

**MINUTES OF THE 18TH MEETING BETWEEN THE SUPPORTERS' COMMITTEE AND LIVERPOOL FOOTBALL CLUB ON 28 NOVEMBER 2015 AT ANFIELD.**

**Representing the LFC Supporters' Committee:** Bella Ainsworth (BA), Supporters Under 25; Paul Amann (PA), LGBT Supporters; Anna Burgess (AB), Away Fans; Ian Byrne (IB), Family Match Goers; Tony Fitzgerald (AF), Season Ticket Holders and Hospitality; Lee Foley (LF), Official Supporters' Clubs; Karen Gill (KG), Honorary President; Roy Heaney (RH) Non Season Ticket Holders & Official Members; Yunus Lunat (YL), BAME Supporters; Matthew Selby (MS), International Fans; Graham Smith (GS), Supporters in the Merseyside Area. **Representing Liverpool Football Club:** Ian Ayre (IA), Chief Executive; Alan Allison-Hughes (AAA), Head of Customer Experience; Susan Black (SB) Communications Director; Phil Dutton (PD), Head of Ticketing and Hospitality; Diane Kirby (DK), Resource and Planning Manager; Brendan McGlinchey (BM), Head of Operations; Scott Richardson (SR), Head of CRM. **Facilitator:** William Montgomery (WM).

**1. Welcome and introductions:**

- 1.1. WM opened the meeting and welcomed Diane Kirby [DK] who was standing in for Yonit Levy-Sharabi, the Club's Customer Experience Manager, who was away on Club business in Sunderland. He also welcomed Brendan McGlinchey [BM] who, as Head of Operations, is responsible for the efficient operation of the Stadium, Melwood and The Academy.
- 1.2. GS apologised for Tara Fisher (TF), the representative for Female Supporters, Katie Price (KP), the representative for Disabled Fans and Roy Heaney [RH], the representative for Non Season Ticket Holders & Official Members, who could not attend due to illness.
- 1.3. GS continued by saying that the purpose of the meeting was to discuss both young and local supporters which is the theme the Committee is trying to address for the current season. Not all the pre-submitted questions relate to that theme of the season, but those listed first do relate to it.
- 1.4. GS said that the Committee had been asked to make a couple of preliminary remarks about the relationship between the Club and its supporters. He continued by saying the current picture was a depressing one from the supporters' perspective. There are a number of issues which are "bubbling around" which may be addressed through some of the questions. The Committee feels it beholden on them to ensure the Club recognises that this disconnect is not getting better; in fact it's getting worse.
- 1.5. GS said that the disengagement and disconnection is around a number of issues, namely: accessibility, support in the stadium, access for local supporters and ticket pricing. He said the Committee wanted to get across a positive message to the Club that the Committee and the other supporters' groups are actually trying to create a positive engagement with the Club and it's important that this is on record.
- 1.6. GS concluded by saying that while it might appear a depressing situation, there is a lot of feeling in these groups that engagement is crucial, and it's only going to be to the benefit of the Club if this engagement is improved.
- 1.7. IA offered apologies on behalf of Andrew Parkinson (AP), Operations Director and Yonit Levy-Sharabi (YLS), Customer Experience Manager.

- 1.8. IA continued by saying the Club shares the view that this is a positive group and that the Club wants to work together, listen, and provided the best outcomes, and that this is why the Committee was created in the first place. He said that everyone at the football club believes we should have regular and positive engagement with the fans. He said that the Club has more dialogue with its fans today than it has ever had before, particularly through this forum. He said that we are never going to agree on everything, but what is important is the way in which we engage and communicate. He said the Club is aware of the negative comments that circulate in the press and social media, and we are not always sure that these are a fair reflection on reality. It is down to us all to get the communication right.

## **2. Matters arising from the previous meeting:**

- 2.1. WM referred to the past minutes and outstanding actions, advising that a total of 27 actions are currently being progressed, and invited the Committee to seek an update on any actions that they feel appropriate.
- 2.2. GS responded by saying that the Committee had reviewed the Club's list of outstanding actions and feel that it could be improved to make it easier to navigate. The logging and reporting of actions will be reviewed prior to the next meeting, and a new system put in place shortly thereafter.
- 2.3. YL referred to paragraph 3.29 of the previous minutes and the final sentence that states that YL would forward outstanding issues and complaints to AP for consideration. The action should have read that the Club would revert to YL with the list of outstanding issues and complaints in advance of a review meeting. This will be recorded as a new action within these minutes, and corrected accordingly.

