



EFL Supporter Engagement Meeting - Minutes

Friday 25th May 2018 - 1pm

30 Gloucester Place, London, W1U 8PL

Attendees

EFL: Shaun Harvey (Chief Executive), John Nagle (Head of Policy), Mark Rowan (Communications Director), Andy Pomfret (Supporter Services Manager) & Nick Roberts (Public Affairs Manager)

FSF: Kevin Miles (Chief Executive) & David Rose (Deputy Chief Executive)

SD: Deborah Dilworth (Network Manager)

Championship: Geoff Bielby (Hull City); Di Cunningham (Norwich City) and Roger Titford (Reading).

League One: Tim Hillyer (AFC Wimbledon); Steve Rowland (Blackpool) and Martin O'Hara (Doncaster Rovers).

League Two: Roger Ellis (Coventry City) and Kristine Green (Grimsby Town).

Agenda

1. Matters Arising
2. Standing & Stand Up for Choice
3. Supporter Engagement
4. Owners Conduct Review
5. Late Notice Weather Postponements
6. AGM Proposals
7. Broadcasting
 - a. iFollow
 - b. End of Season TV Notification Period
8. Restricted Views
9. Community
10. EFL Official Charity Partner – Mind
11. AOB



Meeting Minutes

Jacqui Forster – Tribute

The meeting commenced with a tribute to Jacqui Forster whose funeral was taking place at the same time as the meeting and apologies from absent Supporters Direct (SD) members who were paying their respects.

Led by Deborah Dilworth from SD, tribute was paid to Jacqui who was described as having a “huge impact on the Supporters Trust movement” and affectionately termed as being a “terminator of the supporter movement with an incredibly kind heart”.

1 - MATTERS ARISING - STEWARDING REVIEW

JN opened proceedings by stating that the cross football stewarding review was now up and running with both the Premier League and English Football League involved in the initiative and a lead for the review appointed.

JN confirmed that the working party committed that the Football Supporters Federation (FSF) would be consulted as part of this process, but the way in which that will happen is still to be determined.

The rationale for the review includes the aim to develop a long term strategic approach to steward training that provides a solution for the professional game from the Premier League down to League Two.

At the same time, any review and guidelines needs to be balanced so that the game can sufficiently train stewards without adding excessive cost and barriers to recruitment for clubs.

KM confirmed that the FSF in conjunction with Kick it Out (KIO) would be producing a joint paper with requests for the stewarding review to consider and incorporate.

Discussions touched upon club bans to which DC stated that approaches to club bans had to be consistent when homophobic and transphobic abuse had been reported. SH agreed and stated that the issue of club bans was also under consideration currently. Ultimately he stated that while that while consistency issues had always been prevalent, club bans were generally a system he supported.

Matters Arising – Rail Travel

JN confirmed that while further discussions had taken place between the football authorities and the Rail Delivery Group regarding a football fans rail travel pass / product, the issue had become more complex.



An initial EFL led initiative to develop a fan pass with the Rail Delivery Group (RDG) that would protect fans from rail fare price hikes when games are moved or postponed was being modelled by the RDG, but wider considerations have now brought into the debate by other parties which have held up the process.

A separate process had been initiated by the Department for Transport relating to disorder and anti-social behaviour on the rail network by football supporters. As a result the two issues had become linked in a way that was not necessarily conducive to making progress on the proposed rail pass, but this was outside the control of the EFL.

The EFL still hopes to be able to deliver a rail product for fans but will be reliant on buy in from the rail authorities. The FSF confirmed that it had been invited to attend a meeting with the British Transport Police forum in Brighton in the coming weeks where it is anticipated the issue may be discussed.

KM confirmed that discussions around rail and fans with authorities had begun to interest the police who are mindful of issues on trains.

Matters Arising – Presentations for Circulation

DD asked if presentations given from the previous meeting could be shared regarding iFollow and Supporter Engagement Meetings as they had not yet been circulated as agreed.

