

Ops Meeting 21 March 2023

Attendees

STAR: Sarah Turner and Nick Houlton

Club:

Mark Bradley (Chief Communications Officer)

Tim Kilpatrick (Head of Commercial)

Paul Collins (Head of Ticketing)

Ray Booth (Stadium Manager)

Rob Coleman (Head of CRM)

Tessa Szwarc (Supporter Liaison Officer)

Dave Parker (Safety Officer)

Mitch Parris (Reading FC Women Marketing Manager)

ACTION POINTS FROM THE MEETING

ACTION 1 – Club to look at delaying goal music and look at half -time scores on the big screen

ACTION 2 – Tim to give STAR an idea of funding required for half time games

ACTION 3 – Club to look at the lighting in the toilets and turnstile makeover

**ACTION 4 – Club to talk to local businesses again to see if any other car parking can be provided.
Club to speak to the operators of the Red car park to see why late arrivals get better spaces**

ACTION 5 – Club to continue to monitor the staffing levels

Tasks from last meeting:

Task 1 – Reading FC to send STAR a list of possible ‘day of action’ tasks for suitability consideration.

Club – Painting the girders and removing rust at the top of the stadium, clearing dirt and painting using two coats; experience required due to nature of the job. The structure report has also shown the concourse needs painting and rust clearance on the steelworks, the concourse is the clubs focus for a ‘day of action’, litter picking would also be helpful. - ONGOING

Task 2 – Reading FC will revisit the idea of a media day with all podcasts with the Chief Communications Officer.

Club – Wanted to do a media day, The Tilehurst End podcast is soon doing a podcast with Noel Hunt, Elm Park Royals has recently recorded one with Mark Bowen, Tim Kilpatrick has been on with 1871 podcast. The club would like a marquee one and it is to be confirmed. - ONGOING

Task 3 – Reading FC to check whether ground regulations on website are 2022/23.

Club – The ground regulations are up to date and on the website. - CLOSED

Task 4 – Reading FC to consider how to further publicise the text message reporting line.

Club – It is on the big screen, posters around the concourse, the Equality and Diversity page has a hyperlink on the website on how to report and covers all reporting of abuse. - CLOSED

Task 5 – STAR to consider whether to arrange a meeting between fans and Reading FC/Levy to discuss catering.

STAR – This was held on 1/3/23, the minutes have yet to be posted. We can confirm plans are in place for 2023/24 season but are not able to disclose full details until implementations are confirmed. The club has been putting pressure on Levy regarding staffing issues on matchday. - CLOSED

Task 6 – Reading FC to provide a full update on the main website on catering difficulties and steps taken, including openness to receiving feedback later in the year.

Club – Putting a lot of pressure on Levy; after Covid staffing was really poor but is improving, once solutions and ideas implemented will confirm on the website. - ONGOING

Task 7 – Reading FC Community Trust to provide an example of how money raised through Golden Gamble is used to benefit the local community.

Club – No update yet - ONGOING

Task 8 – Reading FC to review the video screen template to ensure text is more visible for fans.

Club – This has been done - CLOSED

Task 9 – Reading FC to trial reading out the away team news at men's games at 14:30.

Club – This is now on the script and is being done. - CLOSED

Task 10 – STAR to meet with Reading FC to discuss Loyalty Points proposal paper.

STAR – This was done on 12/11/22 through Paula and Roger but nothing has yet come of this; Roger to consider the alternatives. - ONGOING

Task 11 – STAR to set-up a meeting with Reading FC on the museum exhibition artwork.

STAR – Roger has had a meeting and exhibits are on view in the stadium. - CLOSED

Task 12 – Reading FC to consider through the Community Trust how to make a sensory provision in the absence of a sensory viewing area. Can the club tell us about the Swing and Smiles initiative?

Club – Working with Swing and Smiles, they are setting up a Sensory Area and a quiet room, these will be available on matchday's for the final three 3pm kick-offs this season and continue to be available next season. Club has since posted on the website informing supporters. - CLOSED

Task 13 – Reading FC to consider options for signage at Reading Station directing supporters towards the football buses.

Club – This is done and has been used for Watford and Millwall, they have a lollipop man in place. - CLOSED

Task 14 – STAR to identify options for signage outside the megastore pointing towards STAR Base.

STAR – This is in hand. – ONGOING

Task 15 – Reading FC to consider options for signage outside the megastore pointing towards the Fanzone.

Club – There are flags showing the way and signposting the Fanzone, some of these are damaged due to bad wind and this will be reviewed. – ONGOING

Task 16 – Reading FC to commence consultation on matchday music. Is there a timeframe on this?

