



Newcastle United

Fans Forum Minutes

Monday 24th September 2018
Magpie Suite
St. James' Park

Club representatives	
Lee CHARNLEY	Managing Director
Nicole ATKIN	Head of Business Development (chair)
Kate BRADLEY	Head of Foundation
Eddie RUTHERFORD	Head of Facilities
Steve STOREY	Head of Safety and Security
Stephen TICKLE	Ticket Operations Manager

Supporters	
Gareth BEARD	NUDSA
Mark BETHAM	Equality representative
Alan CLARK	Over-65s representative
Steve COLE	Supporters Clubs
Craig ENGLISH	Corporate representative
Alex HURST	NUST
Steve HASTIE	NUFC Fans United
Jon LANE	Members' representative
Phil LEE	East Stand representative
Jill MORRIS	Long-distance supporters
Lynne PARMLEY	NUDSA
Martin TYRRELL	Leazes Stand representative
Steve WALLWORK	Away fans' representative
Kris WOODS	Gallowgate End representative

Apologies	
Peter FANNING	NUST
Lee MARSHALL	Head of Media and Content
Sharon RAVENHALL	Women's representative
Bryn TENNANT	Young persons' representative

1. Introduction

Nicole Atkin (NA) welcomed all attendees and outlined meeting protocol, with detailed minutes to be circulated around the group.

All members would have an opportunity to approve the minutes, particularly the accuracy of their own contributions, before they are published.

2. Supporter items

An extensive number of questions were received from Fans Forum members in advance. The floor was opened for these questions.

Phil Lee (PL) enquired about the late cancellation of the planned August meeting.

Lee Charnley (LC) stated this was due to personal reasons and an apology was given on the club's behalf.

The majority of questions were about the summer transfer window, the manager, potential sale of the club and current unrest amongst some supporters.

Summer Transfer Window

When the club enters a window, its aim is to come out of it stronger. The club brought in seven players (five on permanent deals and two on loan).

The club was pleased to secure the manager's number one transfer target, Salomón Rondón – and also Yoshinori Mutō, a player the manager wanted in January 2018.

The club brought Kenedy back on loan and brought some Premier League experience in Ki Sung-yueng and Federico Fernández, plus Fabian Schär to add competition, and then also secured Martin Dúbravka on a permanent deal.

The collective view, including that of the players, is the squad is stronger following the summer transfer window.

The club explained that several more players were pursued, some of which were well above and beyond the club's current transfer record. For a number of reasons, the deals were not possible despite the money being available for these players.

Craig English (CE): “I think we have heard it all before, with the greatest of respect.”

The club explained the challenges of the transfer window and stated that several clubs simply did not want to sell their players, or that the players did not want to make the move.

Jill Morris (JM): “Was the manager expected to sacrifice Dwight Gayle in order to get Salomón Rondón?”

The manager’s view was that Salomón Rondón was best suited to the way he wanted to play and had Premier League experience.

The manager did not have to lose Dwight Gayle from a Newcastle United perspective, however West Bromwich Albion would only sanction the deal if he moved in the opposite direction and the financial terms offered were attractive enough to them.

PL: “What about other strikers such as Alassane Pléa?”

The club discussed a number of other striking options <names withheld from Fans Forum minutes>, some of which were well above and beyond the club’s current transfer record, however ultimately the club pursued Salomón Rondón at the manager’s request. The club’s preference with Rondón was for a loan deal.

Alex Hurst (AH): “May I ask what was the issue that stopped the players we signed being part of pre-season and being ready for the first game of the season?”

The club agreed that it would have been ideal for all new players have arrived at the start of pre-season but explained the realities of the transfer market do not always support this especially in a summer with a World Cup. Each player’s availability and the willingness of their clubs to do business changes as the transfer window progresses.

Examples were given – Ki’s contract at Swansea expired and the deal was completed quickly. Likewise, the club had an option to purchase Martin Dúbravka and activated it accordingly.

The deal for Salomón Rondón was far more complicated for several reasons (some of which are noted above).

Fabian Schär was acquired to add additional competition. When Florian Lejeune sustained an injury, and the manager assessed what he needed at centre-back, the club supported him in purchasing Federico Fernández.

Kris Wood (KW): “Were we in for left-back cover at any point?”

The club confirmed it had been in the market in this position and wanted an offensive left-back to provide competition for Paul Dummett. The position remains on the club’s radar for the January transfer window.

Martin Tyrrell (MT): “Have we got targets for January and does the manager believe they are enough?”