SH confirmed that this would be done and apologised for the omission that they had not yet been shared.

2 – STANDING & STAND UP FOR CHOICE

MR provided a presentation on the background to the Stand up for Choice campaign (Appendix I), and what activity had taken place to date. The presentation referenced ongoing active dialogue with supporter groups, Government and other stakeholders, and the commitment to providing Clubs and fans with a choice of being seated or standing in safe, licensed areas of grounds. MR then confirmed the forthcoming planned activity and dates of the full release of the survey results.

Following the presentation RT asked why Stand up for Choice did not include the Premier League and asked about the Premier League's general position on standing.

SH replied outlining in the first instance that there lots of differing views from a range of stakeholders in and outside of the game when it comes to the standing debate.

The Premier League have a wide range of issues to consider but as their grounds are at around 97% occupancy, their clubs may all have different views about re-introducing standing areas in the top flight. The EFL will wait to see where the Premier League positions itself in the debate in the coming months.



Given that EFL clubs' occupancy is around 61% as a league it is in our clubs' interest to be able to offer more choice about how fans watch EFL matches. Those who wish to stand should be able to and likewise, those who want to sit should be able to. The EFL can only speak for EFL clubs, therefore the Stand up for Choice survey was an exclusive EFL and FSF campaign by design.

KM stated that he felt that the reporting of the Premier League's survey on standing was misrepresented by the national media which largely focused on the headline that only 5% of fans would choose to stand in the Premier League all match, every match, whereas 60% of those respondents said they actually felt that fans should be given the choice.

KM confirmed that the FSF's brief on standing at football matches would go to all MPs w/c 28 May. The key message being that standing accommodation at grounds should be a devolved decision at a local level, not one that sits with national government.

SH agreed that generic one size fits all solutions are never the answer for clubs and that is the case with standing. The best people to make decisions are the people who are responsible and accountable for security at football grounds.

TH stated that AFC Wimbledon's new Plough Lane stadium would ideally have standing accommodation and hoped that there was sufficient movement in legislation to allow this. General questions around funding grants for future standing accommodation were raised, to which SH stated that he was happy to have further discussions on that matter with relevant people.

JN acknowledged that there were a number of clubs developing new grounds who would similarly like to have standing accommodation built in, but were currently in limbo.

SH reiterated that the standing is safe or else 21 grounds in the EFL would not be licensed for standing. The debate can no longer be seen as a debate about safety, but is about giving fans a choice. The EFL believes fans should be able to determine what they offer fans in terms of a match experience.

SH then shared the then embargoed results (now public) of the Stand up for Choice survey in confidence (Appendix II).

RT remarked that 33,000 seemed like a very strong sample size. SH confirmed that it was one of the largest responses to a survey the EFL had ever received and far exceeds any minimum for a sample size to be considered robust. The EFL will use the findings to address and consider with clubs at its Summer Conference.

RE stated that while the numbers were impressive, the survey in his opinion was not a "random" survey, but skewed toward football fans that would by and large be in favour of standing. SH confirmed that ultimately the survey is of EFL fans, who are the people who watch and attend the games, this a fair reflection of the people who attend games and their opinion.



RE asked what data there currently was on accidents caused by standing in seated areas. SH replied that the SGSA held no data of this kind, which made it difficult to understand how it could determine that standing in seated areas is wholly unsafe. SH also questioned the validity of saying it is permissibly safe to stand at times of extreme excitement as SGSA guidance currently does, but not for any period of time beyond that.

KM agreed that if DCMS are going to contend that managed standing in seated areas is dangerous (eg. Cardiff), then that should be evidenced by proof.

TH asked who currently remains opposed to standing at EFL matches. JN responded that at present it would seem that DCMS are the only stakeholder that is currently opposed to revisiting the subject.

