



Draft Minutes of the Arsenal Disabled Supporters Association AGM

held on Thursday 24th September 2020 via Microsoft Teams

Present: Anne Hyde
 Nicole Evans-Dear
 James Warren
 Redmond Kaye
 Cristina Serrao
 Gordon Moser
 Steve Foord
 Christopher Clelland
 David Pullen
 Allan Mabert
 Wayne Busbridge
 Thomas Grover
 Barbara Grover
 Tim Hyde
 John Lloyd
 Judith Purdue
 Alun Francis (Disability Liaison Officer – Arsenal FC)

	Item	
1	Welcome and Introduction	<p>Welcome to everyone to our first virtual AGM. My name is Anne Hyde and for the past 4 years have been the Secretary for ADSA. I have recently taken over from Anthony Joy as Chair and am currently acting as Secretary until we find a replacement.</p> <p>Before we start a few house rules:</p> <p>We are delighted that some of our Deaf and Hearing-Impaired members have joined the meeting. They will be using the Live Caption option which allows them to read on their screen what is being said. You can access this by clicking on the three dots and then click on 'Live Captions'. When speaking can you try and speak slowly and clearly as this will help improve translation seen on the screen for them.</p> <p>On your screen there is a mute button (a microphone) so when you are not talking, please make sure you have muted yourself. We don't really want to hear your partner asking if you want a gin! You can unmute yourself when you want to speak by clicking the button again. We would be grateful if you could keep all your questions to the end when there will be an opportunity for us to respond. Can you also when speaking please give your name before you ask the question.</p>

2	Apologies for Absence	Mark Brindle (Supporters, Clubs Liaison Officer) Tom Head Adam Prescott Andrew Prescott Angus McGuinness Ly Voong
3	Approval of minutes of meeting	Minutes of the previous meeting - 22 nd September 2019 approved. Proposed by Nicole Evans-Dear and Seconded by John Lloyd.
4	Chair and Secretary Report	<p>Holding our AGM virtually is a sign of these unprecedented times and I hope that everyone has kept well. We are now in our 4th year having relaunched the Arsenal Disabled Supporters' Association in December 2016 and our membership has grown to 249 from 231 this time last year. We welcome this year our youngest ever member, Sophia who is just 10 months old. Our members around the world are increasing with members from France, Germany, India, Ireland, Northern Ireland and Kenya.</p> <p>Our Chair for the past four years, Anthony Joy has sadly had to resign due to ill health and I am sure you would want to join me in wishing him a speedy recovery. Tom Head, who was our ambulant disabled representative, has also resigned due to work commitments. I would like to thank both Anthony and Tom for their hard work and dedication to improve disabled facilities for us all. A few weeks ago, Gordon Moser, Ly Choong Voong, Cristina Serrao and David Pullen were co-opted on to the ADSA Committee and I am sure they will be a huge asset. Cristina has taken on Social Media so please follow us on Instagram, Twitter and Facebook.</p> <p>I continue to be a member of the Arsenal Fans Forum representing our disabled supporters. Members of this forum includes the Chief Executive of Arsenal FC and the Director of Communications and Community. This is an opportunity for disabled supporters to raise any issues so please let me know if you have anything you would like me to raise by emailing me. Minutes of these meetings can be found on the Arsenal website on the Fans page.</p> <p>We continue to email our members on a regular basis, and I am grateful for James Warren who assists me with this. However, James will now be focusing on the joint Strategy with ourselves and Arsenal FC. About 60% open the newsletters so it would also be interesting to know why our members don't open them and if anyone has any suggestions for improvements to this form of communication.</p> <p>The Official Arsenal Supporters' Club members now receive a discount of 10% in the Arsenal shops on production of their Arsenal Supporters Club Membership card and photo ID or online. The latest is that for the foreseeable future they will not be issuing cards so the only way to obtain your discount is to order online unless you already have a card in which case you can use it in the shops.</p> <p>Following incidents at the AFC Bournemouth v Arsenal game on Boxing Day 2019 which several of our members were involved in, a meeting was held with AFC Bournemouth, Arsenal FC, Watford FC,</p>