Discussions with the manager are on-going. The club would ideally like to secure exciting, high-quality young players who can make a difference, rather than focussing on quantity of players.

PL: “There is some talk in the press about there being a summit meeting about transfer targets this week – is that just made up?”

The club advised that those reports were not accurate but confirmed there is an imminent meeting with the club’s scouts following the closure of the summer window to review and plan ahead.

There are regular conversations between the managing director, manager and head of recruitment.

Jon Lane (JL): “Are reports that Rondón’s release clause didn’t make financial sense wide of the mark?”

The club explained the release clause fee is just part of a deal, with wages over the period of a potentially long contract and agents’ fees factored in. A loan agreement was preferred.

Alan Clark (AC): “Does the manager agree with that or is that something between Rafa Benítez and the managing director?”

The manager wanted the player and the best deal for the club was to loan the player. The club would not have done the deal it did if the player wasn’t the number one target for the manager.

Mark Betham (MB): “Would the finances have been there?”

The club confirmed that there was money available for the right players. Players have to benefit the club not only in the short term, but also the medium-to-long term.

PL: “One of the things people complain about is that if we do have a target, it seems to take forever to get them over the line?”

The club explained that signing a player now is rarely straightforward for any club, with various parties needing to be satisfied before a deal is concluded.

JL: “We come across as haggling more.”

The club also explained that it would be easy to pay sometimes highly-inflated initial fees quoted by clubs but there is a responsibility with the club’s long-term health in mind to spend intelligently.

Another consideration is the club’s wage structure, which can impact heavily on the dressing room. When players come in, the club tries to keep salaries within that structure. The club explained that while people refer to an extra £10,000 or £15,000 a week to secure a deal, this can create an imbalance in the dressing room, and can mean a difference of millions of pounds to the budget.

Steve Hastie (SH): “Would it be safe to say that Rondón is here for one season and one season only, or can West Bromwich Albion decide they do not want him back and an extra year be added on?”

The club explained that Salomón Rondón is on a one-year loan deal and that there was a lot of football to play before any decisions were made. The player has every opportunity to earn himself a permanent move, subject of course to his parent club’s desire to sell.

Steve Cole (SC): “Are we signing an extra striker in January?”

The club advised that discussions with the manager are on-going.

SC “There have been very few goals scored this season.”

Róndon and Mutō were brought in to improve attacking options, in addition to the return of Kenedy, who did well offensively last season.

While the fixture list has been challenging to date, the club hopes there will be an upturn as the season progresses.

Steve Wallwork (SW): “We were terrible against Cardiff and we were terrible again on Saturday (at Crystal Palace), against lesser teams.”

The club’s view was that while chances were limited in both matches, gaining a point in matches away from home is generally positive. In the case of Cardiff, we were a penalty kick away from securing 3 points.

SH: “We lost Mikel Merino – did he want to leave?”

The club stated that Mikel Merino had requested a clause in his contract when he arrived, which was agreed to in order to secure his signature. This was based on the number of appearances he made and the release fee would increase in-line with how many appearances he made.

Mikel did not play as much as he would have liked and when Real Sociedad activated his clause, he was happy to leave. Conversations then took place between the manager and the club and accordingly, the club did not take steps to retain the player.

SH: “Was Yoshinori Mutō a direct replacement?”

The club stated that Ki Sung-yueng was a replacement. The manager’s view had been that Ki would be a valuable addition with proven Premier League experience.

MB: “So if we had another Rondón situation, where the manager is adamant that he has a target that he wants, would he be backed if it meant keeping us in the Premier League?”

The club works hard with the manager to identify targets and to take deals forward in a way that makes financial sense for the club. Securing Salomón Rondón is an example of this.

PL: “Did you expect going into the transfer window to make a profit?”

The club confirmed that it did not set out to make a profit.

The club also explained the difference between profit and cash flow. The deal for Aleksandar Mitrović was given as an example, with money coming over a period of four years. In terms of this financial year, the club’s income in relation to trading for summer 2018, when comparing cash going out and cash coming, is about net £2m; far from the profit being reported. The rest of the money comes in over future years.

The club made it clear that money was available to spend in the summer transfer window.

PL: “For Sissoko, Wijnaldum – what about the money from previous windows?”

The club reiterated that these transfer fees are paid over a period of time so the money comes in when scheduled instalments are received – not up front in one go.

SH: “Would it be fair to say that Rafa would prefer a different business plan to the one you have?”