3 – SUPPORTER ENGAGEMENT

DR outlined that the FSF and SD have committed to another joint survey on feedback reviewing supporter engagement meetings.

The feedback from groups is that by and large meetings between clubs and fan groups are happening but quality control of meetings is the main issue.

DD asked when any analysis of this season's supporter engagement sessions at clubs could be expected. AP responded to confirm the EFL would have this by the end of June and would share relevant feedback with SD and the FSF in due course.

DD asked if there was any way that the EFL, FSF and SD could work collaboratively to share data and survey activity together. AP confirmed that while the EFL wanted to work closely with fan groups, ultimately its responsibility is to uphold, and ensure clubs are working to meet, the regulation.

DD stated that it would be beneficial to have everybody working to share best practice and ensure that what is happening at engagement groups is meaningful.

SH agreed that duplication of work is not desired and some joint way of working could be found. AP offered to meet and continue to discuss how the EFL monitoring process could support any quality control review from the FSF and SD.

GB added that in his experience, Hull City were effectively meeting their regulatory requirements by holding meetings but not taking heed or following up on any actions or suggestions stemming from engagement meeting. JN pointed out the EFL can only provide the framework for the engagement to take place but can't force the club to act on it.

RE suggested that the EFL could potentially put requirements in place about reporting back at follow up meetings on actions as an opportunity to improve the supporter engagement experience yet further. JN indicated that he felt this went beyond what had been agreed at the Expert Working Group and



subsequently with clubs. RE suggested that it should be considered as a way to secure continuous improvement of the supporter engagement process.

DD stated that there should be rules on execution of engagement and asked whether there were sanctions for non-compliance of engagement regulations. SH and JN confirmed that any club in breach of supporter engagement regulations could be charged and sanctioned.

4 – OWNERS CONDUCT REVIEW

SH acknowledged that the issue was one of the EFL's biggest challenges that came to the fore with Leyton Orient's situation last year. The EFL Executive is currently conducting a review of what more could be done if anything, to safeguard clubs from poor conduct by owners.

To start SH reaffirmed that the EFL is a member organisation which has to consult, govern and ultimately be answerable to its membership. When first discussed with clubs there were around four issues that dominated the debate around ownership.

As an outcome, there will be areas of discussion at the Summer Conference, namely a new Club Charter, enhanced financial controls of clubs and the ability for the EFL to take actions against individuals rather than just clubs. The EFL will need to report back to the group in due course but reiterated that this was the furthest that the EFL had been in to this issue to date so there will be plenty to consider.

RE stated that the title of the Owners and Directors Test highlighted the key problem in that it's ultimately "owners regulating owners". RE stated that the EFL should be consulting fans and other stakeholders. RE went on to question whether the EFL views itself as a competition organiser or a regulator and whether it would prefer the FA as an independent organiser to conduct the Owners and Directors Test for its clubs.

SH responded by saying that the EFL is a member owned competition organiser that provides governance in accordance with its rules and regulations. Its role is to protect the integrity of its competitions and that is why it undertakes governance and has a whole framework of regulations. And while it is not a governing body, that doesn't mean the EFL does not do governance.

RE questioned why there is not one independent senior regulator for all competitions in England. SH replied that the only body that could feasibly fulfil that role is the FA, but in reality the situation was more complicated with the roles of the FA, EFL and Premier League dovetailing to provide the domestic governance structure.

SH stated that the EFL will report back on anything that is relevant for fans on the owners review following our summer conference. RE said that supporters would see the whole package as "relevant" to them.



5 – WEATHER POSTPONEMENTS

AP provided a short presentation outlining the agreed procedures around match postponements and abandonments. The presentation covered postponements related to the 'Fitness and Condition of the Playing Surface' and procedures if the pitch condition is in doubt, along with the agreed protocol for the 'Fitness and Condition of the Stadium Footprint and Surrounding Areas'. These areas were discussed in context of the Derby v Cardiff City fixture postponement that occurred in March 2018.

