

**MINUTES OF THE 15<sup>TH</sup> MEETING BETWEEN THE SUPPORTERS' COMMITTEE AND LIVERPOOL FOOTBALL CLUB ON 21 MARCH 2015 AT ANFIELD.**

**Representing the LFC Supporters' Committee:** Paul Amann (PA), LGBT Supporters; Sam Armstrong (SA), Female Fans; Anna Burgess (AB), Away Fans; Karen Gill (KG), Honorary President; Roy Heaney (RH), Non Season Ticket Holders & Official Members; Bob Humphries (BH), Chair and Season Ticket Holders & Hospitality Fans; Yunus Lunat, BAME Fans; Damien Moore (DM), International Fans (West); Katie Price (KP), Disabled Fans; Matthew Selby (MS), International Fans (East); Graham Smith (GS), Fans in the Merseyside Area. **Representing Liverpool Football Club:** Ian Ayre (IA), Chief Executive; Susan Black (SB), Communications Director; Gill Derbyshire (GD), Head of Customer Service; Yonit Levy-Sharabi (YLS), Customer Experience Manager; Andrew Parkinson (AP), Operations Director. **Facilitator:** William Montgomery (WM).

**1. Welcome and introductions:**

- 1.1. WM welcomed all present including Graham Smith who is the newly appointed representative for Fans in the Merseyside Area. He continued by stating that there are currently 25 outstanding actions that are in various stages of progress towards completion. 10 of these relate to ticketing and will now be addressed as part of the recently incorporated Ticketing Working Group. The remaining 10 are spread across membership, stadium, match day experience and sub committee matters.
- 1.2. BH apologised for Nausherwan Effandi who despite being appointed as the representative for Official Supporters' Clubs has been unable to obtain the necessary travel visas. In addition, Laura Woodcock has resigned from the Committee due to personal reasons. James Benson, a founding member of the Committee, has also stepped down, again, due to personal reasons. BH expressed his thanks to each and every one for their support and encouragement. Finally, he too welcomed Graham Smith (GS) as the new representative for fans in the Merseyside Area.
- 1.3. BH continued by welcoming the progress that is being made with the development of the new Main Stand and the construction that is now so clearly underway.
- 1.4. BH continued by saying that with the recent changes in membership of the Committee, it was opportune to conduct a review of the existing structure and identify any changes to the constituencies that the members represent. To this end, the Committee has created a small review group to consider the current constituencies and identify any changes that might be needed. It is expected that this review will be concluded before the final meeting of the season in May when a report will be presented.
- 1.5. BH asked if the Club could give an update on the game against Besiktas in Istanbul, which resulted in transport delays getting the fans to and from the stadium. The Committee was contacted by a good number of fans expressing their dissatisfaction with the situation. Whilst the Committee accepts that this would not have been of the Club's own making, an update on what happened and how it can be prevented in the future would be welcomed.
- 1.6. IA opened with offering apologies for Phil Dutton as Head of Ticketing and Hospitality and Billy Hogan as Chief Commercial Officer.
- 1.7. IA continued by saying that the Club is very pleased with the progress that is being made with the redevelopment of the new Main Stand. The project is on

time, and on budget.