The club explained that it usually opts to pay up front in full in order to get the best deal possible. It then accepts dated payments to maximize what is received

During planning for the summer window, the club discussed with the manager about the possibility of being able to match up against incoming payments in future years, where appropriate. For example when signing Mutō the club offered two options. One was to pay in full and one was dated payments.

The club will always do the deal that is in the best interests of the club.

AH: “Is there not extra income as part of being in the Premier League? Why does transfer spend have to be determined by player sales?”

The club confirmed that player sales do impact on the total amount available to spend, however they are not the only determining factor.

The club agreed player sales were just one part but explained there are misconceptions around how money is received from the Premier League (i.e. it is not received as a single payment at the start of the season).

AH: “There is an idea from fans that the club has £30m - £50m in the bank. Is that accurate?”

The club stated that it was an oversimplification to talk about a cash position at any particular point in the season. The cash flow has peaks and troughs through the season and has to be managed – including periods to ensure the club is not in a negative cash balance – with support given either by the owner or through an external lender.

Either way, by the end of the financial year we aim to pay back what is owed, in terms of short term funding, to whomever it is owed. The amount owed to the owner was disclosed in last accounts and the figure is currently less than that. However the source of funding and level of funding required for the remainder of the season is not yet finalised, so this position may change.

Premier League payments are not made in full at the start of the season and come into the club in three main instalments in July, January and at the end of the season. The club also receives smaller monthly payments.

AC: “The club is facing a maelstrom of adverse publicity in relation to its finances and what it isn’t spending. What is the answer to that?”

The club agreed that it was important to engage in further communications around its finances, which is an area in which there is a great deal of confusion and misinformation.

The club highlighted articles in the Chronicle, Mirror, Mail and Independent that had followed a lengthy and detailed briefing with the managing director, after it published its latest accounts.

The club’s view was that these articles were a good assessment of the club’s finances at that time and the club is committed to getting more content of this nature out to supporters.

The Manager

PL: “Where the media is concerned, it seems to me is that the club is briefing against the manager.”

The club strongly rejected this and stressed its support for the manager. Individuals in the football community have their own opinions and most have chosen to lay fault with the club. The club would always prefer that any conversations behind the scenes remain private.

Jill Morris (JM): “In terms of summer transfer business, the manager does not seem satisfied with it and there is a risk we can now lose him.”

The club worked hard to secure the manager’s targets and is confident that it has a stronger squad than before the summer window. Transfer business has addressed some of the areas identified by the manager and time will tell over the course of the season how positive this business has been. The club, the manager and the players believe their group is stronger.

MT: “Kenedy, Rondón and the manager could leave at the end of the season and it could leave a hole in the club. Are the club concerned by that?”

The club is very clear that it wants the manager to stay beyond his current contract. The club has tried to engage and negotiate with him since January and give him different proposals in terms of length of contract and other key elements.

The club will have further conversations to try and achieve that.

The club stated it will have a decision to make on Kenedy and Rondón depending on how they play for the rest of the season, and then subject to discussions with the players and their parent clubs.

PL: “Do you have a contingency?”

The club is focused on Rafa Benítez and would like him to stay.

SW: “Aside from the playing side, Rafa wanted the training facilities improving.”

The club has discussed this with the manager. There is a shared aim to improve training facilities but in prioritising its needs, the club feels its overall budget is currently better spent on the team.

PL: “In recent times, owners have spoken about bringing more players through the Academy system.”

The club believes the debate around Academies is intensifying. There is a belief that it is becoming more and more difficult to bring through young talent, with managers generally reluctant to call on Academy players in the Premier League. The club also believes the current rules make it easier for the big five or six teams in the country to secure the best players from all other Academy systems.

SH: “Should the club not be having a conversation with the owner and saying ‘we need X, Y and Z in order to compete’ and gaining investment into the infrastructure?”

The club spends within its means and the owner has always been clear and open about this.

The club highlighted that its training pitches are excellent and, whilst the building is fit-for-purpose, there is a long-term ambition to upgrade.

Eddie Rutherford (ER) noted that while some changes had been made to the building in recent years, the biggest and most immediate improvements had been made to indoor and outdoor pitches to ensure the players train on the best possible surfaces. ER’s view was that the club’s facilities were by no means the worst in the Premier League.

MB suggested fans don’t get to see the positives behind the scenes at the training ground.

AH: “Is the aim just not to be the worst?”

The club stated that was absolutely not its aim. It always wants to improve in all areas and that will continue. Whilst there might be differences around the timeline, what all parties want is ultimately the same.

JL: “Do those plans include hydrotherapy facilities?”

