

Present for RFC Bryan Stabler and Mark Bradley and for STAR Paula Martin. Some responses were delivered in written form as, during a working week and in the middle of the club's close season, fewer people from both the club and STAR were available to attend the meeting in person on the day so questions and responses were exchanged in advance.

Feedback from last Operations meeting...

In-stadium Public Address System:

As ever, we will make improvements to the PA where we can, although there are many challenges with this and it is very difficult satisfying all supporters in every corner of the bowl using the current PA system. Being transparent, we can't commit to getting this perfect without significant investment in the system itself.

In addressing the 'music is too loud' comments from a small section of supporters, again it is a difficult one to balance. For every supporter who doesn't like music being played loudly, we have others who say it should be louder to build atmosphere. At present, we aim to play music louder in the ten minutes immediately before kick-off and at half-time, as agreed at previous Fan Engagement Panel meeting(s). We can change this approach very easily, but would need clarity on what the vast majority of supporters want.

Food and Drink Prices:

STAR supplied comparison figures from seven grounds – RFC thanked STAR for their research and will liaise with Levy, the club are currently awaiting details from Levy with their benchmark prices. Initial reaction from Levy was that these are not necessarily a like for like comparison eg. we sell Piglets Pies which are higher price for a higher quality product. We did supply a cheaper pie in 2019-20, but then received complaints around quality. Again, we can return to selling a cheaper product if STAR and the supporter-base so wish. It is also worth noting that in the like for like comparison, some Premier League clubs' prices are artificially kept low as they are subsidised by the clubs themselves.

Half Time Entertainment:

A start has been made, with the club's thanks to STAR board member Ben Thomas. The club also trialled an app at the Legends game in May which delivered an interactive quiz for supporters. More than 200 fans in the stands successfully played the quiz that day and it is not a data heavy App to use so 3G connections in the bowl shouldn't be an issue. This quiz came at a cost but it may well be followed up as a regular feature in 2022-23.

Loyalty Points Review:

The club's current ticket priority system we believe is the fairest workable way to reward loyalty at present; it recognises recent loyalty in prioritising current Season Ticket holders first, as well as

taking into account previous loyalty based on points from earlier campaigns. We are open to suggestions on how to restructure this priority system if STAR can put forward an alternative proposal that is better for the club and STAR, and most importantly, is fair and acceptable to the majority of supporters. STAR can run a task force on this matter as RFC need to have a clearer position on this as a starting point.

20's Plenty for away trips:

STAR have used the Football Supporters Association to encourage other clubs' supporters to lobby their club to reciprocate £20 away tickets. Also STAR will be represented at an EFL Fan Engagement Meeting to try to get the EFL to endorse the idea and maybe follow the PL in specifying the maximum charged.

EFL survey:

The EFL advised these will be released to the clubs in the middle of June. RFC will let STAR have sight of the results when we receive them and the relevant report from the EFL will be published on the club's website.

Car Park repairs:

RFC aims to have this repaired in time for the first home pre-season friendly. Prices to remain the same as 2021-22 season. RFC would appreciate if STAR could help further promote pre-booking parking to supporters.

New agenda items...

STAR membership benefits 2022-23:

RFC confirmed that these are to remain the same as 2021-22.

Charging away coaches to park:

Many Championship clubs charge supporter coaches to park, often between £20 and £35 per coach. The revenue to the club would be negligible and could potentially push visiting supporters away from travelling on coaches to travelling in individual cars, which ideally the club do not want and coach parking has designated parking space which does not have an impact on car parking availability. This is why RFC continue not to charge away clubs to park their supporter coaches. However, the club agrees that much like the Twenty's Plenty stance, free coach parking should be reciprocated by clubs when our STAR coaches travel away.

'Day of Action' – The community coming together to help improve the stadium:

RFC are very open to the idea of a 'Day of Action' although there may be an underestimation of the work and the type of work that is required and possible for a group of volunteers. The concourse walls in Club 1871 are an example - with only one panel painted over the course of last summer. RFC agree it is a good idea in principle however, if there is an appetite from supporters.

Certainly RFC would appreciate the help of fans who are keen to feel more involved in the club and the club will consider drawing up a list of actionable tasks on a 'Day of Action'.

Shadowing RFC employees to learn more about the matchday experience:

No objections from RFC whatsoever.

Are Macron still the kit supplier this season and when will this season's kits be released?

Macron are the kit supplier for 2022-23 and next season. Kit samples are ready for a kit launch photoshoot which is scheduled for late June. The launch itself and availability to purchase by fans is expected to follow in early to mid-July, with the away kit likely to follow a little later in the same month.

Are there plans to revive the matchday programme?

Not at present. Options are being explored but it is unlikely to return for 2022-23. The club and other clubs (including Premier League clubs) have trialled online versions of the programme but they have not been well-received by fans nor profitable for the clubs.

It was noted by STAR that RFC intend to invite a number of fan podcasts to Bearwood during pre-season to give a new form of media, which has captured the interest of supporters, access to player and manager content ahead of the start of 2022-23.

Would the club allow a statue if crowd funded?

Potentially, but statues are very expensive. And the club would need to consider who features in and when a statue would be appropriately commissioned. Not a priority at present.

Would it be possible to subsidise away travel again given the hike in fuel prices?

This is unlikely under the current financial constraints which the club are navigating through.

How are season tickets selling?

Slowly but steadily. Not yet at the end of the renewal period when meeting took place.

STAR Elections:

STAR reported that there will be an election as there are more nominations than spaces so there will be new faces at these meetings in future. RFC commended STAR for attracting interest from new Board members and looks forward to meeting new faces at meetings in the future.

EFL control of contracts and the danger of more point deduction:

The 2021-22 season was within the parameters set by the EFL. However, for 2022-23 there will be similar and in some instances even tighter restrictions within which the club have to operate; the permitted squad size of 25, a total wage bill which will be a significant challenge, an average wage limit for new players which has to average out at a specific level set by the EFL (including payments to agents within that average). Contrary to some rumours, there are no restrictions on

contract length we can offer to players. However, as an example, it is not possible to offer a contract which promises a payment to a club should the incoming player achieve promotion at Reading.

The level of loss cannot continue though this is not always easy to see these losses in the accounts as there are adjustments made for Academy expenditure amongst a range of other items.

Contracts have been offered to five first team players from 2021-22 and several youth players and some are close to a conclusion. But every contract negotiation takes much, much longer than normal as each amendment to a contract has to be approved and ratified by the EFL in three stages - the player registration department, the financial limits department and then legal approval.

Fan-Led review:

The club is open to many of the suggestions proposed by the Fan-Led Review, but does not want to pursue those recommendations until the EFL publishes its official response.