would wish to be notified. The club has good CCTV and any assault is a police issue. The Spurs match was in the evening, and many children were not using their tickets so there was an increased chance of tickets reaching away fans. The club have security and away response teams and if away fans are identified in a home area, they deal with the situation.

The club can check whether there is an upgrade from a child to an adult ticket. It was noted a number of adults came in on childrens' tickets into the Holmesdale stand. The club agreed that it could look at targeting areas where there was a risk of away fans entering by checking ID and age appropriate tickets.

Box Office Calls - when contacting the box office it was raised that fans are saying they have to hold on the telephone for significant periods or request a call back, which then may not happen. The club has a live system and can tell how many callers are waiting. When busy callers are encouraged to go online. People often wish to chat as well as purchase a ticket.

The call back should be after 5 minutes, but the club can look to see if it is not working. The longest wait should be no more than 20 minutes, however feedback on call backs with time and numbers is helpful. The club also recognised the repetitive 'Glad All Over' music on calls could be reduced. CPISA will continue to monitor with fans and provide specific feedback re call dates and times if this continues to be an issue.

Previously there were multiple questions to go through when calling, but now there are just two: (1) to speak to the box office and (2) for information. The box office only has 4 people to deal with emails, answer calls and pack tickets. The club could be more proactive, directing more people to go online, which would free up time to deal with calls. At peak times, with people coming into the box office, responding to calls is more difficult.

Call Transfer System - the point was raised that the general call transfer system was probably not assisting the box office in responding to calls. When the main reception switchboard is busy/not covered, calls transferred to the Academy reception. If unanswered the call would then transfer through to the box office, which does not have capacity to manage calls to other parts of the club. It was recognised by the club that this should be rectified to stop such calls going to the box office.

Away Tickets Points - the loyalty points scheme is controversial. There are differing views amongst fans re what points should be awarded for and how it should work. It is seen as preventing people, especially new fans, from getting tickets for away matches. Some family members did not have the same number of points and many newer fans had insufficient points. The club were confident that except for a match like Luton with a restricted allocation and where loyalty points are significant, fans wishing to purchase an away ticket should be able to get one.

Other clubs have loyalty schemes where there can be some exciting promotions. The club recognise that the loyalty scheme would benefit from some consideration and they would like to include for example special deals to encourage people to come to matches earlier to reduce the pressure on turnstiles close to kick off.

Away Ticket Sales - notification period of the sale of away matches appeared to have reduced. The club try to get away tickets 4 weeks before the match, but this is not always possible if awaiting information from the away club.

Away Match Allocations - depends on tickets sold and the block system. For Chelsea the whole area was opened up and the club will try to open up all blocks as much as possible. If the club is sure it is going to sell out, it will make all away tickets available. However, if unsure the club will stick to the rules of the opposing club.

Usually Palace make allocations available for visiting away clubs 4 weeks before the match and mostly full allocations are taken except for Bournemouth and this may also be so for Sheffield United.

For the Everton and Liverpool away matches CPISA suggested the loyalty point requirements be removed and that the Everton away match might be a 'Palace Away Day', The club were willing to explore this however, it would be dependent on Everton's view and TV picks 6 weeks before. (Subsequently, the Everton match has been moved to a Monday night for TV but efforts would be made to see if an alternative game can be found).

Coaches - the point was raised that coach availability was not sufficiently publicised for away matches. Coach seats are sold sequentially as they fill but there are multiple coaches available.

The coach journey to Manchester City was also highlighted. The coach was 20 minutes late arriving at Selhurst for the start of the journey, there was no passenger list available to check people onto the coach and had only one driver. The driver had to stop for a break due to using up driving time. A second driver was picked up on route. The club will pick up issues with the coach company.

The coach arrived later than expected. Manchester City did not seem to have a list of those attending and who would be collecting their tickets. The club advised that a notification was sent to Manchester City at 10.35pm on Friday night and confirmation received from them at 08:47 the following morning. However, the club did not know whether this had then been referred to the box office team at Manchester City.

COMMUNICATIONS

Refund information - there was concern re only 2 windows for refunds and that details about picking up resale refunds should be better communicated to prevent those due payments missing the application slots and that there should be something on the resale window. The club agreed this could be better communicated and would look to improve the position. The number of windows is needed for the refund process to enable the club to manage staff levels to deal with all of the enquiries and calls that this generates.

Features - fans wished to know more about people in the club and their responsibilities, and to have more insight into long term plans for the club and issues behind the scenes.

Chairman's news - views were expressed that news on what was happening was provided for the various paywall publications such as The Times and Athletic, but not directly to supporters. The club pointed out that the Chairman had made a podcast for supporters with similar information but would explore more club based options.

Direct Meetings with the Chairman - the possibility of direct meetings with the Chairman was raised. There were forums arranged at one time. These can be challenging, starting well and then waning. The Chairman had indicated that he was up for holding forums and this would be raised with him again.

