

# Premier League Supporters Meeting

11 October 2018

## Attendees

- Alan Wares (AW) - Albion Roar
- Ashley Brown (AB) - SD
- Ash Lord (AL) - PL
- Bill Bush (BB)
- Dave Kelly (DK) - Blue Union
- David Chidgey (DC) - Chelsea Supporters Trust
- David Rose (DR) - FSF
- Deborah Dilworth (DDi) - SD
- Duncan Drasdo (DDr) - Manchester United Supporters Trust
- Goronwy Brookes (GB) - Spirit of Shankly
- John Browne (JB) - Manchester City Supporters Club
- John Ratomski (JR) - West Ham United Independent Supporters Association
- Katherine Allen (KA) - PL
- Katrina Law (KL) - Kick-Off Working Times Group
- Malcolm Clarke (MClA) - FA Council (fan rep)
- Martin Cloake (MClO) - Tottenham Hotspur Supporters Trust
- Michael Brunskill (MB) - FSF
- Nick Illingworth (NI) - The Ugly Inside fanzine
- Peter Fanning (PF) - Newcastle United Supporters Trust
- Peter Pike (PP) - Claret Trust
- Richard Scudamore (RCS) - PL
- Rachel Solich (RS) - PL
- Steve Moulds (SMo) - Leicester City Supporters Trust
- Sue Maisey (SMa) - Crystal Palace Supporters Trust
- Tim Payton (TP) - Arsenal Supporters Trust
- Tom Greatrex (TG) - Fulham Supporters Trust / FA Council (fan rep) / SD
- Thomas Guthrie (TG) - PL
- Tony Maycock (TM) - Cherries Trust
- Trevor Whitehead (TW) - Huddersfield Town Supporters Association

## 1. Structured Dialogue

- a) AB outlined recommendations from EWG document.
- b) BB indicated he was relaxed about sending a template. He confirmed a draft had been shared informally with some clubs and PL was still collating feedback. Some clubs had indicated a concern that template could constrain clubs from what they are currently offering. Other feedback from clubs is that

things are going okay, the guideline should be a minimum and that it is difficult to have a definition of a template that works for everyone.

- c) TP requested a firm date for the circulation of the guidance note. TP stated the template should reflect the EWG recommendations. BB committed to finalising and sharing the documents within the next few weeks.
- d) PF asks if clubs produce an end of season report? If so it should be shared amongst fans as he feels NUFC's February 2018 report to the PL is factually incorrect. SMO and MClo talk about embedding culture of good governance in how football clubs are run. PP and DK say that SLOs should be in these meetings too.
  - i. Action – BB to finalise and share the document referred to in 1c in next few weeks
  - ii. Action – FSF to share survey results with PL

## **2. Rail travel**

- a) KL outlined that it's one year since the Rail Delivery Group (made up of train operating companies) meeting with herself, RCS, BB, and Rosena Allin-Khan MP. What progress has been made since then? It'd be good to get direction from the PL on how fans can help / get involved in the process.
- b) BB explained that senior elements from the organisations were less prominent and BTP presence was now more significant. BTP focus is now on their own project which also concentrates on behaviour and policing matters.
- c) BB said PL have no problem with BTP raising those issues but could not discuss scheduling.
- d) BB said PL view was that one package would need to be agreed at a senior level with BTP encompassing all issues relating to travel, including railcard initiatives.
- e) BB stated his belief that DFT and BTP could breath new life into the process and fans can lobby to help aid this process.
- f) TG asked fans reps to keep PL informed of any initiatives they are aware of between their club and travel companies. TG said he felt that fans had to be considered as part of network customer base, and not automatically grouped with those carrying out anti-social behaviour.

## **3. Standing**

- a) DCMS have put an appointment for review out to tender and a selection is due to be made. BB explained that careful consideration around the review and language used was understandable and would be a factor in the timing of the review.
- b) PL and EFL had spoken to the SGSA and had some differing views, but not fundamentally different.
- c) BB confirmed the PL position would always be heavily influenced by evidence.

- d) MClo asked if SGSA had bought into choice for clubs and BB suggested he felt they would offer that choice if the evidence shows it is safe to do so.
- e) BB confirmed that in relation to evidence clubs have strong processes at local level, but there is not currently a set template for reporting injuries to SGSA.
- f) BB suggested that more injuries may actually occur away from areas of persistent standing, for example on stairs or during circulation into and out of stands.
- g) TG confirmed two clubs, Brighton & Hove Albion and Cardiff City had recently piloted designated seating areas for away supporters. PL will review the effectiveness of these areas in the coming weeks with club ticketing and safety staff. Further trials would take place at the clubs at forthcoming matches and TG undertook to keep fans reps updated on progress. TG asked club reps to contact their own SLO to check if their club would be taking part in any of the pilot matches, or to offer any feedback on the proposals.
- h) RCS said he would raise the matter of designated seating again at shareholders to remind clubs of the proposal.
- i) PP says he was an MP when the Hillsborough disaster occurred and initially backed all-seater stadia but he has now changed his mind on this matter and supports the standing campaign.

