FCG Responses – 7th April 2022

Fan Representatives

Dave Woodhall	Heroes & Villans
John Gillett	Lions Clubs
Scott Jones	Villa Talk
Nick Sanders	avillafan.com
Karl Bowater	AV Supporters Trust
Mo Razzaq	AV Supporters Trust
David Michael	My Old Man Said
Sam Timms	Villa & Proud
Sarah Breslin	Villa & Proud
Harjit Badesha	Punjabi Villans
Stephen Gough	AV Independent Supporters Clubs
Aaron Jones	Aston Villa Disabled Supporters Association

Apologies

Nilesh Chauhan	Villans Together
Jonathan Fear	Vital Villa

Club Representatives

Christian Purslow	Chief Executive Officer
Paul Tyrrell	Chief Corporate Affairs Officer
Nicola Ibbetson	Chief Commercial Officer
Tommy Jordan	Communications Director
Lynne O'Reardon	Head of Ticketing Operations
Adam Lowe	Head of Marketing
Lee Preece	Supporter Liaison Manager

For tonight's FCG, the club had several items that we wished to update on and discuss with Fan Reps accordingly. ***Fan questions or comments raised during the discussions are shown in italics.***

1 Premier League (PL) Update

An update was provided to Fan Reps regarding issues on the horizon for PL Clubs and to ensure fans that the club is fully engaged and contributing to the discussion on football governance.

Mr Purslow discussed UEFA's announcement regarding changes to FFP regulations (moving within a 3-year period that clubs can only spend 70% of their turnover on wages and transfers). These rules only apply to those clubs who qualify for UEFA competition. The concerns over this new system for the wider football community were discussed.

Will the Premier League adopt the same 70% rule?

Answer Any change in PL regulations would require the agreement of 14 clubs.

The second item related to the Fan Led Review, and an update for the group that football authorities are in a consultation phase with Government and relevant authorities regarding what elements should be adopted. It is clear the attempted European Super League breakaway has changed the political landscape of football and matters such as independent regulation and financial support for the League pyramid are very much part of the discussions.

2 COVID Update

PL Covid protocols have now moved to symptomatic testing only for players, an indication that we are moving back to normality.

The club appreciated the help and support of fans complying with Covid protocol requirements when fans were allowed to return.

3 Season Ticket Pricing

The Board recently asked Nicola Ibbetson's Commercial team to conduct a strategic review of ticketing at Villa Park over the last ten years. The catalyst for the request was the significant impact COVID has had on Season Ticket and all matchday revenue over two seasons.

A report was presented to the Board and although the report is confidential, substantial details of it were presented to the Fan Reps to aid discussion and questions.

Even prior to reviewing the report, it was accepted by some FCG reps that Season Ticket prices were low compared to other PL clubs and that they represented good value for money.

The report showed that our current pricing:

- was easily amongst the cheapest in the PL for both match & season tickets
- has traditionally tracked below the rate of inflation
- was complicated with the stadium split in to six price zones
- offered concession reductions for Over 65, Under 21 and Junior tickets of up to 80% of the full price

Whilst TV revenue and league position remain the most significant revenue streams, the club stated it must grow all revenues to be competitive.

The club presented broad proposals, based on three key principles. Pricing should be simple (easy to understand), fair (representing value for money) and reasonable (compared to the clubs we are competing against in the PL).

It believed that prices should be increased across the entire Season Ticket range and there would likely be other increases in specific categories due to the simplification of price categories and the realignment of concession percentages.

The club stressed that while no final decision has been made on the precise level of increases, it welcomed the input and views of FCG Reps.

A general discussion was then held on the subject and specific questions were asked which included:

Will there be options for Direct Debit / spreading payments?

We are currently speaking with our finance providers.

Do we know if the number of fans on the waiting list for season tickets will reduce if we increase prices?

We have no way of knowing but this is a possibility.

When the club decide to change price categories for certain areas can the quality of the facilities / catering in those stands be taken in to account?

Yes – this will be considered.

Can the classification of what constitutes a restricted view be reviewed?

We are happy to receive the coordinates of any seat to review the restricted or clear view categorisation.

Following the discussion, Mr Purslow said the club would take the feedback received from the FCG and further consider options.

It was agreed that any communications on ticket price increases will be transparent.

4 On-pitch performance

Steven Gerrard and his team have settled into a different club, community and training ground environment very well. We are well underway for our plans for 22/23.

At Academy level, the relationship between Steven and Mark Harrison is providing a clear pathway for young footballers. Our loan programme is seeing players getting good minutes. A clear indication of progress could be seen during the last international window, with the club having the 4th highest number of under 21's away on international duty with their respective countries.

The Women's team have gone through radical changes this year, seeing the introduction of Carla Ward. We are seeing progress in the number of points achieved and becoming much harder to beat. There is continued support from the Men's operation for the squad and staff. Jill Scott has been a welcome addition to the squad offering advice from her vast experience within the game.

5 Developing Villa Park

As well as a fan engagement survey on stadium developments with the wider fanbase which we will be launching shortly, the club will arrange a specific FCG meeting to consult on plans in more detail. The FCG were introduced to reps from Liquid PR who will be leading the consultation & communication process.

The club have put together a top-class development team of design consultants, architects etc who have been working for the last few months on the project.

Preliminary plans, a preliminary timetable and a programme for applying for planning permission have been created.

The first phase has three key elements:

- a new North Stand
- refurb of all Trinity Road Stand hospitality facilities
- a multi-purpose fan zone on the area behind the North Stand

Any development will be sympathetic to our history and heritage, celebrating everything that makes our club great.

We are working with our regional partners to ensure that the development is a catalyst for change in the B6 area, creating a destination venue that supports the whole community and ensuring Villa Park has the facilities to target a 365-day business model.

We are acutely aware of the transport issues. Birmingham needs to have a stadium of at least 50,000 (with appropriate transport structures and facilities in place) for the city to participate in Euro 2028 (if the Football Association is successful with a bid). The Club have welcomed all the cooperation received from both local and national stakeholders in our discussions so far.

Formal consultation will be launched in the weeks ahead where we will be asking all our fans and our wider community to share their views.

Do the plans include areas for safe standing?

We are monitoring all the current safe standing trials in this country and gathering information from the safe standing models adopted across European football. The North Stand development will not include safe standing, however, we are looking to potentially develop safe standing options in other areas of the stadium.