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**Meeting:** Working Group and Fans Open Meeting

**Agenda:** Ticketing and Matchday Experience

**Venue:** Court Place Farm

**Date:** Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> January 2019

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**Club Working Group Attendees:**

Matt Everett (Commercial & Marketing Director)

Lee Barton (Head of Ticketing & Retail)

Kath Faulkner (Supporter Liaison Officer)

Adam Harris (Commercial Sales Executive)

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**Introduction:**

The informal meeting took place prior to the FA Youth Cup match v Bournemouth and was the first such meeting. Supporters were invited to raise questions, concerns or make suggestions regarding anything to do with ticketing or matchday experience. The working group also discussed points made via email in advance to SLO Kath Faulkner at [kfaulkner@oufc.co.uk](mailto:kfaulkner@oufc.co.uk)

Whilst remaining very much informal, the next meeting will have a short 5-10 minute introduction from a member of the club's working group on actions taken on the below points since the last meeting, and any other changes that have, or are close to, taking place.

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**Can there be an Under 25's concessionary ticket?**



Whilst recognising the expense for people of living in Oxford, this is unfortunately not something we can do. It is not widely used by clubs, though a very small minority do offer it. For us, as with all concessionary pricing, ticket revenue is our only source of matchday revenue as we do not gain additional revenue from catering and bar sales.

### **Why do concessions start at 65 and not 60?**

Very similar reasons to the above – and 65 is in line with Oxfordshire County Council's older persons bus pass: <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/roads-and-transport/public-transport/bus-passes/older-persons-bus-pass>

This is a much closer split between what clubs do than Under 25's, but to reiterate whilst being aware of ticket pricing and the expense of it, we do have to maximise this revenue – a huge percent of our revenue is made up from it. To add 5 years at one end and remove 5 years at another would cause a significant reduction in revenue.

### **Why is there no student price?**

Instead of student pricing, we offer an 18-21 concessionary price, which we feel is more inclusive and allows young adults who go straight into work the same price to watch games. This also incorporates our target student audience of the undergraduate years.

The 18-21 year ticket actually means more supporters are eligible for a concessionary rate than if it were a student price.

### **Why not reduce price of season tickets to £150 for adults like Bradford?**

Similar to concessionary pricing as above. Season Tickets are a HUGE chunk of our revenue. We don't get any incremental revenue from having more bums on seats over and above our Season Ticket and Match Ticket revenue.



Clubs like Bradford follow a different model. They have huge core support, and huge stadia, where the more people in on a matchday the more revenue they take from catering etc. We have an entirely different model for reasons laid out above.

Reducing price does not necessarily result in the increases you would expect. For example our heavily reduced match to celebrate our 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary, where match tickets were £1.25 - £12.50 generated a similar crowd to Boxing Day, but with approximately half the revenue.

At reduced prices, the numbers needed to generate the same revenue are significantly higher than we can achieve.

#### **Encourage the younger generation and why no offers for new people to come along?**

We full recognise the importance of attracting the younger generation. We are already working very closely with Oxford United in the Community to reintroduce more group sales packages for young teams and schools, with coaching and experiences added in. This will be launched between now and the end of the current season, with a view to attracting far more groups of young fans next season, similar to how we previously did it.

At every match, our SLO picks a few first time fans, who receive a surprise tour of the stadium, dugouts and tunnel area and are given a certificate to remind them of their first match.

We are working on follow up surveys and offers for first time attendees in order to try and attract them back.

#### **Will Sunderland's ticket allocation increase?**

No. They have received (and sold) 1804 tickets plus some wheelchair spaces. As with Portsmouth, this is the maximum allocation we will give them. For this match in particular we are backing that our own fans will come out in force to support us and get the crowd over 10,000. That means we need 8200 home fans, which we have already had twice this season (v Shrewsbury and Southend).



**Why can't people pay on the day if they are on the database for all ticket matches?**

This is to avoid the ticket office staff being faced with any confrontation if away supporters turn up without tickets and try to obtain tickets (either themselves or via passing OUFC fans). It avoids one person being eligible to buy a ticket and the next person not.

From this season, we have advertised matches as all ticket right from the fixtures being released both on the website and on the fixture cards. Then, if circumstances change (if the away team do not in fact sell their allocation) this can be lifted eg Coventry this season. This avoids wherever possible us having a situation where we have to make a match all ticket at late notice.

However, we do recognise that we do not wish to limit any casual supporter who is eligible to purchase a ticket and maybe does make that decision on the day.

Therefore it was in effect already for Portsmouth, and will be for Sunderland (plus any all ticket matches in future) that supporters on the database are able to purchase ONLINE up until Midday on the day and print their tickets at home or turn up to have their tickets printed.

**If we reach Wembley in future, can the club sell tickets themselves and keep the £5 ish per ticket admin fee that Ticketmaster charge?**

Unfortunately, no.

The volume of tickets that Ticketmaster sell far outweighs what we can cope with as a club. For example when Manchester City went on sale this season, nobody could get a phone line in or out of the club. That was to sell a few thousand tickets, not 30,000!

Matt Everett has experienced this before at previous clubs where they sold their own tickets, and the length of queues, and administration of groups and manually allocating tickets (whereas Ticketmaster use a fulfilment centre) means it is beyond the resources we have given the amount of tickets which we sell.



We do recognise that fees add on to an already expensive ticket, however in this situation it is a necessity.

**Music and PA on a matchday – walkout music is not uplifting and is quiet?**

We use a very old PA system at the stadium. We have already booked a sound engineer to visit and assess this system at the Peterborough match on 16<sup>th</sup> February, which will advise us on how to move forward, and at what cost.