Club – A close season/end of the season survey to be held, it is hard to do this mid-season. Fan input is important, and club is looking in to creating a Spotify channel in the summer for Reading FC. Sweet Caroline to remain until other options come as an anthem, one of the issues is Reading do not have a historical song unique to them (i.e., Forever Blowing Bubbles, You'll Never Walk Alone etc.) – ONGOING

Task 17 – STAR to ensure due consideration is given to amplifying women's messaging on Social Media.

STAR – We have improved on this and look to keep improving. Women's Football Weekend was promoted on Twitter and Instagram. This is being more driven and will continue into next season. – ON GOING

Task 18 – STAR to consider trialling opening STAR Base on Reading FC women's matchdays.

STAR – We have opened STAR Base for the last four games. – ONGOING

Matchday Comms

The club are to ask Darren to tone down the pre-match announcing, this has also been done previously.

Goal Music – the club have always used it, the attendance is too low to carry the atmosphere. The club may consider new techniques such as let the crowd cheer and then play delayed goal music.

Half-time scores to be displayed on the big screen – this may be possible. This should be in place for Birmingham.

Birthday messages etc. have to be sent via the selfies link. <https://www.readingfc.co.uk/selfies/>

ACTION 01 – Club to look at delaying goal music and look at half -time scores on the big screen

Entertainment

Master Blaster – costs has prevented its use, it will be brought in for big games and when we have a full stadium.

Half-time games – the club is raising funds to improve these, the cost and pitch protection procedures hinder this currently. STAR will look at funding this and the club are to provide costing details to STAR.

ACTION 2 – Tim to give STAR an idea of funding required

Ticketing

Burnley is a grassroots game and Everton is the same for the Women's.

Season Tickets – Prices are under review.

A data review on non-renewals of Season Tickets to be done going forward. The club has not been able to prioritise this in recent years due to COVID and manpower.

Non-members can buy tickets anywhere in the stadium except in Club 1871. It only becomes members-only when the visiting team sells out their allocation.

Ticket collection charge - £1.50 charge is to encourage home printing and the club will look to continue improving the mobile ticketing.

Concourse and Buildings

The dark and dingy toilets (B12) is being looked into and the lighting is being improved as part of the lighting uplift.

Turnstile failure at Gate 8 – no delays were noted and data of this were shown to STAR.

Safe Standing in Club1871 – The Council and SGSA undertake at least two inspections each year, independently, and there is still lots of issues to be resolved around the health and safety aspect. Only a handful of clubs have adopted it and Reading FC have not had any injuries attributable to stand in seated areas. Some of those of have adopted safe standing have noticed issues with fans standing on the rails and using them to jump between to get out more quickly. Taylor Report states you must sit down without safe standing, which the club acknowledge however for a variety of reasons until it becomes mandated and our licence could be adversely affected it is unlikely that it will be adopted at the SCL Stadium.. checks each year and there is still lots of issues ding this due to health and safety. Taylor Report states you must sit down without safe standing, the club has no issue with standing, but it's regulated to sit.

Inside turnstile makeover – This is a massive cost (five figure fee) but the club will look at options. When we last had this quoted it was a 6-figure fee (although we have now since done the west uppers and half the Eamonn Dolan Stand so may lower the cost to 5 figures)

ACTION 3 – Club to look at the lighting in the toilets and turnstile makeover

Transport and Car Parking

The transport available from the new station (Green Park) is not yet known and the club are discussing this with the Council. The walk to the ground is around 15 minutes.

Red Car Park – cars parked later are getting out quicker, the club will ask the management company to look into this.

Car Park 6 – To pre-book this is quicker and cheaper than card payment on the day due to wifi being required.

Using local business car parks when they are empty on matchday – They usually only allow employees, the club will communicate with local businesses.

Buses – the club will discuss issues with Reading Buses, lost a lot of drivers in Covid who became HGV drivers.

ACTION 4 – Club to talk to local businesses again to see if any other car parking can be provided. Club to speak to the operators of the Red car park to see why late arrivals get better spaces

Catering

Queues - Agency staff leads to high turnover and there is no current space to introduce pre-pour. Club are on at Levy to improve this and ensure staff resource is better.

Boilers for hot drinks – These have been serviced, two are not operational Should not be using boilers, have hot taps (boiling water, not just a hot tap)

ACTION 5 – Club to continue to monitor the staffing levels

The meeting closed with a thanks to all at Reading FC for giving their time.

NH