



Nigel Huddleston MP
Department for Digital, Culture,
Media and Sport
100 Parliament Street
London
SW1A 2BQ

13th August 2020

Charlton Athletic Football Club

Dear Minister,

We hope this letter finds you well during the unprecedented times we find ourselves in, and hope that you enjoyed your visit to the Royal Borough yesterday.

We write regarding the current on-going situation with the ownership of Charlton Athletic and the recent decision by the English Football League (EFL) to reject the application of three of the individuals in charge of East Street Investment through the owner's and director's test.

Whilst the club has confirmed that it will be appealing to the EFL against this decision, the individuals involved have done little to prove that, even were that appeal successful, they would be responsible custodians for the football club, or that they possess the necessary funds to ensure the club continues its current football league status and can return to the Championship at the earliest opportunity.

The situation has caused great concern, not just to fans of the club but to many residents living in our community in the Royal Borough of Greenwich. Charlton Athletic play an important role in the local community, not least through the work of the Charlton Athletic Community Trust (CACT). Whilst over the years the CACT has done this through a number of projects including the Charlton Challenge, the Extra Time Hub aimed at older residents, and the Street Violence Ruins Lives Strategy, the most recent and obvious example is the vital role CACT played in helping to coordinate the response locally to the coronavirus pandemic and lockdown. The Trust worked together with the Council to create the Greenwich Community Hub, supporting the most vulnerable residents in our Borough. The Hub received over 105,000 calls and delivered over 4,200 food boxes to vulnerable residents.

Charlton fans meanwhile have a long record of activism to support the Club and its place in the Borough. When Greenwich Council refused planning permission in the late-Eighties which would have allowed the Club to return to the Borough and their home, The Valley, fans set up the Valley Party and contested seats at the 1990 local elections. Although they did not win any seats, they took 10% of the vote across the Borough and helped to unseat the Chair of the Planning Committee in the process. In 1992, largely because of that demonstration of support, Charlton were able to return to the Valley after seven years away.

In recent years, Charlton fans have focused their efforts on vocally campaigning against the ownership of the club by Roland Duchalet, who still owns both the Valley and the Sparrows Lane training ground, and will therefore have a significant say in the future of the club.

All of the above highlights the deep relationship not just between the fans and the club, but between the club and the local community within our Borough. As the local Opposition group on the Council, our former leader, Cllr Spencer Drury, seconded the freedom of the Borough for Charlton, and in recent years we have consistently asked questions in the Council Chamber to ensure the Council will not allow the Valley to be redeveloped, reflecting our continued and on-going commitment to the Club.

We are therefore extremely concerned that Charlton's future as a Football League club is under imminent threat. This concern is amplified by the fact that our community would not be the first to suffer as a result of the poor management and governance of the EFL in the last twelve months. The community of Bury have lost their club due to the failures of the Football League, whilst Bolton Wanderers narrowly held onto theirs. How many more clubs need to be in this situation before genuine reform and change happens? Once we have been able to save Charlton, the focus needs to turn to reform to ensure no club or community is in this situation again.

As the Minister for Sport, we look to you for assistance, and would welcome the opportunity to meet you (in person or virtually) to discuss how we can support the Government to facilitate a satisfactory resolution. We seek your support and intervention, working with the EFL and the wider football community, to ensure that the Club has a future in the Borough, and that our community does not suffer the same fate as Bury in losing an asset at its heart.

Thank you for your time and we look forward to receiving your response.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Charlie Davis', with a horizontal line underneath.

Councillor Charlie Davis

Deputy Leader of the Opposition and Opposition Spokesperson for Sport
Royal Borough of Greenwich

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nigel Fletcher', with a horizontal line underneath.

Councillor Nigel Fletcher

Leader of the Opposition
Royal Borough of Greenwich