## **3. Q&A covering young and local fans:**

- 3.1. **Q1 from GS:** Can the Committee and other supporters' groups have a clarification of what Ian Ayre meant when he suggested in the U.S recently that we wished to 'discriminate' in favour of local supporters?
- 3.2. IA responded by saying that he was interviewed in New York at a conference hosted by John Green and, in response to question, he had said that the supporters, as represented by the Committee, all felt that we needed to work together to address the issue of atmosphere, young people attending, etc. He said that he also made the point that it was felt that a big part of that comes from local support and what we wished to do was find solutions that would help us address the issue. He used the phrase that was picked up by the media, that it's a form of positive discrimination. In the audience there were probably 700+ people, mostly U.S. supporters, and the response achieved a spontaneous applause, indicating that it was positively received.
- 3.3. **Q2 from BA:** Are there any plans for having an adult and child section in the new Main Stand?
- 3.4. PD responded by saying "not specifically." The Club is not entirely convinced that the Main Stand is the best place to situate an adult/child section. He said that the Club has an adult/child section in the Upper Anfield Road Stand and this works well. The Club has been working on a pricing structure for the past two years, and particularly so in the last eight or nine months. The Club will be making positive changes with regard to adult/child and junior tickets in general, but he doesn't agree that the Club should be restricting children to

- one section of the ground as it's not conducive to what the Club is trying to achieve.
- 3.5. **Q3 from BA:** What are the initiatives that the Club is looking at to bring younger fans in to fill empty seats after kick off?
  - 3.6. PD responded by saying that approximately 1,000 tickets holders fail to turn up at every game. This is barely noticeable owing to the wide distribution of the empty seats. The Club is looking to determine the feasibility of inviting a number of pre-registered fans to turn up on the day and be escorted into the ground to one of the vacant seats sometime after kick-off. He said that there are a number of logistics to consider before a plan can be implemented, such as what to do if the fan actually turns up after their seat has been occupied by one of the "lucky" fans, who would not be charged for their seat. The plan will be to conduct a trial with staff this season, before making it available to local fans at the start of the following season.
  - 3.7. IA continued by saying that although approximately 1,000 seats remain vacant at the start of each game, any trial will be initially restricted to approximately 150 local fans. This will ensure that any problems can be ironed out first before a full rollout once the trial has proved successful. This will be supported by an effective communications strategy informing fans of the plan and for them to be aware that, if they arrive late, their seat may have already been given away to a local fan. The Club would also request that if the registered ticket holder is not planning to attend they should advise the Club in advance so their ticket can be re-distributed to a local fan who could then take up a seat prior to kick-off.
  - 3.8. **Q4 by BA:** With tickets for matches being unrealistic for many local supporters, are there any initiatives for the new development around the stadium that could get these young people involved in match days in some other ways?
  - 3.9. SB responded by saying that the Club is involved in four main initiatives at the current time. Following the meeting #17 in August, the Club has created a working group to identify further ideas.
  - 3.10. SB continued, firstly, the LFC Foundation works with the commercial partners, and these partners donate complimentary tickets for children. Secondly, the Club has a Sweepers Zone initiative involving approximately 20 children picking up litter at each fixture in return for the opportunity to stay and watch the game. This initiative is currently under review, and instead of requiring the children to pick up litter, they would be invited to carryout other light tasks, similar to the task of deploying the centre circle flag at Uefa games. The idea will be to get the children more involved on the pitch. Thirdly, the Club involves children at Uefa games, including the deployment of the centre circle flag. Finally, the Club does have an initiative for block booking 30 tickets for each game, the availability of which is publicised on the website. However, this initiative is not restricted to local children, but schools and youth groups from outside the area. Last season, the Club welcomed 1,200+ children into the stadium through these four schemes, of which only the fourth is a paid for initiative. In addition, through the good work of the LFC foundation every week over 600 children from the local Anfield/Breckfield area have the opportunity to participate in sport and football coaching.
  - 3.11. SB said she would welcome the opportunity to share ideas with members of the Committee, and it was decided that BA and IB would be best placed to