The club confirmed that would be an inclusion.

PL: “What is the timescale?”

The club is currently unable to put a timescale on the new training ground building. However, plans have been drawn up and it would be built modularly, around the existing facility. This change to the plan was at the suggestion of the manager in order to minimise disruption to the players and all parties agree this is a significantly better approach than the original plans.

CE: “Given there’s one pot of money, something has to give; the timescale on the training ground, or investment in the playing side. Is that fair to say?”

The club agreed, stating that at this time the squad was its priority and full focus.

AC: “Can the club be sustained as a Premier League football club given its current situation?”

The club believes when compared to other Premier League clubs and considering its revenue, yes it can.

PL: “What caused the dispute with the players in relation to bonuses? Why was it up to the last minute?”

The club paid the players a very significant bonus in relation to their achievement last season and had until September to agree a scheme for 2018/19. The new scheme was not initially accepted by the players. However following engagement with the managing director and owner, the dispute was resolved quickly. The club stated that such disputes were not uncommon at other clubs but usually did not reach the public domain.

MB: “Is there a concern generally that information leaks from the club to the media?”

The club believes Newcastle United has always attracted a lot of media coverage and that unfortunately, some stories are based on information leaking out.

SH: “We eat, sleep and drink football here so we demand information. We have a press who demand it on our behalf, so it has to be seen a positive.”

The club agrees the make-up of the media around the club is unique and is driven by a passion for the club and the game in the region, with several journalists tasked with covering the club and its operations in great detail each day. That is not necessarily the same in other regions.

The club works hard to have a very healthy relationship with the media. It recognises that the media landscape has changed immeasurably in recent times, with a need for traffic and large volumes of stories driving the nature of content more than ever before.

The club acknowledges that it can always do more and can present things in a better format, while accepting that some outlets will continue to sensationalise what the club does.

AC: “There is a lack of information from the club in the face of some negative publicity sometimes and it’s upsetting for some fans. It could disappear quickly.”

The club accepts that its strategy has been for the manager to be its figurehead and voice. However on occasions this has led to unfair pressure on the manager to answer questions that are unrelated to football.

The club is assessing its strategy in this area.

The club has also made significant strides forward with its own content channels in recent years and is committed to further enhancement.

Sale of the club

The club remains for sale.

The club has a very clear and reasonable process for individuals or groups who express an interest in purchasing the club. There has not been a lot of serious interest and a sale is not close as it stands.

The owner wants a fair price and has been open to the dating of payments to achieve a sale. In addition the buyer must be someone, or a group, that can take the football club forward and support it financially better than he can.

It is important to disclose that there have been groups who have expressed an initial interest, but who have been discouraged with proceeding due to the visibility and scrutiny that comes with the football club.

PL: “What about the price? We keep reading in the press that the price has gone up, then down again, then it’s cut-price.”

The club would advise fans to disregard those reports. Anything around the sale will come from the club rather than other sources.

Sports Direct

There is now an agreement in place whereby Sports Direct pays for all advertising in the stadium.

Sports Direct is only allocated what the club doesn’t sell and that arrangement can be terminated immediately by the club if another company is willing to pay more on a fair commercial basis.

Keith Bishop

The club confirmed that Keith Bishop and his agency KBA give the club some strategic PR support but are not involved in the day-to-day operations, or decision making of the football club.

AH: “Can you give me an example of what he does for the club?”

KBA are a point of reference that can give advice, guidance and support in terms of PR strategy, or dealing with a particular media story.

Justin Barnes

With Mike Ashley taking on a wider role at Sports Direct, it was felt appropriate to have a conduit between the owner and the managing director at Newcastle United. Justin Barnes is not paid by the club and while he will give his view in discussions, he does not have decision-making powers at the football club.

JM: “Why does the club not have a board?”

From a business operations point of view, the club has a senior management team which meets regularly and has an awareness of all aspects of the club on a day-to-day basis.

Major decisions at the football club are made by the managing director and where appropriate the owner.

SW: “Is there any significance in Mike Ashley, Keith Bishop and Justin Barnes being at the Crystal Palace match with not being there for so long?”

The club stated that Keith Bishop and Justin Barnes are at most games so their appearance was not unusual.

Mike Ashley being engaged in the club is better for everyone. He is starting to build a relationship with the players and there is a commitment to on-going dialogue. Strengthening ties between owner, manager and players can only be viewed as a positive.

MB: “There needs to be a change but it won’t come from the fans. It has to come from him and he has to admit to his mistakes.”

