



Fan Engagement Panel Meeting 10 November 2021 at Select Car Leasing Stadium

Present:

Supporters:

Alex Everson

Dave Harris

Phil Johnson

Matt Lansley

Paul Mann

Claire Saul

Alex Saul

Kevin Flood

Jason Baldwin

Ed Marshall

Joe Stephenson

Jamie Hodder

Paula Martin

RFC :

Ray Booth (Stadium Manager)

Tim Kilpatrick (Head of Commercial)

Kevin Berry (Levy/Compass)

David Parker (Safety Officer)

Paul Collins (Head of Ticketing)

Mark Illsley (Head of Merchandise)

Mark Bradley (Chief Communications Officer)

Rob Coleman (Supporter Services Manager)

1. Communication to/from the club

There was substantial discussion about the lack of information from the club to either confirm or negate rumours on social media. RFC position is that until there is some actual information any speculation is damaging. The Operations Meeting and Structured Dialogue Meeting with STAR included the information that is possible at the moment with reference to any point deduction. Similarly the owner is a very private person and the new CEO is also not the sort of outgoing person RFC supporters were used to with Sir John Madejski and Nigel Howe.

2. Perceptions of the club among supporters/local media

This discussion was generally covered in the communication discussion

3. Public Transport and Parking

There was a particular problem with the Saturday 8pm game as some bus companies used the weekday 8pm times and others the 3pm + 5 hours. This will not happen again (and an 8pm Saturday game resisted in future). In general there is a problem with buses as there is a general shortage of drivers and especially regular drivers who know the procedure.

Parking is now usually sold out at the stadium and overflows to the greyhound parking. It is possible to buy a car park pass when buying a match ticket at a discount on the published cost – available up to 4 hours before kickoff.

Green Park station is finally under construction!

4. Catering

Levy/Compass - As with the buses the biggest problem is staffing. Challenging to attract staff for what is a very limited number of shifts. The move away of rugby has made it less desirable too. Having lost most experienced staff there is not time for long training and no-one to buddy new employees. An example of the problem was the QPR game when of the 180 staff needed there were only 105 available and of those 30 did not turn up on the day.

The staffing problems are beginning to improve as staff were sufficient to open all the kiosks for the last 2 games.

The change from Blue Collar Food was also explained – the arrangement with Blue Collar was commercially poor for Reading FC, bringing in only 30% of what the previous arrangement with EMC did. The club concedes that a case could have been made for this being a 'tolerable loss' if this was offset by a noticeable positive impact on attendances, but data on home attendances from 2013/14 season to present show that this wasn't the case.

Another street food business covered the November/December 2020 reduced capacity games but were not interested in football as it is such a short window to sell compared other sports and events.

The club plans to expand and improve the catering offering both inside and outside the stadium, and actively welcomes supporter's constructive suggestions on what they would like to see.

5. Stadium Facilities/Matchday Entertainment

The club are currently limited to what they can do on matchdays due to COVID.

The club do plan to provide additional shelter for the Fanzone.

The Fun Zone and Kids Activity Kabin outside the Eamonn Dolan Stand should, staff numbers permitting, be open from the Nottingham Forest game on 20/11/2021

With staffing improving it is hoped the Windsor Lounge (upstairs above hotel) will open again soon which will show games especially now the hotel bar no longer shows games.

6. Stewarding and Policing

The details of a public disorder incident in Y26 at the Bournemouth game was explained in detail by the Safety Officer. The 8pm kick-off made this a very challenging game to manage and the club will make every effort to avoid future similar kick-off times.

The problem of the QPR game has been widely discussed and the main lesson learned is that an expected sell-out away end will result in tickets online in the home end will need a certain level of Loyalty Points. This is far from ideal as it deters new supporters.

The away club now gets the hospitality area close to the away fans but after the QPR game there are no flags allowed, as it is our stadium.

7. Merchandise

The club reported that this seasons shirt has sold exceptionally well – highest sales since the Premier League Season.

MI confirmed that the Black and Blue Goalkeeper shirts will not be available for sale. Traditionally, Goalkeeper shirts do not sell particularly well and so it is not commercially attractive for the club. They are both standard Macron templates which supporters can buy from Macron directly, albeit without Reading FC badge or sponsor.

8. 150 celebrations

The Luton game on 18 December will be the celebration game and the intention is to fill the ground with as many lapsed and new supporters so ideas were sought for how to achieve this. A few suggested ideas will be explored and any new ideas welcomed.

