



**Arsenal Football Club Fans' Forum**  
**6pm–8pm 29<sup>th</sup> September 2022**  
**Boardroom, Highbury House**  
**Online**

**Fan Representatives**

16-21 Rep	Liam Patel
ADSA	Wayne Busbridge for Anne Hyde
AISA	Richard Smith
AST	Akhil Vyas
Club Level	Fred Dowd
Ethnic Minorities	Draco Wang
Family Section	David Hurrell
Gold	Darren Epstein
LGBT	Joe White
Over 60's	Richard Stubbs
Red	Ben Buckstone
REDaction	Raymond Herlihy
Silver	Joshua Webley
Supporters Clubs Domestic	Dave Harrold (Arsenal Scotland)
Supporters Club Overseas	Peter Host (Arsenal Denmark)
Women	Linda Duffy (Apologies)

**Arsenal Representatives**

Arsenal FC	Khali Parsons – Senior Fan Services Manager (Chair)
Arsenal FC	Vinai Venkatesham – Chief Executive Officer
Arsenal FC	Amy Trynka – Senior Ticketing & Strategy Manager
Arsenal FC	Karen Dumbrell - Senior Membership Product & Marketing Manager
Arsenal FC	Mark Brindle – Supporter Liaison Officer
Arsenal FC	Jim Gay – Fan Services Manager
Arsenal FC	Remi Moya – Ticketing Manager
Arsenal FC	Jon Dyster – Disability Access Manager

## Minutes

### 1) Welcome

**KP** welcomed the group. Thanked Jake Coare for his time as Silver Rep and introduced Joshua Webley as the new representative for this group.

### 2) Update from Vinai

**Vinai** updated on the first team, sharing that we are pleased with what we achieved in the transfer window this year.

The support this season has been spectacular, Emirates has felt the loudest he has experienced to date, with attendance at its highest. Vinai thanked the fans for the incredible support.

On the academy there has been lots of change with a new U21 coach, Mehmet Ali, with Jack Wiltshire coaching U18.

In women's football lots of great things happening nationally and as a Club. The new facility for the Women's team at London Colney will be ready to move into in the next couple of months. Announced some time ago we would have at least 6 games at Emirates. The Spurs fixture was really successful with record tickets sold and record attendance, and season tickets and match by match selling out at Borehamwood.

**Vinai** spoke of success off the pitch too, commenting on the work going into increasing attendance and making it easier for fans to transfer and sell their seats, new policies on using season tickets. **Vinai** also shared the success of the new kits with this being the first season we sold more away kits than home kits. The demand for all kits has been outstanding, with a huge amount of money raised for the Foundation as a result of the home kit initiative.

**Vinai** also spoke about the launch of the All Or Nothing documentary, which was a step into the unknown for us as a Club. He gave an insight into the process, and that we are pleased with its success to date with the series trending at number one on Amazon UK for many weeks.

**Vinai** moved on to an update on operational projects with the roof work underway, investment in General Admission areas providing more places to comfortably eat and drink, and the project to replace the imagery on the outside of the stadium progressing with fan input a major element of this.

Final update from **Vinai** was on the Arsenal Advisory Board, which met a couple of weeks ago. In that meeting Vinai talked about the changes in the Executive Team at Arsenal, and the 7 strategies we have as a Club in particular the Brand Strategy. The AAB also discussed licensed standing, and also talked about the role of the AAB and the role of the Fan Forum.

**Vinai** invited questions, and **Raymond Herlihy** (REDAction) asked if record attendance meant tickets sold or fans in the stadium. **Vinai** and **Amy Trynka** confirmed it was fans in the stadium, driven by improved access and education around Ticket Exchange and Ticket Transfer, and team performance.

### 3) Minutes and Matters Arising

Minutes agreed from the last meeting, nothing to raise.

#### 1. Topics for Discussion:

**KP** explained the approach for this forum. The questions sent by reps ahead of the meeting had a lot of crossover, with all falling under specific operational areas. It made sense to group these questions by topic rather than by rep/question so we could approach each subject with an update from the staff expert followed by an opportunity to pose additional questions and talk more around the subject.

#### **Ticketing**

##### **Amy Trynka:**

**Touting.** We have put out a statement, in response to the high number of tickets we are seeing posted for extortionate prices. We see an increase in touting around some games such as the NLD.