STADIUM

Safety - handrails in the stands were identified as a significant safety requirement. This was not only in the Upper Holmesdale but also the Main and Arthur Wait stand. The Upper Holmesdale had railings installed some years ago, but the Council required their removal considering them unwarranted. There was guidance on how much space there should be between rails, which would have to be checked.

The club would look to see what can be done. It would be difficult to install handrails in the Main Stand. The New Main Stand, however, would have railings which would be compliant with guidance.

Queues - the Holmesdale Road on match days becomes blocked by supporters queueing, making it difficult for people to walk through. It was thought this was due to insufficient people undertaking searches.

The club considered the late walk-ups made it difficult and even if there was speed-searching, there would still be queues at the turnstiles. As the season has progressed this has become better but the club would like to reduce the number of late arrivals and will look at initiatives to improve this.

Congestion - in the concourses and the entrance to the Lower Holmesdale concourse was raised. Stewarding of the congested concourses was being monitored.

PA System - The sound system was difficult to hear particularly in the Arthur Wait and Holmesdale stands. It was thought this would be a problem for safety messages. There is a separate PA system for safety alerts which would be heard around the stadium.

The club is aware that the PA system may need to be improved. The speakers around the gantry in the Arthur Wait were normally turned off, but were turned on at the last match,

which was better, and did not seem to have an adverse effect on gantry activity, so will be continued.

Turnstiles - the turnstiles in the Whitehorse Lane end were too small. The club were aware of the issue and the need to replace turnstiles around the ground where some turnstiles were not acceptable width-wise. The club were looking to overhaul in the summer.

Leak - there were reports of a leak in the Lower Holmesdale with wet seating . Water can seep through the vent, and can be caused by the sprinklers or rain coming into the stand, or possibly water from a kiosk. The club would need more information to check the position, CPISA will contact the person who raised this to get more information.

Toilets - there were insufficient toilets in some areas and some very limited in size. This was the case for those by the Stanley Stephenson lounge and the ladies toilets in the main stand. Similar comments were also made of the men's toilets. The New Main Stand would have more toilets and be compliant in size.

There were also complaints about the toilets in the Arthur Wait. The problem was the concentration of people going to use them at the same time. It was suggested that the provision could be supplemented by portaloos. There were new toilets in the Arthur Wait but after the first game they were found to be blocked. People were putting food and coffee cups into the toilets, and even trousers and pants were also retrieved. Polite notices requesting people refrain from putting items down the toilet were proposed in response.

In the Lower Holmesdale there were long queues for the ladies toilets. It was asked whether reconfiguring the space might allow for more cubicles. Which would make a difference. There was scope for reconfiguration in the Lower Holmesdale which would be considered by the club.

The club now have cleaners working in the toilet areas that are responsible for restocking of toilet paper and soap. The club wants them to be seen to show that cleaning and checks are made. If there are issues these can be reported via the text alert number above.

Technology - there were concerns with the technology after fans found themselves outside at the West Ham match and there was a lack of communication. Some club officials had loud hailers, others did not. On the day different settings and scenarios had to be run through which caused a delay to kick-off. The turnstile technology failure was due to the breakdown of the controlling server and the various backup and failsafes failed leading to Fortress having to rewrite the programme for the turnstiles.

Learning from the incident has been taken on board not just by Palace but by other clubs and the club is confident there will not be a repeat failure.

Rail Seating - Fans were not understanding what was happening with the possible installation of rail seating and whether this would just be in the Lower Holmesdale. There was an appetite for rail seating in the Lower Holmesdale and the club are looking at installing rail seating in the Lower Holmesdale but would consult first with fans and how it works for those that do not wish to stand.

In the Arthur Wait this was unlikely at present as the sight lines would be blocked. Liverpool found this and that after installation, some did not wish to stand, and so had to take out the rail seating.

New Main Stand - preparation work is going on, and much design and architectural work. The club is looking to start the development in the summer of 2024. A request was made for a museum and sufficient toilets to be included in the space. This is in the plans.

People in the Main Stand were worried about having to move and the price of their seat going up. The new stand is going to be built behind the current main stand and people would move back into the same stand and probably the same row. The Directors' Box was going to be wider, so some people would be slightly displaced. The club were just working out the layouts and were not in a position to consider seating costs.

Steve Parish was releasing information about progress, logistics and how parts were made, and recently gave a pitch side account explaining the current situation. Once the development has progressed and gets through the Safety Advisory Group a further update can be given.

Future View - the long term plan is for an enclosed stadium.

The Arthur Wait floor needs to be repaired and painting is carried out each year. Abseilers were required to check the Arthur Wait roof/stand after storm damage. All repairs are carried out over the summer unless urgent.

CATERING

Refreshments - access to bars and refreshments at half-time was difficult and it was suggested that the club was probably losing out on income as fans just gave up. The concourses have limited space. The club has talked about ordering beforehand. Serving food and drink at seats was tried, which required orders 15 minutes before kick off and after half-time, but this did not have a great take up. Preparing glasses of beer in advance, requires judging the right time to pour beforehand so not to risk flat, warm beer. More people favour draft beer, which tends to last longer and increased pints have been sold. The Arthur Wait does not have scope for more outlets, but the club were looking at possible self serve kiosks in other areas.