The club believes he has done so in interviews and has been very candid on his ownership of the football club.

SW: “Did the owner see the manager at the Crystal Palace match?”

The owner’s view is that he wouldn’t disturb the manager on matchdays. The manager is however aware that if he would like to meet with the owner when he attends games, there is always an open invitation to do so.

Everton out-of-pocket expenses

JM asked for an update on a goodwill gesture from the club to fans who had been inconvenienced by the late rescheduling of last season’s away match at Everton.

Nicole Atkin (NA) confirmed that the club had made payments to nearly all supporters who submitted claims, with the few pending having been asked to provide additional information.

Live streaming issues (pre-season)

NA told members that the club was incredibly disappointed by the issues around its live streaming of pre-season matches, and shared supporters' frustrations. All venues were scoped and reced prior to the events, and significant investment made into equipment, services and suppliers to support the stream.

Refunds have been issued and a plan has been created to mitigate future problems should the club revisit live streaming overseas.

Stadium WiFi

The club has recently invested in WiFi connectivity in corporate areas alongside its catering partner, Sodexo Prestige. A new system with easier log-in will go live shortly.

The club has looked at a number of studies with regard to the wider stadium bowl and is considering options.

The club has a strong focus on its digital strategy and has recently introduced beacon technology around the stadium as part of its stadium tours app.

Replacement of Fans Forum members

The club will be replacing members who haven't attended recent meetings. Last season's members were retained for an additional season due to fewer meetings last season.

JM: "The Fans Forum would extend an invitation to Mike Ashley and the manager to attend."

The club agreed to pass those requests on.

The club agreed it will add contact details for Fans Forum members to the club's website pending the relevant GDPR process and that a WhatsApp group would be established for direct communication with the club.

Tickets / Box Office

Questions were received in relation to an increase in some season ticket prices and the communication around those increases.

The club has around 20,000 season ticket holders on long-term fixed price deals. Those prices are significantly cheaper than standard season ticket prices.

There were also a large number of supporters on a 'Championship price-freeze'. Prices had been reduced for one season and that was extended into the 2017/18 season as a thank you to supporters for their loyalty.

New supporters who bought season tickets in 2017/18 were paying more.

For 2018/19, supporters on the Championship rate had their prices brought into line with standard season ticket prices.

That benchmarks the club's season tickets very favourably in the Premier League, in addition to Family Area tickets which are some of the most competitively-priced for families in the top flight.

JL: "What impact will it have when the long-term price-freeze deals come to an end?"

The club is very conscious of affordability and is already exploring a number of scheme options for those whose deals expire in the future (for example 2023/24 for those on the ten-year deal).

PL and Steve Cole (SC) felt that season tickets had arrived later this season and it had caused problems for some supporters.

The club confirmed most season tickets were posted earlier this season than they were in 2017/18.

The club was informed by its suppliers that all deadlines were hit so it will investigate why a small number of fans did not receive theirs until after the first match of the season.

SC: "The club has a premium rate number and a friend of mine was paying 50p per minute with Vodafone. He wants to know if you get a cut of that."

The charge is 7p per minute, plus the charge by network providers. The club does not receive a cut from network providers.

In response to feedback from fans, the club will soon be launching a new local-rate phone number.

The club accepts call-waiting times were larger than usual, which was part of bringing in a new ticketing system.

Gareth Beard (GB) enquired about the designated disabled supporter telephone number after a supporter had struggled to get through.

Stephen Tickle (ST) acknowledged there had been high call volumes and reiterated that the number would be very well manned, well promoted and supporters with disabilities are strongly encouraged to use it.

Away tickets

JL asked about changes to the away loyalty point scheme.

The club advised that its immediate focus is on fine-tuning the new ticketing system but that it will consider the following changes to the away loyalty points scheme:

- Lapsing of unused points
- Sabbaticals for people who have a change in circumstances
- Points for members

The club had previously agreed to give access to tickets to supporter groups should they go to general sale and this was done for London Supporters Club for the match at Crystal Palace.

SC thanked the club for this on behalf of London Supporters Club members.

SW: “The friends and family groups didn’t carry over to the new system for some supporters.”

The club advised that moving to the new system was an opportunity to regain consents, meaning that fans needed to follow a quick process to re-add friends and family. A step-by-step guide to doing so is available within the process on the website.

The club confirmed that wherever supporters have raised concerns about information transferring over to their new account, queries have been dealt with promptly.

SC: “What is the future of the £30 cap on away ticket prices?”