#### **4. Brexit**

- a) BB outlined his current view of government negotiations and the potential impact on fans travelling overseas for matches. BB talked about matchday workforces and access to player talent. BB said it shouldn't have a significant impact if the government applies its high talent rule measured by salary to PL footballers. BB confirmed PL are monitoring events closely and, like everyone, awaiting further developments.
- b) RCS said Brexit shouldn't have a significant impact on international broadcasting deals.
- c) RCS thinks the European parliament has started to respect international territoriality and the PL is aligned with the EFL, PFA, Scottish authorities that a national player quota would be a retrograde step.

#### **5. Ticketing**

- a) DR outlined three fan requests in relation to ticket prices: 1. Retention of £30 away price cap; 2. Further reduction of away ticket prices when games are moved for TV; 3. Standardisation of the young adult category (18-22) with the overall aim of reducing ticket prices for home and away fans in that age group.
- b) RCS said away cap retention would likely be decided at club shareholders meeting next February. RCS confirmed he would recommend to his successor the retention of the cap but advised that clubs will need to take into account all revenue streams prior to making the decision.

- c) RCS said he felt clubs knew the cap would likely remain in position beyond the initial three-year cycle when they first agreed it.
- d) RCS stated he felt there was no prospect of clubs considering reducing the cap further for UK live broadcast matches.
- e) PL shared details of the current Young Persons (YP) match ticket prices. BB said only a handful of clubs didn't currently offer a YP category and this was what generated the negative feedback. The majority offer discounts that are proportionate.
- f) BB said he was happy to take up the YP position with individual clubs to ensure they knew where their own offer sat on the spectrum.
- g) RCS said if it was a minority problem we don't usually regulate but suggested moving forward with the BB offer.
  - i. Action – FSF to liaise with BB on YP ticket price work
  - ii. Action – FSF to share YP ticket price data with the wider group

## 6. Kick-off times

- a) KL some progress not as much as we would like, matches scheduled and then rescheduled and this leads to travel issues, particularly if a match is rescheduled outside of the regular PL announcements.
- b) RCS confirmed Dec and Jan schedule should be announced by the end of 12 October.
- c) RCS confirmed no Xmas Eve or New Year's Eve fixtures, but a knock-on effect was that a number of subsequent Tuesday matches will move to the Wednesday due to broadcast selections.
- d) RCS said scheduling issues around Spurs v Manchester City and Manchester United v Everton were directly related to delays with Spurs new stadium move but that didn't necessarily mean that Spurs should compensate fans of other clubs.
- e) DD and JB ask if a central pot could be administered to refund fans?
- f) TM recounts experience of game at Old Trafford being called off at 10 minute's notice and believes fans at that game should have been compensated.
- g) RCS said a central pot for compensation claims on specific matches could not be taken forward and would not be agreed by clubs. These types of issues were usually matters between the two clubs involved.
- h) RCS made the point that Sunday 4pm slot was valuable to broadcasters and they will always want to utilise that slot.
- i) PF asks how much freedom clubs have to say no to broadcast requests? If clubs choose to move the games to secure income then they could compensate fans.
- j) RCS explained all clubs have agreed the broadcast deals and therefore are aware that broadcasters can choose their preferred matches.
- k) RCS said PL had brought in the target dates to assist fans and try not to move matches outside of these but conceded on rare occasions there are unforeseen circumstances.

- l) DDr asks if the six-week window is in the broadcast contract?
- m) RCS said there was a separate clause in the contract concerning the six-week period, which he would check to clarify.
- n) TG stated club match tickets offer protections within the T&Cs but it is difficult for clubs to have policies relating to third party contracts (e.g. travel) which are outside of their control.
- o) RCS said broadcasters will always want the best games in the preferred slots and that the Sun 4pm timing was established now as part of the football viewing experience, if not the match attending fans experience.

## **7. VAR**

- a) RCS said there has been eight times as much testing as last season. Clubs were nervous about not being practiced enough to bring it in this season.
- b) RCS explained World Cup only had multiple matches in the final round of group stage fixtures whereas PL may have 7 or even 10 matches simultaneously.
- c) RCS felt VAR improved as the World Cup went along but came with challenges. RCS said VAR would limit the number of talking points but those which remained would be more emotive.
- d) RCS felt VAR would likely be in the PL next season, subject to further discussions with clubs.
- e) RCS discussed the need to consider the in-stadia experience and the challenges that come from communicating the message. RCS referenced ideas such as officials communicating directly to the stadium crowd and reducing the need for referees to use monitors before making their decision.
- f) RCS said PL not always first to the market when adopting new technology but always with a view to learning from others and being properly ready when it was implemented.
- g) RCS said he felt VAR would ultimately be game neutral with decisions going for an against clubs over a season but hopefully with more correct decisions made.
- h) RCS confirmed clubs are paying for the VAR technology at their stadium, which is then used in all relevant competitions.

## **8. AOB**

- a) DR acknowledged this is RCS's last meeting with fan groups and credits his contribution to supporting dialogue and the introduction of the away price cap.