On the sites that are advertising tickets you can't see the seat details, so it is hard for us to identify who is actually selling them. Often those tickets don't even exist – they are fake tickets, or they are seats sold multiple times.

The websites are often based outside of the UK. If they are in the UK we can report them to Trading Standards and have them taken down, which we do. We can and do also report them to the website hosting platform. But within hours the tickets will appear on other sites and platforms. It is difficult to tackle from this angle, although we do take these actions where possible.

We do record all seat details of touted tickets that are brought to us at the Box Office. We have 'mystery shopped' these sites, which means purchasing tickets for the game in blocks that we know are season ticket holder area blocks. This means we can identify STH that are selling their seats and issue a ban after thorough investigation – in these instances they will lose their Gold or Platinum membership. We hope that if people understand that risk it will reduce the number of touted Gold and Platinum Member seats.

We are also educating supporters on not buying from unofficial sites. We appreciate how frustrating it is for Silver and Red members that are struggling to get tickets with current demand and seeing tickets on these sites at inflated prices.

**Darren Epstein** asked if, following mystery shopping and investigation last season, were there any ST revoked and **Amy** confirmed that yes there were. We revoke Season Tickets each year and cancel/block thousands of memberships.

**Wayne Busbridge** talked about the ticket touts in person around stations and the stadium and asked why nothing appears to be done to address those. Amy explained that in order to take legal action the police have to see an exchange of both tickets and money, and the touts operate in such a way as to separate those two actions. We have been successful in catching touts by monitoring cameras and working with the police and our own task force – there were arrests a couple of weeks ago. We have and continue to work on actions and initiatives to raise awareness amongst fans about the laws and risks of buying from unofficial sources and identifying and blocking suspicious accounts.

**Joshua Webley** asked about the family enclosure and touting in that area, referring to recent posts on social media. **Amy** confirmed that we have been identifying suspicious accounts buying tickets in this area and holding tickets for collection with ID which has resulted in a number being cancelled and blocked. Increased seat checks are also in operation in this area.

This brought **Amy** on to away tickets, with Bodo being the first game with 100% collections in response to fan and supporter group information and feedback, and due to the low number of tickets available. This meant that the sale reached much lower criteria in terms of away points, ensuring those buying are those attending and opening up opportunities for more fans. **Amy** shared our ongoing discussions with key stakeholders to refine our approach to away tickets, and that we would be bringing our findings to the forum for further discussion.

**Amy** went on to reiterate the strong attendance this season, and the incredibly high demand for tickets. She went on to talk through the membership scheme and how that relates to ticket allocation.

This year we have a total of 205k members, last year was around 182k. Approximately 30k of these are silver members, and this number remains static each season. 3.5k tickets go to red members for every game. The number that goes to silver fluctuates from game to game depending on the demand from Supporter Clubs, where demand has also gone up this year. Total match by match availability has gone down by around 500 this year due to a high season ticket demand and the need to be flexible in our approach after the COVID pressures and need for season ticket holidays, 1-year deals and so on. **Joshua Webley** said that Silver members are raising that there doesn't seem to be the availability for Silvers as previously, with Red Adults able to book with a JG in the FE as well as Cannon/Young Adults able to book anywhere in the stadium and he asked what the thought process is behind these policies. **Amy** shared some further detail to help explain some of the numbers and answer these questions:

Average number of members online and in the queue at the start of a sale has increased by 252% (Red) 198% (Silver). TX – last season average conversion rate for tickets placed on the exchange was 78%, this season it is 99.4%. This is unprecedented demand.

A common complaint we received for many seasons and echoed when raised in previous Fan Forums was if you bought a membership for you and one for your child, you couldn't buy in the same sales window. To address this, we introduced the discount for Cannons and Young Adults stadium wide, freeing up availability in the FE and giving us the opportunity to allow Red Adults to buy with a JG in this area only. This has not impacted Silver members as there has always been availability in the FE following a Silver sale.

**Joshua Webley** reiterated the challenges faced by some Silver members with the way the system works online, and **Richard Stubbs** agreed that older fans can experience challenges buying. **Amy** reiterated the priority windows for Silvers to buy and priority to buy on the exchange.

The group discussed the sale windows for Cup matches and the approach to these.

Historically a low number of Gold members buy in their window (around 4k) although they do tend to purchase later in the sale to sit with friends and family.