SH stated that the decision is always with the referee on pitch discussions. In the Derby v Cardiff example the biggest issue is managing the stadium footprint. In that case there was a perfect storm of factors that contributed to making the game unplayable.

SH stated that fundamentally no club would want a postponement as it costs a lot of money. He went on to ask the group:

- a) what is the level of understanding amongst fans about what it takes to put on a game and
- b) what do the EFL need to be doing to raise awareness of considerations that go into putting on a game

RT stated that the majority of fans have minimal understanding of what it takes to put on a game safely.

DR stated that the FSF would be happy to help promote what goes in to hosting a game and promoting awareness of the matchday event timelines. For example a start of season guide could be a possibility to promote "how a match is put on". Additionally the EFL stated they would look into producing a video on these guidelines too to make the information more digestible alongside a guidance document.

KM stated that there is a credibility gap at present as some fans feel that clubs could use a postponement as an opportunity to get a game called off to gain an on the pitch advantage.

TH remarked that early postponements are helpful for travelling fans, especially for long distance fixtures, and that AFC Wimbledon had benefitted from that earlier this season.

With the discussions on postponements concluded, SH confirmed his requirements to attend further meetings that afternoon, provided his apologies, and left the room.

6 – AGM PROPOSALS

JN provided a brief presentation on the proposed changes to regulation being discussed as part of the upcoming EFL AGM, providing some relevant context to each.



SLOs – JN confirmed that the wording about employment of SLO's would be changed to reflect that applications from volunteers would be welcomed.

TH questioned whether central programme ads would still have to be included in programmes even if the compulsory regulation was abolished. JN confirmed they would.

7A - iFOLLOW

MR provided a presentation on iFollow, detailing the changes to the product from the 2018/19 season, including the live streaming of certain League matches from 2018/19 season in the UK & Ireland. The presentation also provided some detail on the enhanced production values of all games – both domestic and international - to include such additions as home and away commentary, graphics, and in some cases, multi-camera production. MR confirmed that final details would be made available by mid-June.

In response to GB's query, MR clarified that clubs not in the iFollow initiative did still have rights to broadcast their matches overseas.

TH stated that the main complaint about iFollow from the outset was regarding complaint resolution. MR asked TH to forward any unresolved issues on as that would be raised with the supplier.

DR questioned whether the EFL was wary about any impact on away attendances with the intro of widespread streaming. JN acknowledged that everybody was watching with caution and the proof would be in the pudding but ultimately it was hoped that this would give more fans the opportunity to watch matches providing a revenue boost to clubs and that the increased profile it gave EFL, clubs and competitions would lead to more widespread popularity of the League in general.

7B – BROADCAST SELECTIONS

MR provided a short presentation on the current process involved in broadcast selections. MR confirmed that the EFL will continue to uphold the minimum five week commitment, and that the change made in 2017/18 in regards to giving three weeks' notice for the penultimate weekend will be maintained. The EFL will notify Clubs and the public of announcement dates on or before, 21 June 2018.

DR questioned what the breakdown of the broadcast contract for League One and League Two clubs is. MR confirmed that Sky was contracted to show 20 League One and Two games per season.

8 – RESTRICTED VIEWS

DR asked for clarity on what constitutes a restricted view so that there is consistency across clubs. Confirmed the Premier League were looking into it.



JN stated that the EFL would enquire with the Premier League and see if it is a process the pair can run in conjunction.

The EFL will report back at the next meeting.

9 – COMMUNITY

A brief discussion around some of the headline EFL Trust and Club Community Trusts' work throughout the season took place, with MR confirming that an update of this activity will be sent to supporter group representatives following the meeting.

10 – CHARITY PARTNER

NR outlined that the EFL's new Official Charity Partner would be Mind from the start of the 2018/19 season and provided an overview of the aims and objectives of the partnership.