The club stated it hadn’t been discussed at Premier League meetings and it would be surprising if there were any changes to the current policy in the near future.

SW: “Can the club introduce ApplePay to purchase tickets?”

The club is currently looking at a number of developments with regards to using mobile technology, for payments, access control and wayfinding. The club works with a number of digital partners and together with them, will pull together business cases for any new developments, on which supporters would be given input.

Retail / Club store

All revenue from the club store goes directly to the club, irrespective of the name on the receipt. Sports Direct operates the store for the club, which means the overheads associated with staffing, managing stock and a large warehousing operation are significantly reduced.

If a shirt or merchandise is bought from another store, that revenue does not come to the club directly.

AH: “Does the club receive every penny generated from the store, or are there fees involved?”

AH: “The figures for online sales are pretty different in Sports Direct’s accounts.”

The club pays Sports Direct for the stock sold in the store, which is noted in the club’s accounts. The revenue from the store goes directly into the club’s bank account.

Online sales are accounted for differently but the net profit for the club is unaffected.

During the meeting it was agreed that further clarification would be provided on online sales subsequent to the meeting. This detail is now included below:

Sports Direct took over fulfilment of the web/mail order operation in 2015. This means stock now comes from them directly for web sales, rather than the club having to purchase the stock from Sports Direct. For the avoidance of doubt, profit for the club is unaffected.

KW: “If someone came in and bought the club, would the retail operation change?”

The club stated that a new owner would most likely look at all key supplier relationships.

SW: “From a commercial point of view, what happened to the sleeve sponsor?”

The club explained that last season was the first year and on reflection, many businesses involved with Premier League clubs did not feel it offered them as much exposure as they had wanted.

There are a few clubs without sleeve sponsors and the club is aware that others have taken significantly less money from new sleeve sponsors.

The club has received interest and discussions are on-going but the club is prepared to not have a sleeve sponsor partner this season, rather than take a very low offer and compromise the value of future potential partnerships.

The club confirmed that a number of options were being considered in the interim and that they had sought clarification about displaying charities on the sleeve for one-off games.

CE: “Can the club provide an update on the HMRC investigation?”

The club is unable to issue comment on this.

Stadium

ER confirmed that since the club had encouraged fans to report issues in the stadium, 13 supporters had come forward with genuine issues and all had been resolved.

One such problem was the projector screens in the Sports Bar, which were only one-year old. The club has looked into the problem, discovered an issue and an audio-visual specialist has fixed it for the next match.

The club continues to have a thorough cleaning and maintenance programme but if anything is missed, fans are encouraged to email stephanie.gouldson@nufc.co.uk to report it.

SC: “With regard to the traffic exclusion after the game, trucks were being moved very quickly after the Arsenal match.”

SS asked if Newcastle City Council had arranged a meeting with Fans Forum members regarding road closures.

SH confirmed the Council had not been in touch.

Steve Storey (SS) stated he would give feedback to the Safety Advisory Group (SAG). It is the club’s understanding that the current road closures are part of a two-year pilot scheme by the Council.

The club believes road closures pre-match have been very positive when they have been introduced, both in terms of supporters’ safety and the atmosphere generated with additional fan zone areas.

MB: “Bag checks seem to be lax.”

SS was disappointed to hear that feedback and asked MB for additional information on where he enters the stadium.

Community engagement

The club has had criticism recently from Chi Onwurah MP.

In reference specifically to her comments on community engagement, the club felt this had been unfair and misleading.

Kate Bradley (KB) explained that Foundation staff had been extremely disappointed by Ms Onwurah’s comments, particularly because of their dealings with her in the past and the amount of work going on in her constituency on a daily basis, and intend to make contact directly.

The club urges supporters to take an interest in the work of the Foundation and to feel proud its fantastic achievements.

Fans Forum members are invited to attend a Foundation event.

Local Heroes

SH: “The people you have put around the ground on a matchday, giving directions and helping people, are smashing. I would encourage anyone to go up and say hello to them.”

The club explained that it is trying to make the stadium a more welcoming place and the Local Heroes, who are simply fans from around the city, are a key part of that.

SH: “They have been very supportive of the food bank, as have the club and fans. It is community engagement as it should be.”

AOB

SH asked if the club would do anything to disassociate itself with the FLA.

The club can confirm FLA logos, whether on flags, banners, clothing or anything else are not permitted at St. James’ Park.

SH: “Would the club, including its supply chain and contractors, commit to do something around the Living Wage?”

The club asked to take the point away for consideration.

ENDS