



EFL Supporter Engagement Meeting

Date: 14 November 2018 – 1pm

Venue: Cabinet III, Hyatt Regency London, the Churchill

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: Malcolm Clarke (Chair) & Michael Brunskill (Director of Communications)

SD: Ashley Brown (Chief Executive) & Deborah Dilworth (Network Manager)

Championship: Geoff Bielby (Hull City); Billy Grant (Brentford) and Roger Tifford (Reading).

League One: Antony Wilkinson (Blackpool), Roger Ellis (Coventry City) and Martin O'Hara (Doncaster Rovers).

League Two: Kristine Green (Grimsby Town), & Dave Tomlinson (Crewe Alexandra).

AGENDA

1. Matters Arising
2. FSF/SD merger update
3. Governance
 - a. EFL Owners' Conduct Review
 - b. FSF & SD Proposals to the FA
4. Checkatrade Trophy – Every Game Matters
5. Domestic streaming
6. EFL Fan Engagement
 - a. EFL 5-year strategy
 - b. Supporters Survey
 - c. Fan Forums 2019
7. Supporter Engagement review 2017/18
8. Supporter Liaison Officers 2018/19
9. Stadium Matters update
 - a. Standing
 - b. Alcohol
10. AOB



Minutes

1. Matters Arising

Rail Fares

John Nagle (JN) outlined that initial discussions with the Rail Delivery Group on rail fares and help for fans had been positive, but that progress had now slowed as a result of the involvement of the issue of supporter disorder in discussions by the Department for Transport and the British Transport Police.

The matter has become more complex with rail fares now one of a range of issues being looked but the EFL has agreed to act as an observer to the steering committee leading this work. The next meeting is in January.

Michael Brunskill (MB) confirmed that the FSF were pulling in the same direction on the group and will maintain involvement.

Weather Postponements

Mark Rowan (MR) confirmed that the EFL would be providing a short informational video about the postponement process amongst matchday procedures and would be releasing those to coincide with the winter period.

Other issues to be covered would include matters such as security at stadia. Information would also be provided on EFL website and social channels.

Restricted Views

JN confirmed that there weren't many complaints about restricted views to the EFL and that the situation was similar in the Premier League. This view was reflected by the EFL customer service team and there is a belief that any complaints that do come in can be resolved by existing complaints mechanisms. E.g. Club, EFL, Supporter Engagement meetings and the IFO if required.

Dave Tomlinson (DT) raised the example of Crewe Alexandra fans being moved to an area of the ground with a poor view.

ACTION – Shaun Harvey (SH) confirmed that the EFL would contact Lincoln City directly.

Meeting Presentations & Terms of Reference

Deborah Dilworth (DD) requested that any presentations given previously be shared with the group. EFL confirmed any presentations it had agreed to share would be shared.

ACTION – EFL to share relevant presentations

Discussion as to whether new Terms of Reference were needed for the Supporter Engagement meeting

ACTION – Agreed that FSF and SD would consider internally and submit a joint request to the EFL in writing once the issues relating to the merger of the two organisations had been resolved.



2. FSF & SD Merger Update

Ashley Brown (AB) provided an update on the merger process stating an interim board had been formed in the summer for short term decisions and that a new board would be formed for longer term strategic issues in the coming weeks. An EGM is scheduled for 22 November.

A new organisational name of the 'Unified Football Supporters Organisation' would be used and a series of appointments and election to councils would follow.

Confirmed that administration work is going on behind the scenes, interviews were to be held for a new Chief Executive and that all staff would be transferred with no losses. Offices to be maintained in London and Sunderland.

AB confirmed that both organisations still had funding KPIs to meet through this funding cycle which runs until the end of next year.

3. Governance

JN summarized the outcome of the EFL's Owners Conduct Review and outlined the new Club charter and the new Board policy on taking action against individuals in instances where

- There has been one very serious single act or persistent serious acts.
- An individual's conduct is clearly damaging to the standing and reputation of the wider profession and game of football.

JN outlined that the Board was currently assessing the circumstances in which it might use the new policy and in what way. The EFL would like to hear the views of the supporter organisations and asked the FSF and SD to take the issue away, give it some consideration and come back to the EFL with their views.

ACTION – FSF & SD to submit views at least one month prior to the next meeting for consideration by EFL and further discussion

Roger Titford (RT) asked for an example as to what sanctions would be available. SH confirmed that there is a sliding scale of sanctions available in line with the regulations.

Roger Ellis (RE) believes there is still a principle issue of conflict of interest as long as owners are policing themselves then nothing will change. Discussion continued on Club charters and thresholds of intervention ending with RE requested a sub-meeting to discuss the issue in advance.

Malcolm Clarke (MC) stated that any charter shouldn't just cover Clubs but also recognise a commitment to communities and fans.