- represent the Committee at any such meetings, due to their status as the local and youth representatives The Club would convene internally first, and then engage with BA and IB subsequently.
- 3.12. SB highlighted a previously submitted idea put forward by IB were one of the lounges would be opened up during away fixtures to allow children from local schools to watch the game, and tour the stadium. Refreshments would be provided and there would be no cost for those attending. The Club is looking to pilot this idea with two matches early next year, and the Club will advise IB of which games have been selected for the pilot.
  - 3.13. In response to a suggestion by YL about ensuring that all communities are represented, SB said there are 25 schools that are situated in the local area. She said that she would be attending a meeting of head teachers in the local area next month, to ensure that the Club meets its social responsibility agenda. The LFC foundation is already involved in the majority of those schools, but the Club is keen to determine what more can be done.
  - 3.14. In response to GS stating that the local area is determined by the location of the stadium but that it does not necessarily represent all the communities to which BAME represent, SB said that the Club has taken the postcodes of L4 and L6 as local, but the LFC Foundation work extends across the Merseyside. It was agreed that YL would feed in any ideas to BA and IB for review with the Club's 'ideas' committee.
  - 3.15. **Q5 from GS:** The Committee is aware of the major problems with supporters on the Kop and problems with the flag displays. Will senior management at the Club meet as a matter of urgency with those supporters to try and resolve any problems?
  - 3.16. IA responded by saying that the Club does not have any issue with meeting with the supporters concerned. The Club offered Monday or Tuesday for the meeting and suggested BM and Vaughan Pollard [VP] as the key officials for stadium matters, only to be asked for others at short notice for more senior officials to attend. IA outlined that BM and VP manage the stadium and suggested that AP attend any subsequent meeting and GS agreed that this would be a suitable alternative.
  - 3.17. **Q6 from AF:** Could the Club update Main Stand redevelopment effect on season ticket holders (STHs) seat locations for next season?
  - 3.18. PD responded by saying that the next two or three months is going to be the most difficult from a logistics perspective. The Club needs to communicate with 6,500+ STHs and provide them an opportunity to decide where they would like to sit. Importantly, the Club is completely re-profiling the lower tier, meaning the seats will not exist in their current format. The objective will be to keep the relocation process as simple as possible, by giving people an opportunity, perhaps using an online 3D viewer, to choose a seat in or around where they are seated currently. The good news is that people will have options, and the Club hopes to accommodate first preferences. The communication plan will be initiated before the end of the calendar year and will continue through the early part of the New Year.
  - 3.19. **Q7 from AF:** What is the future strategy for selling packages? The reason behind this question is that on the website there is a 20% discount on the next three games. So what is the impact and effect on individual match packages as opposed to those who have currently taken an annual membership scheme?

- 3.20. PD said that the current hospitality budget is very aspirational compared to previous years. The Club is determining the best methods to sell hospitality packages in preparation for the opening of the new Main Stand. The process deployed is what's known as 'variable pricing' where you look at a price point for the whole stadium for a particular game. So, over the course of a season some games would be priced differently to others. The process is still being refined and more work needs to be done prior to next season.
- 3.21. Q8 from AF:** During the last members' ticket sale there was an issue with the online system when selecting all 10 games. By the time you reached game 10 the system would lock you out as you'd been on the system too long. This resulted in your earlier selections being removed. The only option was to revert to the 'old way' and selecting match by match. What can be done about this?
- 3.22. PD said that during the member bulk sales some 80,000 tickets are sold within six hours or less. The Club recognises that there are issues that need to be resolved but the complaints are not substantial with regard to the process, they relate more to the availability of tickets. The Club received approximately 14 messages from fans advising of the technical issue raised in the question. In total, the Club received just 96 emails regarding the members bulk sale that resulted in 80,000 tickets being offered to 100,000 eligible members and sold to 13,000 individuals in less than six hours. The Club will investigate the matter further and implement a solution.
- 3.23. **Q9 from YL and PA:** YL said that during the past twelve months he'd received a number of diversity complaints that he'd passed onto the Club. He said that he was concerned with the lack of engagement in terms of feedback. Prior to the last meeting, he said that he'd submitted to the Club a list of the complaints that had been passed to him, yet explanations surrounding the outcome and process to some of the issues remain outstanding three months on.
- 3.24. IA responded by saying that an easy fix would be to keep YL copied in on all correspondence relating to BAME matters, whether it relates to the alleged perpetrator or alleged victim. It's important that the Club deals with matter promptly, but, importantly, communicates what action has been taken or resolution achieved.
- 3.25. PA said that he'd been involved in the Supporters' Committee for a number of years now and had previously raised the issues around World Aids Day [WAD], and offered his support. It's good that the Club has already made a contribution but with WAD in the coming week, but not good that he'd not been invited to contribute to what the Club had planned.
- 3.26. In response to a question from SB on what other things the Club should be doing, PA said that Sophia House is a registered charity providing HIV/AIDS services to people across Merseyside. The backing the Club could give by means of communications for that charity would be enormous. SB agreed to look at this as part of the Club's social agenda.
- 3.27. SB said that the Club is currently reviewing its social agenda and agreed to include both YL and PA, in the social responsibility review that is being conducted by a specialist third party. The Club has identified seven strands, and out of the review will come a recommendation that will result in a roadmap of activity for the coming season.

