



EFL & FSA – Supporter Engagement Meeting

Date: Tuesday 3 December 2019

Venue: EFL Commercial Office, 55 Blandford Street, W1U 7HW

Attendees:

EFL: Mark Rowan (Communications Director)
Dave Cookson (Football Services Director)
John Nagle (Head of Policy)
Andy Pomfret (Supporter Services Manager)
Nick Roberts (Public Affairs Manager)

FSA: Ashley Brown (AB)
Deborah Dilworth (DD)
Amanda Jacks (AJ)

CH: Shin Aujla (SA) – West Brom, Geoff Bielby (GB) - Hull City, Malcolm Clarke (MC) – Stoke City
L1: Roger Ellis (RE) – Coventry, Martin O'Hara (MoH) – Doncaster, Christine Seddon (CS) – Blackpool
L2: Kristine Green (KG) – Grimsby, Elaine Ganderton (EG) – Oldham Athletic

AGENDA

1. Apologies
2. EFL update
 - Chair/CEO recruitment
 - Governance Review
 - Club matters
3. Qatar 2022
4. Project Enable
5. Safe Standing
6. Supporter Engagement R118 update (2018/19 feedback)
7. EFL Supporter Network Meetings
8. AOB

APOLOGIES

Michael Brunskill – FSA & James Young – Cheltenham Town



1 – MATTERS ARISING

All actions from the previous meeting had been completed. It was agreed that Enjoy the Match Campaign discussions would be postponed until a future meeting.

2 – EFL UPDATE

a) Chair & CEO

The EFL gave an update, stating that the CEO recruitment process was well on track. Rick Parry has been appointed as Chair with Debbie Jevans returning to an Independent Director role after her tenure as Interim and Executive Chair.

NB. Since the meeting, it has been confirmed that David Baldwin will become EFL CEO in June 2020.

b) Governance Review

Updates were provided on both the Governance Review and Bury Review which are being led by Jonathan Taylor of Bird and Bird, and the EFL outlined some key details, timescales and differences of the two reviews. It was also discussed how the FSA could feed into those reviews as per the commitment previously made and this would be done directly with Bird and Bird.

The FSA expressed some concern as to whether they would have the opportunity to feed their full and comprehensive feedback into the review process. MR suggested that it would be sensible to wait until Terms of Reference of the Bury Review had been published to make that determination.

There has been subsequent correspondence post the meeting (and the publication of the Bury FC Review Terms of Reference) where it was agreed members of the FSA and the EFL would meet early in 2020 in order for the FSA to provide any feedback that was not covered within the scope of the reviews, particularly around the area of sustainability.

It was also confirmed that EFL clubs had been consulted in respect of both reviews, and that dialogue with them continues on a number of issues on a regular basis. The EFL also stated it would maintain dialogue with the DCMS Select Committee (SC) and share developments and findings that emanate from the review processes as requested.

b) Club Matters

Matters relating to specific clubs were discussed and the EFL reiterated that review and discussion remains ongoing around Championship Profit & Sustainability and similarly SCMP in Leagues One and Two. SCMP has had a positive impact on Leagues One and Two, however there is a need to look at the rules as per above, in the context of Bury's financial plight.

Macclesfield Town

The ongoing situation at Macclesfield Town was discussed, with the EFL outlining the interactions it has had with the club to date and the actions it has taken.

Bolton Wanderers

Amidst a general review of issues, the club's suspended point deductions was discussed. The EFL Executive and clubs weren't happy with the principle and precedent being set, reiterating that fulfilment of fixtures is sacrosanct to the League and non-fulfilment needed to be given an appropriate sanction. Therefore the EFL had taken the unusual step of appealing the decision.

AB suggested sanctions could be more simply defined, perhaps mirroring the approach used by the FA for disciplinary offences/defences, and that this could help avoid confusion surrounding potential points penalties.