Discussion centered on how the charter aligned with the FA's conduct rules with questions on why the FA didn't ever charge owners or directors for bringing the game into disrepute through ownership.

SH stated that FA and League rules and regulations dovetail and are designed not to duplicate. DD asked whether conduct toward supporters could be included as a misconduct charge. SH replied that



this was all about thresholds again so need to consider who / when / how and request that ideas are fed back by the FSF/SD members.

4. FSF and SD Proposals to FA

MC stated that while lots of progress has been made on Club ownership since the turn of the century that is of no consolation to Clubs with ownership disputes. Added that reputational issues are damaging for game's reputation and significant for the EFL.

MC provided background to the proposals stating that they emanated from the FSF Annual Conference. The FA have since offered supporters groups the opportunity to present to the FA Board about Clubs in crisis at the end of November.

RE presented an overview of the proposals opening with the view that the EFL doesn't have the authority or the regulations to achieve change. Also of the belief that parliamentary legislation won't be forthcoming to regulate football.

Proposals to the FA are therefore a pathway to achieving change by taking owners out of the question. RE states that owners suitability and conduct should be a responsibility of The FA. Football Clubs are the largest community organisations in the country and should be preserved as community assets.

Proposal 1 – Code of Practice on Stewardship of Clubs

This would require Clubs to look after Clubs as you would a heritage site or community asset and maintain a positive relationship with fans.

Any major changes to the Club and protected characteristics would need to go through the same process as a listed asset.

Proposal 2 – Owners and Directors should undertake different eligibility tests

Linking back to capability question, owners would need to submit plans to regulator and update annually or periodically. A judgement would then be made on submissions with Directors to pass separate tests.

The ask will be for The FA to back the principles of the proposals and work together with the fan organisations.

SH responded by stating that financial stability of Clubs shouldn't be a focus of the proposals as changes to EFL regulations have largely proved to be a stabilising factor in Club finances.

MC asked if more details discussions could follow The FA presentation.

ACTION – FSF to organise follow up meeting with JN and MR after the presentation has been done.

5. Checktrade Trophy 2018/19

MR presented a summary overview of the new look Checktrade Trophy which has incorporated a number of regulation and format changes made with input from Clubs. The presentation also outlined the EFL's fan engagement plan 'Every Game Matters' that is aimed at encouraging attendance in the competition for the 2018/19 season.



KG felt that the Every Game Matters campaign has divided opinion amongst Grimsby Town fans with some feeling their Club loyalty is being questioned.

MR responded to say that the aim is not to question loyalty but highlight that all games are worthy, important and worth attending as a spectator.

RT questioned how the penalty shoot-out for drawn games has been received by Clubs. SH responded to say that there had been no significant comments in favour or feedback either way.

Martin O'Hara (MOH) outlined his concerns about Doncaster Rovers fans' boycott of the competition, highlighting his discomfort about discouraging any fan to not attend their Club's match. SH agreed that the EFL shared this view.

DT questioned whether any thought had been given to kick-off times and price structures as they seemed inconsistent around the country. SH stated that historically the 7pm kick-off time had been designed to try and get families to games but its use remained a choice for Clubs. The EFL had looked at a central pricing structure but ultimately couldn't get Clubs to agree on it.

SH canvassed the group on the current status of the revamped competition and requested whether the FSF would consider lending its support and backing to it instead of a neutral policy.

MC responded to say that the new organisation's Board could look at the stance toward the competition. AB added that the promotional campaign was a positive step and that new changes had improved the competition but it would still be a challenge for Portsmouth fans to support.

6. Domestic Streaming

SH presented key matters relating to domestic streaming of EFL matches. This covered details relating to Article 48, recent streaming over international weekends and the review of streaming to date which will look at the impact of domestic streaming across all fixtures. SH also outlined 'Project Genie' as a potential alternative business model for Clubs from 2019/20.

RT questioned whether data was held on the Sky red button audience figures to which SH replied they did not.

MOH questioned why the EFL chose to break the 3pm blackout if it believes in the principle of Article 48. SH replied that as per the presentation that the two matchdays were used as opportunities to gather data as part of a review and insight to inform 'Project Genie', through which the EFL was re-examining its financial distribution model.

EFL fully supportive of Article 48 and now has data that it can feed back into Clubs to make a decision on how they want to proceed with domestic streaming strategy. Clubs will now be making a decision based on stats and insight regarding whether to stream domestically on bank holidays, international breaks and other fixtures.

MOH asked if the EFL were concerned about the reported 8% drop in Championship attendances in Quarter 1. SH replied to say that the Championship's concern was not so much about iFollow streaming but more the impact of Sky's red button access. The red button was however one of the main reasons that Sky has paid 35% more for the domestic broadcast rights.