- 3.28. PA said that in the absence of TF, it was agreed that he should raise the issue of White Ribbon Day, which is to ensure men take more responsibility for reducing the level of violence against women. SB advised that this should be fed in as part of the social responsibility agenda review.
- 3.29. **Q10 from MS:** International fans are an important part of the Club and there are more international fans than local fans. Could the membership be bigger and better? How can we make the international fans feel important?
- 3.30. SR responded by saying that a piece of work is underway around redefining the membership; what it is and how it works. The aim is to devise a scheme that is of value to the fans that enables them to engage with the Club, and with each other. The Club has developed a strategy for membership, and the detail behind it.
- 3.31. SR continued, the Club has recently conducted a survey, which resulted in 18,000 responses from across the World. The Club has conducted online panels with 56 discussions with fans, and a series of focus groups locally, nationally and internationally, some conducted in the local language too. The output for this activity is that the Club has a great deal of data which will be used to define the new membership propositions for all fan groups, both those who attend games and those who don't. Some changes will be implemented in time for the next season.
- 3.32. SR said that once the proposals have been presented to the Executive, he would be pleased to engage with MS, perhaps over Skype, to update him on progress and elicit his view on the proposed improvements.
- 3.33. **Q11 from MS:** What plans are in place for the new membership scheme?
- 3.34. MS agreed that this question had been covered in the previous question, but any additional information resulting from the surveys could be covered in the same Skype call.
- 3.35. AB asked if the Club had been surveying the fans who have 19 or less, credits on their fan card and what they would like to see from the membership? This group feels quite ostracised because they must have a membership to purchase tickets in the bulk sales. It has been raised before that the Committee could be involved in some of the preliminary discussions, and this hasn't happened.
- 3.36. SR said that the survey of 18,000 people wouldn't dictate the decisions that the Club may, or may not make regarding membership. When it comes to making changes to members who purchase tickets, the Club will only be looking at their responses before any changes are made to the scheme. Any changes on membership and ticket sales going forward, the Club will involve the Committee. SR said that when it comes to producing surveys, the Club engages with numerous third party agencies, and it is not always possible to involve the Committee in the construction of surveys. What the Club will ensure is the customer service brief on each research project is shared with the Committee so they can also handle any queries they receive from their constituents.
- 3.37. **Q12 from KG:** Following our Female Supporter's representative meeting retail staff to discuss the ladies clothing range could a survey be done of supporters about the clothing range?

- 3.38. SR said that he had spoken to the retail team about this and they were keen to ensure that those questions are received and considered. Some they will be able to answer, and some may form part of a subsequent survey early in the New Year. It was agreed that TF would be the Club's point of contact on the Committee. SR advised that the Club had a Research Manager starting shortly that would enhance the Club's research capability.
- 3.39. **Q13 from LF:** Can the Club update the Committee about the recruitment of the person to assist with challenging and managing the touting problem [as indicated at the previous meeting] and give some general guidance about the strategy to deal with this over the next 18 months?
- 3.40. PD responded by saying that the person with responsibility for tackling the issue joined the Club six months ago. He advised the Club bans 200-300 people each year. It's a lengthy process, and involves a good deal of investigative work. The Club avoids communicating how people are caught to avoid fuelling the very problem the Club is trying to resolve. The problem spans all fan groups and is not restricted to just one constituency. For example, the Club estimates that up to 30% of the people who attend away games are not the fans who actually purchased the ticket from the Club.
- 3.41. LF advised of a system employed in other Clubs where photo recognition is employed to determine if the fan who purchased the ticket is the one actually sat in the seat on match-day and asked if something similar could be employed at Anfield.
- 3.42. IA proposed a question as to what is the rule? Can you pass your ticket on at all, if so under what circumstance? LF suggested that developing the Friends and Family initiative so you can pass your ticket on legitimately without punishment might be the way to go. The Club are considering employing a 'season ticket amnesty' in 2016/17 to help address the touting issue.
- 3.43. **Q14 from AB:** Can the Club implement a proper process for dealing with supporter behaviour? A published process with transparency and an opportunity for supporters affected to be heard before any action taken.
- 3.44. BM said that some of the issues of behaviour relate to ground regulations. As a Club it is very rare for banning orders to be applied, and only one has been issued this calendar year. Every incident is treated on an individual basis, it is never black and white, and it's almost always a confidential matter, that can't readily be shared. The Club employs a very thorough process of investigating such incidents, some of which have to be taken promptly, particularly if games follow in short succession.
- 3.45. GS stated that it would be wise for the Club to have a published process so any alleged offender would be clear about what process he/she would be subjected to in the event of being charged with a misdemeanour. He stated that he had produced such a process for the Club's consideration, which he asked the Club to review. It was also suggested that the Club determine if there is any 'good practices' deployed at other clubs that the Club could adopt.
- 3.46. **Q15 from AB:** Can an initiative be considered to setting aside a percentage of tickets to allow access to new tickets for kids and young adults? A small pool that can be applied for on a game-by-game basis.
- 3.47. PD said that the allocation of away tickets needs a review. The system works for the 2,000 regulars who travel to away games, but not for the many who