Matchday Promotions - The club is looking at more promotions, like the early bird meals and lager offer. The idea being to get people into the ground early. The club will look at what other clubs do for ideas such as a pound off beer or 2 for 1 etc.

Range of Food - there was a lack of healthy options with little for vegetarians and vegans and a burger was not always wanted, a sandwich or roll might be preferred. Bacon rolls were available at one time. The club said there were vegetarian/vegan options around the ground. When a full option was not available there would still be one or two vegan selections. As a healthy option the club had tried salad meals but this did not work. In the Arthur Wait last year vegan curry and chicken tikka were available but didn't work. The burger bar nearby took the most custom.

Snacks It was suggested that snacks other than pringles might be available, such as nuts. The drawback with nuts was the risk of an allergic reaction, but the club would look into the possibility of other snacks.

Green Football Week - would be held in February with the theme of food. The club had a working group. The focus would be on plastics, but it could also discuss food.

MERCHANDISE

Clothing Ranges - women's ranges were poor and sizes were not comparable with other retailers. Similarly for men the sizing varied with the manufacturer. Puma and Macron for instance have different large sizes. The club recognised the difficulty and were looking to get more diverse ranges. The club does have size charts on the website.

ACADEMY

Academy Stand - the stand was still without a roof and the site was incomplete. It was not expected now to be ready until the summer. The stand was ordered but delayed by the weather and designs going back and forth to the Council. It was anticipated the site would be functional from next season and the stand available for supporters to watch Academy matches .

U21 matches - Sutton was being used for U/21 matches, but the query was raised as to whether any matches were to be held at Selhurst Park. It was hoped that more matches would be held at the ground.

Team sheets - these had been made available when the Academy teams played at Dulwich but the message at Sutton was that they were only provided for scouts and agents. The club would look into making team sheets available.

SURVEY LIKES

Supporters' Likes - the survey asked for supporters to indicate what they liked and what worked well in relation to the club. The inclusion was very much appreciated by the club. The likes included:

- LED screens including the stripes around the clock
- Stadium Tour - considered a good experience
- Palace TV - particularly live transmissions.
- Season Ticket Plus - appreciated the initiative
- Staff - seen as helpful
- Fans Zone - people appreciated
- Foz - in the club shop seen as a terrific employee
- Catering Staff - in Stanley Stephenson brought food over.

WOMEN

Large Flag - the design for a supporters' large CPFC Women's flag had been submitted to the club for approval. This had been agreed and the club would meet the cost.

Selhurst Park - there was a women's match scheduled for March, and the club would look to see if there was scope for further matches to be played at the ground.

Merchandise - queried about ranges specific for CPFCW - this needed to be more unique - the club were looking at women's ranges, but the margin factor was an issue.

Programmes - an online version was available, but the possibility of printed issues was unlikely as there had to be a minimum print run and demand is not sufficient.

Transport Guide - the West Sutton railway station was often closed at weekends, when women's matches were played. Information on alternative travel directions were sought. The club had produced a guide which included travel directions to the Sutton ground and accessibility matters.

FANS' ADVISORY BOARD

Meeting - A first meeting of the FAB had been arranged for 23 January 2024. It was expected a co-chair would be agreed and the number of meetings to be held during the year. Decisions might also be made on whether meetings should be by zoom or face to face and how to raise agendas and communicate with the fanbase.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Selhurst Park Centenary - something special should be planned to celebrate and bring people together. This might include special merchandise. The club would communicate plans nearer the time. This was already firmly on the radar of the club.

Wifi - at Selhurst Park was poor. The club were aware of the position, but did not have the capacity to have dedicated wifi. The club would contact Villa Park to see how the problem is dealt with there as they seem to have better wifi.

Match Day Programmes - since programmes are not being received in time by post pre-match, there was a request to reintroduce the vouchers for programmes. The club would see how many receive programmes by post and if vouchers can be used.

Brighton match - plans were in place for the match. The club did not like to have a hold back in the stadium for away supporters unless circumstances necessitated. The Brighton fans would be held in the road outside the stadium to allow Palace fans to get away. However, Palace fans would not be able to proceed up Holmesdale Road and would have to turn at Park Road.

After Palace fans had cleared, the police would walk Brighton fans as a group towards Norwood Junction Railway Station. Selhurst Station was to be closed either side of the match. There were insufficient trains coming through, only two per hour and it was considered the station was not adequately staffed and unsafe for a large number of supporters. Norwood Junction was content to take the strain.

Rail services - with engineering works and strikes rail services were creating travel issues for some supporters. The club were in touch with the rail services and would notify supporters of any relevant travel information. It was suggested that park and ride might be introduced. The club were aware that people let out drives and vacant areas close to the ground for around £5.

Green Football Week - the club has a working group and wants to push green travel so will be participating in the week.

CPISA Annual General Meeting - the club were willing to provide a room for the meeting except for the 13 and 30 January. Any other evening except a matchday was possible.