APPENDIX I



Supporter
Engagement Meetin



APPENDIX II

01.06.2018

BIGGEST EVER FAN RESPONSE SHOWS OVERWHELMING SUPPORT FOR CHOICE IN STANDING DEBATE

94% of football fans believe they should have the option to choose the type of matchday experience they want - whether that be seated or standing in safe, licensed areas of grounds according to a recent, record-breaking EFL survey.

The survey, which received more than 33,000 responses in less than two weeks, is part of the recently launched 'Stand up for Choice' campaign, which is being run in conjunction with the Football Supporters' Federation and is specifically designed to fully understand the views of fans of EFL Clubs.

The consensus amongst supporters could not be clearer, with the overwhelming majority believing that Clubs should be able to provide fans with a choice between standing and being seated at EFL matches.

The survey, which has received the highest number of responses for any EFL led campaign, also revealed:

- Over two-thirds (69%) of responders indicated that they would prefer to stand, compared to less than a quarter (22%) who claimed a preference for seating;
- Standing has also shown to be more popular with younger fans with the highest supporting demographic coming in the 18-34 age groups;
- There is a high demand for the choice to stand across all three divisions, with 94% of Championship supporters and 92% of League One and League Two supporters all in support;
- Nearly half (47%) of all fans said they would attend more games if licensed standing was available;
- There is no material difference between the responses compiled from supporters of the 21 EFL Clubs who currently offer standing accommodation compared to supporters of Clubs who don't.

The purpose of the campaign is to provide key data and insight on the views of supporters nationwide, which is in addition to a petition that is set to be debated in Westminster Hall on Monday June 25. The key findings from the EFL survey will be used to inform that debate.



EFL Chief Executive, Shaun Harvey, said: “We stated at the outset that we wanted this survey to provide Government with a clear indication of the strength of feeling amongst those supporters who attend matches every season. The response could not be clearer.

“Football supporters clearly want the option to stand at football matches and we see absolutely no reason why they should not be allowed the choice to have the matchday experience they want.

“With nearly half of all fans claiming they would attend more games if licensed standing was available, this campaign demonstrates how standing could play a significant role in boosting attendances, particularly with the under 35s demographic, a group of supporters that have a significant number of other options to consider when determining whether they will or will not attend a match. With stadium occupancy at 61% in 2017/18, a change in legislation would provide an opportunity to increase revenue from gate receipts.”

The EFL was given a mandate to pursue a change in legislation on behalf of its Clubs in 2014 and is keen to develop increased dialogue with supporter groups, safety authorities and senior Government Ministers to achieve a review of existing legislation so that Clubs have a choice on this matter and fans get the matchday experience they want.

Harvey continued: “The safety of all fans attending football matches is the number one priority and we very much understand why the issue of standing at football matches is sensitive and the concerns that the Government may have in terms of changing the legislation.

“However, it is the view of the EFL that the current legislation is not appropriate, with some League One and League Two Clubs allowed standing areas in their stadiums but others not. When you consider the position in the Championship it is equally unfair as Clubs are required after three years to only offer seated accommodation.

“The standard of football on the pitch can have no bearing on whether standing accommodation should be available. If standing is permitted at a football match in League One, then why not a game from the division above if they are designed to the same standards?

“Alongside the FSF, the EFL is committed to working with Government in order to provide Clubs with a choice on this matter, so that fans can choose the matchday experience they want - whether that be seated or standing in safe, licensed areas of grounds.”



Peter Daykin, standing co-ordinator at the Football Supporters' Federation, said: "We'd like to thank every supporter who took the time to take part in the 'Stand up for Choice' survey, the largest of its kind ever conducted on the issue of standing at football in England and Wales.

"Once again, football supporters have made it abundantly clear that they want the choice between sitting and standing at a match - genuine choice that is provided at horse racing, rugby, music festivals and beyond. We urge the Government to listen to those supporters who, along with clubs and safety experts, want to see reform of the currently unworkable all-seater legislation."