would like the opportunity. A review will be conducted, and any recommendations shared with the Committee in due course.

- 3.48. **Q16 from IB:** Can the Club actively support food bank initiatives? EST and SOS – North Liverpool Food Bank and ABCC. Ideally, we would like a donation from the Club in cash or in kind.
- 3.49. SB said that Liverpool FC was the first to introduce a food bank over 10 years ago at Bridge Chapel Centre where the LFC Foundation is based. One of the initiatives that the Club implemented this year, as part of its employee engagement process, is a partnership with Trussell Trust. The Club has a Food Bank Friday every month which encourages staff, and players, to donate food. The intention is to trial it with staff, before rolling it out to fans on a match day.
- 3.50. IB said that between the 13-18 December ABCC will be organising a dinner for 500+ pensioners, and they are struggling with funding issues. Could the Club help support the initiative by encouraging staff to lend a hand? It was agreed that SB and IB would meet to discuss this, and other initiatives.

#### **4. Any other business:**

- 4.1. AB suggested that the outstanding actions, currently 27, are published at the foot of each set of minutes. It was agreed that this matter would be taken into the review of the recording and reporting of action points, as per item 2.2 of these minutes and action 5.1 below.

#### **5. Key actions from this meeting:**

- 5.1. Committee and Club to review the process for logging and reporting of actions, and identify and implement a new system prior to the next meeting. [2.2]
- 5.2. Club to forward a list of outstanding BAME issues and complaints to YL in advance of a review meeting between him and the Club. [2.3]
- 5.3. BA and IB to represent the Committee by feeding in ideas to the Club, and to meet with the Club regarding initiatives, current and future, to get local children into the stadium on match days. [3.11]
- 5.4. Club to notify IB of the games selected for the pilot giving local children access to the hospitality lounges to watch the team play at away fixtures. [3.12]
- 5.5. YL to feed in any ideas about getting BAME children into the stadium to BA and IB for review with the Club's 'ideas' committee. [3.14]
- 5.6. AP to attend any subsequent meeting with fans from the Kop to resolve the on-going 'urgent' matters, including, but not restricted to, the flag displays. [3.16]
- 5.7. Club to investigate the matter of fans being having difficulty purchasing tickets for all 10 games during bulk sale periods. [3.22]
- 5.8. Club to copy YL on all correspondence relating to BAME matters. [3.24]
- 5.9. Club to consider offering support to Sophia House and other HIV/AIDS initiatives as part of its social agenda. [3.26]



- 5.10. Club to include YL and PA in the in the social responsibility review that is being conducted by a specialist third party. [3.27]
- 5.11. Club to review what it does, if anything, to support White Ribbon Day [3.28]
- 5.12. Club to engage with MS, perhaps over Skype, to update him on progress and elicit his view on the proposed improvements to the membership scheme, particularly from an international perspective. [3.22]
- 5.13. Club to consider publishing a process so any alleged offender would be clear about what process he/she would be subjected to in the event of being charged with a misdemeanour. [3.46]
- 5.14. Club to review how PD the 2,000 away tickets are allocated and share any recommendations with the Committee. [3.48]
- 5.15. It was agreed that SB and IB would meet to discuss the staff volunteering programme, and other social responsibility initiatives. [3.51]