

AST statement on results of membership survey on Arsène Wenger's contractual position at Arsenal

Last week the Arsenal Supporters' Trust (AST) surveyed all members on the current situation regarding Arsène Wenger and whether his contract to manage Arsenal should be extended beyond the end of this season.

AST members include Arsenal shareholders, season ticket holders, home, away and overseas fans. Our membership is a broad church with a shared belief in the important role of supporters in the life of the club and the values of custodianship and sustainability that the AST promotes as guiding principles for the great club we support.

The results of the survey were as follows:

1. Do you support Arsène Wenger signing a new contract and remaining as Arsenal manager:
 - Yes – 15%
 - No – 78%
 - Don't know – 7%

2. Do you think that the way that the Arsenal Board have dealt with Arsène Wenger's contract is in the best interests of Arsenal Football Club?
 - Yes – 9%
 - No – 86%
 - Don't know – 5%

The AST membership is just under 1000 supporters. We also offered all members the chance to give their written views and these are attached with this document. There were 424 written comments in all.

The AST Board make the following comments:

“In light of these survey results the AST now calls on Arsenal's Board not to renew Arsène Wenger's contract at the end of the 2016-17 season. A substantial majority of our members believe he is no longer the right person to take the club forward. We are confident this is an accurate reflection of the wider fanbase.

“The AST will be writing to and meeting with members of the Arsenal Board to convey these results and our position that they should now withdraw the offer of a new contract. We believe the Board's role now is to successfully manage the transition to a new manager, an eventuality for which they have had plenty of warning and time to prepare.

“The AST has long believed that change is needed in the Arsenal Boardroom. The fact that only 9 per cent of our members believe the Arsenal Board have handled this issue well reinforces our view that a fresh approach is urgently needed. The Board needs more dynamic and independent members with skillsets that reflect the challenges Arsenal face, including the need to grow commercial revenues and to rebuild a football management structure that increasingly looks out of date.

“In adding our voice to calls for Arsène Wenger to leave Arsenal after 21 years we would like to reiterate the importance of this debate taking place in a civil and responsible way. We respect the right of every fan to have a view and for that view to be respected and heard. For this reason, we have reported every opinion our members offered, but we are compelled to go with the majority.

“We also recognise and pay tribute to the tremendous contribution that Arsène Wenger has made to Arsenal. Regardless of the current debate around his contract we believe that he deserves huge respect and admiration for his long-term contribution to our club, including delivering some of the best football ever witnessed not just by Arsenal fans but all of those who follow the English game”.

Notes:

- The AST survey was conducted between 20 and 26 March 2017.
- Every written response provided by an AST member has been reproduced in this separate report
- The AST has previously conducted surveys into Arsenal in the close season, including into the role of Arsène Wenger. Historically these surveys have demonstrated support for the position of Arsène Wenger which adds weight to the view that many Arsenal fans have changed their minds:

In the summer of 2015, 84 per cent of AST members agreed that Arsène Wenger was 'the right person to manage Arsenal Football Club' (10 per cent disagreed and 6 per cent had no view). The AST membership has remained steady demonstrating the extent to which the views of Arsenal fans have changed.

<http://arsenaltrust.org/resources/documents/1438697900astmembershipsurvey2015.pdf>