Billy Grant (BG) from Brentford asked if streaming is the future, then how will the EFL, Sky and Clubs work together so that all can benefit.

SH responded to say that this was an issue that the EFL started to get ahead of the curve but that they knew it would be a balancing act to juggle interest of all partners.

RT stated that increase of midweek games being broadcast will impact away attendances and coach travel take-up. SH stated that the reason midweek distances can be further is so that more local fixtures are played on weekends when more fans can attend.

BG asked about the pricing of matches on iFollow. SH stated that once Clubs are given all the data that the EFL has collected in the next two weeks, this will be one issue debated by Clubs amongst many others.

7. EFL Strategy

MR outlined that the EFL had begun to develop a new five-year strategy that will be implemented from the 2019/20 season onwards covering all facets of the business which will include engagement with various stakeholders including Clubs, partners, fans, media and more.

As part of this the EFL will launch its first largescale survey since 2010.

RE asked how the fan survey will be circulated. MR confirmed this would be done via EFL channels, Club channels and a variety of other ways. MB stated that the FSF would happily promote it also.

8. Fan Forums

MR outlined EFL plans for one single fan forum to take place in a central location in 2018/19, replacing regional fan forums that had been held over the last two years.

MR stated that the biggest challenge to the success of these previously had been the lack of attendance from fans.

RE stated that supporters trusts could help spread the word but would suggest not holding it at St George's Park which is difficult to access. MR responded by saying the EFL were looking at many options but one may be to shuttle people from the station to SGP, if that was the chosen venue.

A range of other issues were covered including giving sufficient notice, covering travel costs and whether going to direct to fans or getting fans via Clubs was more fruitful.

9. Supporter Engagement

Andy Pomfret (AP) presented the EFL's analysis of data on supporter engagement meetings held by Clubs in the 2017/18 season. There were a total of 306 individual meetings held with an average of 4 meetings per Club. Information included topics discussed, who represented Clubs in meetings, how fans were recruited to attend and other information of note.

DD responded by saying that SD had collated their own analysis of supporter engagement meetings from a fan perspective. This data looked at the content of the meetings and whether outcomes were being acted upon. SD reported that their data showed 85% supporter groups were meeting twice a year



with 82% happy they were meeting relevant people but that 25% of fans felt Clubs were not providing suitable levels of info at meetings.

RT stated that a lot of the meetings were focused more on “pies and pints” as opposed to strategic matters.

GB stated that despite EFL attempts at mediation, Hull City Supporters Trust remain frustrated at their exclusion from meetings. Also considered how the EFL enforce its guidelines to avoid “structured monologue” from Clubs.

DD questioned whether some of the regulation wording be looked at potentially amended. JN stated that this was not agreed as part of the Expert Working Group.

Anthony Wilkinson (AW) of Blackpool asked why the EFL have not made any comment on Blackpool’s ownership issues. MR responded to say that wasn’t accurate and that the EFL met with Blackpool Supporters Trust earlier this year.

AB asked what should we do going forward about discrepancies between Club reports and fan reports that are shown through the two analyses. MR suggested that SD send the EFL a proposal paper.

ACTION – SD will send through a proposal for action on discrepancies.

ACTION – EFL to provide data from the meetings for the last two years.

MC asked whether Clubs can be mandated to supply a review of outcomes following each supporter meeting and its action points.

10. SLOs

AP provided an update on key SLO stats for 2018/19 and SLO seminars that were held at Blackburn Rovers and Reading in October covering a range of issues. AP also outlined an SLO regulation change providing clarity around wording which had been raised at a previous meeting. Clarified that a raft of promotional activity is being planned by the EFL to heighten the profile of SLOs amongst fans of EFL Clubs.

MB stated that it’s good that the EFL are looking at this and FSF is happy to assist looking at ways in which we can jointly improve the role.

11. Stadium Matters Update

Standing

JN gave an update on standing stating that since the Stand up for Choice campaign ran in the summer we had made significant progress culminating in an Analysis of Evidence in to Standing at Football being commissioned by DCMS.

JN to be interviewed by CFE research for a stakeholder interview in November. Initial analysis to be concluded and submitted by the end of 2018.

Alcohol in Stadia



The EFL had paused any active campaigning while focusing on the standing issue but intends to resume following recent reports in the media about the matter.

MoH stated that Doncaster Rovers ST would like to be involved in any campaign as very much aligned.

12. AOB

DT asked if any considerations had been given to the Qatar World Cup and whether League One and Two should continue playing through the winter while the World Cup was on. DT's believes that it will impact attendances and would be unfair to those who will be in Qatar watching England and missing Club games.

KG contended that on the flip side a 6 week mid-season pause would impact Club cashflow and income streams.

JN stated that there were a range of views and issues of which the EFL had given initial consideration. This item should be put on a future agenda for further discussion.