**Amy** moved on to talk about the Family Enclosure. In response to a lot of feedback about the experience in the FE and its proximity to the away fans, we intend to reallocate seats nearest the away fans (half of block 25) for Red and Silver Members. The Cannon and Young

Adult price now available stadium wide is being taken up by around 200 fans per match, which has freed up these seats in the FE and enabled us to address the feedback from families and older fans that don't enjoy the atmosphere in those seats that are adjacent to visiting supporters.

The group discussed the question raised on whether we sell away matches from the back to the front or front to back. Outcome was that this is dependent on the stadium, the view, and personal preference, and the consensus was that we will flip the sale order to front to back.

Amy passed over to **Remi** to talk about the systems questions raised, beginning with concerns around 'bots' and ticket purchase. There has been a perception that tickets are going so quickly, especially on the Ticket Exchange, that this may be because there are bots in play. There are always currently many fans online looking for/waiting for tickets to appear which can be frustrating if someone else is always quicker to get them in their basket. However, we are working closely with Ticketmaster, who have robust anti-bot technology, to gain more data for us to analyse.

**Remi** encouraged fan reps to keep sharing feedback and examples of any challenges they or their networks face so that we can continue to improve the system.

**Liam** raised the low number of Young Adults taking up the new price category tickets stadium wide and felt that it hadn't been shared enough. **Amy** agreed that we would take that away and work on raising awareness with our comms.

### **Service**

**Khali** talked about the questions raised on service. She explained that the huge spike in contact continued from the complex renewal period of this season, and through the early start to the season with a concentrated period of sales which meant that the service was not what fans should expect from the Club. The high demand on tickets has also been a factor with call and enquiry volumes more than 20x higher than we were experiencing last year.

We grew the team in late 2021, working with Arsenal in the Community to give opportunities to participants resulting in 3 out of 5 of our new team members being employed directly from that pool of candidates.

Because the high level of contact occurs in spikes and is not continuous or consistent, resourcing these spikes is a challenge that is difficult to solve by further increasing the team size. The solution we are exploring is an overflow service that can provide advisors for short periods of time, with a team that is closely aligned with ours to tackle the high numbers during busy periods.

### **Membership**

**Karen Dumbrell** began by talking about membership renewals, where we saw members renewing earlier than ever this year. There has been little movement for Silver members with most renewing this season.

There have been questions on Cannon Red vs Cannon Silver, where members have highlighted that they felt they should have been Silver due to the length of time they have been a member. In each of these cases on investigation there has been a break in the

membership during those years. Karen encouraged any member that believes there is a discrepancy to get in touch.

**Karen** reiterated the low number of new Silver members this season due to the high renewal rate. Silver membership remains static at around 30k, so relies on members lapsing to move new ones up.

**Karen** raised the question to the group regarding members that retain a Silver Membership alongside their Gold membership, following a question from **Joshua Webley**

It is currently possible to hold both memberships simultaneously, and this has historically not been prevented. The group discussed the pros and cons. The consensus was that this is a complex question worthy of further consideration.

**Karen** addressed **Wayne's** question regarding loyalty rewards and the long wait times for these. **Karen** shared that the processes for ordering and delivering unexpectedly high numbers were not as robust as they could have been early on, but that learnings have been taken and the logistics have been developed. All orders were now up to date, and **Karen** talked through some of the improvements.

**Darren** asked about the level of uptake for My Arsenal Rewards, and Karen advised that the highest engagement comes from Gold Members.

The group then discussed the question raised by **Darren** on how to reward longevity among members. He understood the challenges around the data, which only goes back 16 years despite knowing we have season ticket holders for sometimes 50 years. We discussed what loyalty meant for different people, and how we could work with the data that we had.

### **Matchday**

**Khali** shared responses from the matchday team on the questions around the screen content. With new screens in place the team have been working with different content and formats, but the most important feedback is from the fans themselves. The group were asked to encourage their networks to engage with an upcoming survey to share their thoughts and help inform the approach moving forward.

The group discussed the inclusion of live action throughout the match, as well as the size of information on the screens.

There was a consensus within the group that the fans prefer not to have live action, and shared some other opinions on the content, including highlights

**Wayne** asked about sign language for disabled fans. **Jon Dyster** talked about the plans in this space.

## **2. AOB**

## **3. Next Meeting**