		<p>and ourselves. Watford and Aston Villa both had similar incidents at Bournemouth. David Butler from Watford FC agreed to meet with Bournemouth at their ground to discuss how they could improve their facilities to make it safer for away fans. We thank Bournemouth for considering David's suggestions and I understand they have made a new safe away area for supporters with disabilities.</p> <p>We have been disappointed that despite asking Arsenal to have text on the screens so that the Hearing Impaired can be part of games, this has not occurred enough. We have asked the club to ensure that when we return to the Emirates that any safety messages shown on the screens show the text clearly, and that any future events, the Hearing Impaired are included. ADSA will continue to work with the Disability Liaison Team on this during this coming season. There is now a new service – SignVideo for the deaf and hard of hearing and hearing loops around the ground which I am sure the deaf and hearing impaired are extremely grateful for.</p> <p>We have had meetings with Alun Francis over the past year regarding the Disabled Supporters page on the Arsenal website and with the Club to produce a 3-5 year strategy. We agreed last year to improve access to information, and ADSA will continue this work with the club over the coming months. I am grateful to James for leading this and he will be talking more about this later in the meeting.</p> <p>Previously we asked the Disability Liaison Team to look at supporters who are gold season ticket holders with long term disabilities only having to provide proof once. We are delighted to hear that the trial last season was a success and will continue for this coming season. ADSA does not have any dealings with tickets and I do receive several requests and questions. All tickets are dealt with by the Disability Liaison Team, so if you have any questions regarding tickets, please either call or email them.</p> <p>Lifts have been a bone of contention for many seasons for so many supporters, but we are pleased to announce that a lift pass is being introduced. We are hoping that this will solve some of the issues that our members have had and if it is successful, we are hopeful this will continue in the future. These passes will be issued to only those who apply, and season ticket holders have been advised of this. Currently, only those Gold Season Ticket Holders that have opted to go into the ballot for this season can apply and should do so as soon as possible.</p> <p>ADSA has had an excellent working relationship with the Disability Liaison Team over the past year and we would like to thank both Alun Francis and his team for their help to improving the facilities for disabled supporters both at the Emirates and at other clubs. Having spoken to other Premier League Disabled Supporters Associations, we are extremely grateful that we have this excellent working relationship as many Disabled Supporters Associations are not as lucky as us. Alun, myself and James are currently having</p>
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5	Treasurer's Report	<p>Nicole Evans-Dear reported that the opening balance from 9th October 2019 was £870.53 and the closing balance as at 22nd September was £1,016.94. The monies spent were for meetings at Arsenal FC, a donation to Level Playing Field, Website costs and an Arsenal shirt for the Raffle. Nicole was delighted with the response from the raffle which raised £330. In ADSA's Constitution it states that monies can be donated to charities and it will be discussed by the committee.</p>
6	Communication and Strategy	<p>James talked about ADSA's overall strategy and priorities going forwards given the changes in the make-up of the committee structure.</p> <p>"I think we'd all acknowledge that Anthony has done a fantastic job in getting us where we are today and putting ADSA on the map as a force in fighting for better access, awareness and facilities for disabled supporters – whether wheelchair users, mobility impaired, visually or hearing impaired. To that end, we can only try and continue to build on what he has already achieved as ADSA Chair and his passion and commitment for all supporters.</p> <p>I think Anthony mentioned last year that we had a strategy meeting in 2018 that was used to try and formulate a longer-term strategy for a 3-5 year period. Level Playing Field were also in attendance that day as we looked to try and work closer together with them with a unified view of improving the match day experience for disabled supporters.</p> <p>I think it's fair to say that we haven't perhaps achieved as much as we would have liked over the past 18 months and obviously lockdown and the pandemic hasn't helped that, nor has Anthony stepping down. However, I think it's now worth looking at what we have achieved and ADSA's role going forwards and what we hope to achieve as an association. As Anne mentioned we've already managed for those fans with long-term disabilities only having to show proof of their condition once and this trial is set to continue.</p> <p>Ongoing strategy areas: Website</p>

Anne and I have also been working with the club on trying to improve the website which has been an ongoing debate between ADSA and the club, but I think we can find a constructive way forward. We know the club and the Disability Liaison Team have financial pressures placed upon them which certainly haven't helped by the lack of crowds at the Emirates. I understand the frustration when such large sums are used in other parts of the Arsenal business but I think it's important to remember that without success on the pitch, this would ultimately lead to even less money being available for other areas of the club like website development. That said, there are a number of questions and issues that ADSA has raised and you as our members have raised in terms of things not working well enough for you on the website and it's important to get those right. I do think it's possible to make the current website better than it already is without a radical overall. Therefore, we just need to find the best way of presenting our changes in a way that follows the existing structure. This is something we'll be looking to work with the club over the course of the season. Now we're clear what the club are able to change within their financial restrictions will make it easier for us to work out how to get the changes that we'd like to see made.

Visually / Hearing Impaired

I think Anthony also mentioned that the hearing and visually impaired changes were a priority for ADSA. Again, more work needs to be done in this area so I think this is something that we'll continue to discuss with the club in attempts to make improvements once fans are allowed to attend games again. From a purely safety perspective, it is vital that some improvements are made, and Anne has already outlined some of these.

Box Office

We were hoping to make some changes so there was a dedicated phone line for supporters with disabilities and training to take place to make sure staff had disability awareness training.