In the meantime, we have already tested and adjusted the volume as best we can with the current system, and are trialling new music just before the teams walk out and as they walk out.

This was first run at the Portsmouth match and will continue for the remaining home matches whilst we review. Any further feedback is welcome.

**Can we play Sweet Caroline when we win?**

Yes. This was reintroduced immediately following the meeting and had its first play at full time vs Portsmouth.

This will continue until the end of the season when we fully review the play lists as above.

**Can we issue teamsheets upon entry for U18 and U23 matches?**

We looked in to this and unfortunately it is not possible as there are sometimes under 16s in the line up - if not in the OUFC team then in the opposition - which cannot be publicised before games.

**Can the Family Area move back to the South-West Lower?**

Originally, the Family Area was moved as the North Stand allows more space (both in terms of seats and the Olly's Den facility).

Stadium layout will be discussed ahead of next years season ticket release, and this is on the agenda.



If either option is feasible (given logistics and numbers) then we would try to seek more detailed feedback and survey supporters who use this area to gauge the preference for either option.

#### **Can we have fliers in all schools in Oxfordshire and do offers?**

Watch this space – we are working hard with the Oxford United in the Community on a huge initiative to celebrate their 30 year anniversary.

#### **Can merchandise be sold in the concourses at the stadium?**

Ultimately the issue is in kitting out vestibules in the concourses and making them secure. The type of merchandise we would be able to stock and sell at satellite sites (hats, scarves etc) are already sold outside the Exhibition Bar.

#### **Why is the club shop closed after games, maybe it should open for an hour?**

The club shop does usually open post match for around 1 hour. Matches where this is not the case are evenings, Boxing Day and all ticket/early kick off matches eg Bristol Rovers.

Standard policy for Saturday 3pm matches is that the club shop IS open after full time, as is the Ticket Office.

#### **Can more public transport be arranged for home matches? Eg Didcot, Abingdon?**

The reality of this is that bus companies could run these routes themselves, if they wished, and don't – which says a lot about their profitability.

The buses we do run (Kidlington and Carterton/Witney) often run at a loss and are subsidised by the club.

They need around 50 PAYING supporters per route to make them financially viable. Remember bus pass holders cannot count towards this. A lot of passengers are also season ticket holders, which mean it is not necessarily driving up matchday attendance and generating additional revenue for us in that way.



We are working on pubs in major towns, which may in turn lead to more informal transport arrangements if numbers dictate.

Unfortunately at the moment increasing routes would mean higher losses.

**With the Oxford traffic can Tuesday evening matches kick off at 8pm?**

This would need much wider consultation – with many stakeholders. It would be a big break from tradition. It also may not be a majority request. As with Family Area, fan consultation would have to form a big part of this.

We will put this on an agenda internally, but would not make any change like this without significant consultation.

The implications of this run much wider than this working group but we will ask questions and report back.

**There isn't much to do around the ground?**

We are working hard to formalise a partnership with J's Sports Bar, and have recently welcomed The Ridge Bar and Grill as well. Whilst we cannot currently host our own fanzone facility, we hope by partnering with local establishments that support the club this will offer more options.

**Why don't we stock any infant product in the club shop?**

This seasons infant mini kits proved incredibly popular with many sizes selling out much earlier than previous seasons. Orders have been increased for 19/20 kit. We've received delivery of baby bibs & infant sleepsuit sets over the past fortnight. Our infant and junior leisurewear ranges are currently being reviewed with plans to increase our selection for the 19/20 season with some exciting product concepts already drawn up.

**Why don't we have more yellow products for sale such as winter coats?**

When purchasing goods with our suppliers there are often two choices, "bespoke" lines and "stock" lines. Stock lines are invariably the most popular high street colours; black, navy,



white, and grey and are available to order in smaller quantities. Bespoke lines have more freedom with design elements (such as colour) but must be ordered in much larger quantities. Using the winter coat as an example, we'd have to order more yellow coats than we'd ever be able to sell so make the decision to buy multiple stock lines instead. This lowers the risk of being sat with the same lines for long periods of time and offers fans a greater variety of product to choose from.

However we have been working alongside one of our key suppliers to introduce more yellow leisure merchandise with a fantastic new range due to land in Spring/Summer later this year

**Can we have local brewed beer on tap?**

**Can we have locally produced food for sale?**

**Can we have Coke instead of Pepsi at the kiosks?**

**Can we have different catering vans?**

All of the above relate to Farris Catering, who work closely with the club and do listen to fan feedback. They have greatly improved the catering on offer in the stadium already and you can follow them @farriscatering on Twitter.

They have the rights for the concessions inside the stadium and the catering vans outside and do work hard and respond to fans on Twitter and Yellow Forum.

For example following feedback Real Ale and Cider are available from most concessions by the pint.

As a working group we will ensure that all feedback is passed on to Farris Catering in order for them to consider and respond via us at the next meeting.

**Can we improve the stadium facilities?**

**The toilets are filthy?**

**The concourses are dull?**





As above, a lot of this relates to what we as a club can do vs the responsibilities of the stadium company.

As a working group we will ensure that all feedback is passed on to Firoka in order for them to consider and respond via us at the next meeting.

We will also discuss with them and establish whether there is any way we as a club can do more to improve this.

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**Next Meeting:** Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> February 2019

**Venue:** J's Sports Bar (above Frankie & Benny's)

Please submit any feedback or questions in advance via SLO Kath Faulkner on [kfaulkner@oufc.co.uk](mailto:kfaulkner@oufc.co.uk)

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