RE articulated the view that directors should be charged for their actions as opposed to clubs and fans. EFL stated clubs have to be penalised when they've fallen foul of rules, however, the change in policy on charging owners and directors shows that the League will also charge individuals where appropriate.

EG highlighted concerns around change of ownership and governance requirements of new owners, advocating that education around what is required of new owners legally would go some way to assist the issue. EG highlighted point with Oldham Athletic who have provided abridged accounts.

ACTION – EFL to raise question with Finance and Legal team about issues raised in relation to Oldham. Terms of reference to be provided to the FSA for review.

3 - QATAR 2022

The potential impact of Qatar 2022 on the domestic season was discussed and outlined by the EFL. DC confirmed the EFL is currently scheduling and modelling the potential impact if the tournament was to be expanded to include 48 teams and take longer to conclude.

Confirmation was provided that there is no desire to stop the EFL en masse as it would be too big a strain on competition and clubs. AJ asked if the EFL and PL will bring in bespoke Ts and Cs to protect supporters and consumer rights around any domestic fixture changes, while KG asked if iFollow will be able to broadcast on Saturday's at 3pm in perpetuity while the World Cup is on because of international kick-off legalities.

ACTION - EFL agrees to look into how Article 48 applies in this context and come back with thoughts.

4 - PROJECT ENABLE

The EFL provided a short presentation and overview of Project Enable, an academic research project looking at the policing of EFL fixtures

AJ outlined the FSA's involvement and support of the project to date highlighting why it's needed and welcomed by fans group. EFL confirmed to RE that promoting the research findings and engaging a variety of stakeholders will be an aim of the project.

FSA felt there is a need to consider how the SLO role is embedded into policing as their input can be valuable while the EFL outlined that the door is open to include more progressive police forces coming together and sharing learnings.

MoH questioned the status of the stewarding review, to which the EFL confirmed that this remains ongoing.

5 - STANDING

EFL provided an update on standing legislation, highlighting that changes in the Green Guide and across political landscape means that progress is being made. EFL remains engaged with SGSA with regard to its evidence gathering programme that is ongoing.

6 - SUPPORTER ENGAGEMENT

The EFL provided an update on Clubs' Supporter Engagement activity in 2018/19 and requirements detailed under Regulation 118.

FSA pleased to see that progress that is being made but state that they believe some clubs are not meeting the full requirements and this needs to be reflected in reporting.



Overall it's believed that in general clubs are engaging well with supporters but FSA suggest similar issues keep arising in relation to what they term 'meaningful dialogue' with some differences between clubs and fans' reporting.

MC concludes that the situation is better than previously but yet more improvements can be made to dialogue meetings. MC believes there is a role for FSA to go away and suggest some wording for the regulation, which may satisfy them and their members.

ACTION – DD to finalise FSA analysis of data and contact the EFL for comparative meeting to discuss supporter engagement generally. EFL to share future Club Guidance document on supporter engagement with the FSA.

7 - SUPPORTERS SURVEY

AP provided an update on the EFL Supporters Survey with plans to continue to analyse the data and decide scope of future surveys. It has been decided an internal working group should be set up to discuss next steps. AB said they can offer a rep to join working group if needed.

8 - AOB

a) ComSec

FSA asked for the matter to be raised, due to some publicised matters at Hull City relating to treatment of fans by Comsec officers. Grimsby had also had similar issues and made a complaint to EFL.

The EFL provided background on the Football Dataco arrangement with ComSec to protect data rights for leagues. FSA representatives discussed a number of suggested ways in which they felt these approaches could be improved. These were acknowledged by the EFL who confirmed conversations with Comsec are ongoing to improve the service.

ACTION – EFL to provide further background and context to role, responsibilities and powers of Comsec officers and how they operate and identify themselves to fans in-stadia.

b) EFL Network Meeting

DD makes request for an EFL rep come along to the next meeting

c) Closing Remarks

RE would like to note for the record that the meetings with the EFL are very worthwhile and continue to improve with each meeting. They include a good level of exchange and meaningful debate.