Moving Forward

Given the current circumstances we found ourselves in and how quickly things have changed over the past 6 months, I'm not sure there's a great need for a complex long-term strategy that stretches over several years. We've all seen how much everyone has had to adapt to radical change and financial pressures and so I think ADSA can continue to perform a vital function now and in the future with a passionate and committed set of members. We'll certainly continue to work on the areas I've already outlined but I think it's important not to get too ambitious about what we're trying to achieve and beat ourselves up if it takes longer than we'd hoped. If we're able to concentrate on 1 or 2 key things a season that we'd like to see changed or improved, then I think that's a pretty good outcome. We're all volunteers and although some may have more time than others, it's still a significant commitment to attend meetings, answer emails and try to affect change for the better. We want to be as transparent and honest as possible with our members, so we'll

		<p>always try to communicate through our newsletters and emails anything we feel important or we've managed to resolve or achieve. So, I think there are 3 key areas that cover most of any ongoing strategy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members • Matchday Experience • Ticketing <p>Specific issues like website changes, fit in to and often overlap into these areas but by concentrating on these areas we'll be able to address most of the problems that arise and without having to plan several years in advance. I do think a long-term strategy with ambitious aims has a place, but it requires a lot of input and work which perhaps shouldn't be placed on just 1 or 2 people.</p> <p>Members Fundamentally, ADSA is about its members and making sure the committee represents those members views and needs as best we can. So please continue to write to us and let us know about the things that are important to you and highlight problems you've experienced, ideas you have or anything else connected to your dealings with the club. We will then do our best to act on those where we can and represent you as best we can.</p> <p>Matchday As I said, one of ADSA's main roles is to improve and enhance the matchday experience as much as possible and I think there's plenty to keep us busy if we concentrate on that overriding principle and listen to our members while doing so. Improvements for visually and hearing-impaired fans are a good example of this desire to improve the matchday experience.</p> <p>Ticketing Ticketing is always an ongoing issue that needs addressing and this alone make up the majority of questions Anne receives (in the normal course of events). This is therefore something that will always be an area that ADSA will try to work with the club on and ensure highlighted problems are dealt with.</p> <p>In closing I just wanted to say that. as our new chair, Anne is passionate and committed to ensuring ADSA continues the work begun by Anthony. She attends myriad meetings and events to push the disabled supporters agenda and I without her passion and drive, ADSA would not function anywhere near as well as it does now."</p>
7	Election of the Committee	Anne said that she had been co-opted by the Committee but needed to be officially elected for two years. This was proposed by James Warren and seconded by Allan Mabert.
8	Proposed Changes to Constitution	Anne had proposed an addition to the Constitution – Membership to include: <i>"3.10 - An ordinary member may be elected to become a Life Member at the discretion of the Committee and on election, have the rights of an Ordinary Member."</i> This was proposed by Nicole Evans- Dear and seconded by Gordon Moser.

9	Returning to the Emirates	<p>Anne said that as I am sure you are all aware, the Government has reported this week that the expected return to live games from the 1st October has been postponed for the foreseeable future. I for one am disappointed with this as I am missing going to the games but health and safety of everyone is paramount and understand their reasoning.</p> <p>For those Gold Season Ticket Holders who have opted to pay the deposit to go into the ballot, they will be receiving membership packs – a decision has not been made as to whether those who have opted to take ‘a holiday’ until next season will receive one. Those who have opted to go into the ballot can apply now online for a lift pass and if required, a face covering exemption. These will need to be produced if asked.</p> <p>We have also been informed that once we go back to the Emirates all the normal restrictions around the stadium will be the same – parking, access, closure of Highbury Station after the game etc. Alun Francis and Mark Brindle are keeping us informed of any updates and we will pass these on to you as and when we receive them.</p>
10	Questions from the floor	<p>Christopher Clelland asked what was happening regarding Deaf Awareness for staff. Alun Francis agreed to meet once staff were back working at Highbury House.</p> <p>Gordon Moser asked when lift passes can be applied for. Anne said that this was available online for all season ticket holders only. Gordon also asked how many people would be using the lift at any one time and Alun Francis suggested that it would be only two people.</p> <p>Wayne Busbridge raised the issue for Blind and Visually Impaired supporters who used the commentary as there was a time delay. He would like to see the return of Smart Speaker as there was no reason why it was cut. Smart Speaker is a simple way of getting the commentary. Alun Francis said that it was to do with the budget. Christina asked Alun what the cost was as it seemed only fair if it was needed that the club purchased it. Alun was not prepared to reveal this at the meeting. Allan Mabert said that he had found this commentary to be really good and that could the committee look into this being reinstated. James Warren will include this as part of ADSAs strategy.</p> <p>Allan asked about sub committees and co-opting members for specific areas. Anne said that this was possible under our constitution.</p> <p>Gordon Moser asked if the 12-month period for using gift card vouchers could be extended due to the circumstances. Alun Francis will check if this can be done.</p>
11	Raffle Draw	<p>The winners of the raffle for 2020 were: John Lloyd – Signed First Team Shirt</p>

		<p>Anthony O'Donnell – FA Cup 2000 Winners photo £15 Gift Voucher – Christopher Clelland 2 x Arsenal Tumblers – Lukas Hoppe</p> <p>Anne thanked everyone who had donated as this money helps to keep ADSA from charging a membership fee and to continue their work with Arsenal Football Club to improve facilities at both the Emirates and other clubs.</p>
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Meeting closed at 8.45pm.