- 1.8. IA commented on the recent announcement of the financial results for the end of last season saying that it is pleasing that the Club is beginning to turn the corner with regard to its financial position, following some five years of strong financial and operational management. If the Club wants to complete at the highest levels then it needs to have control of its cost base, particularly in Europe on account of the strict financial fair play rules.
- 1.9. AP commented on the Besiktas incident by stating that there had been a number of supporters who had been left stranded in the city centre as a result of the transport promised by Besiktas failing to arrive. This meant that a few fans did not make the beginning of the game. The club had considered all the transport options for supporters ahead of the game and had a commitment from Besiktas that coaches would be made available. This was confirmed on the morning of the game. Once the situation became apparent the club and Merseyside Police immediately raised this with Besiktas and made them aware. Whilst regrettably they couldn't address the situation ahead of the game we pressed on them to make transport available after the game. This was provided. The club gave received a few complaints directly on this incident each of which have been responded to. Whilst this was not a failing on the clubs part we are nonetheless sorry for those that were let down .we will be looking at any learnings that can be taken in order to avoid this situation occurring in the future.
- 1.10. PA said that the progress with the redevelopment of the new Main Stand is on account of the new owners and the investments that they have made, but no apology was offered as to why they are not at the meeting.
- 1.11. IA said that it was agreed that we wouldn't include the owners in the round of apologies but that they would make best effort to attend meetings whenever possible. The owners are committed to attend meetings, but can only do so if their other commitments allow. As the meeting dates are now set for a season ahead and therefore there is little flexibility, it can make it difficult for them to attend in person. That said, in the past when they are in Liverpool the Club has arranged for face to face time with some of the Committee members and the ownership. Where their diary permits, the Club will continue to do this.
- 1.12. BH said notwithstanding the above, it has been suggested that if the owners are in the City in between these meetings, then there would be opportunities for members of the Committee to meet with them and highlight some of the major issues concerning the Committee and the fans it represents. It doesn't help when the Committee read that John Henry (JH) was in the Cavern Club and that Tom Werner (TW) had given an interview to the Liverpool Echo.
- 1.13. BH continued by saying that JH had taken the time to respond to a letter from a member of an unofficial supporters' group, when he hadn't taken the time to respond to contact requests from his own official supporters' committee. It's about perception and it would help if the Committee were kept informed of when the owners are in the City with a view to arranging an impromptu meeting.
- 1.14. IA responded by saying it's not the Club's position to advise the owner to whom he can and cannot write. Also, the Club fails to understand why the Committee would need to contact JH direct.
- 1.15. BH responded by saying that both JH and TW provided him with their personal

email addresses. On three separate occasions, he had tried to make contact with the owners, and not once had he received a response. The emails were of an informal nature, simply reminding them that a meeting was about to take place and that it would be welcomed if either or both could attend. It is disappointing that no response has ever been received.

- 1.16. SB clarified that the interview TW gave to the Liverpool Echo was not while he was in the city, but three days afterwards, and was conducted over the telephone.
- 1.17. RH said that fans often ask the Committee if they have met, or are planning to meet, with the owners. When the answer is negative, questions of credibility of the Committee are usually raised. This is not an ideal situation and one that the Committee would like to resolve.

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

- 2.1. BH said that he didn't want to take up too much time from today's meeting going over outstanding actions that are being progressed and the Club is doing a reasonably good job in keeping the Committee informed of progress made.
- 2.2. BH said one action from the previous meeting concerned the sending of a letter to all other Clubs highlighting the advantage of reciprocal arrangements for travelling fans. Has the Club sent the letter and have there been any responses?
- 2.3. IA said that PD has written to all other Premier League clubs regarding reciprocal arrangements, but was unsure of what responses, if any, had been received. However, the Club will report back to the Committee in advance of the May meeting with an update on progress made.
- 2.4. BH asked about whether a decision had been made about giving season ticket holders who turn 65 during the season their discount at the start of the season rather than having to wait to the following season to benefit from the age-related reduction.
- 2.5. IA said that this is something the Club will deal with and that it is not necessary for the matter to be taken forward to the Ticketing Working Group.
- 2.6. BH said that the Club intended a representative from Human Resources to attend a meeting to provide an update on what the Club was doing in order to reach ethnic minority candidates for internal positions vacant at the Club.
- 2.7. YL said that he was now in receipt of emails from the Club highlighting any internal positions available within the Club so that he can help raise the profile of the opportunities across his network and other BAME networks.

## **3. Discussion on facilities and services:**

- 3.1. BH started the discussion by stating that fans have raised issues surrounding facilities and services since the Committee was incorporated. However, other priorities have necessitated that this subject has not been tabled before now. There are some that the Club does really well, and some less so, and many more in between. The Committee has identified 14 questions covering the area of facilities and services.

**3.2. Q1 from KP: Are all staff in ticket office / customer services trained in equality and diversity, and does this extend to new staff when they join the Club?**

3.3. GD responded by confirming that all staff who work in customer experience, whether taking calls over the telephone or dealing with fans at the ticketing kiosk, have equality and diversity training. There is also a requirement throughout the Club that all employees must sign that they have read the policy statement on equality and diversity. The customer experience team is given training to ensure consistency, and this applies to casual staff also. In addition, during the recent International Festival of Business, the Club put 50 of its staff through a half-day external training course that was designed to help Liverpool, as a city, become more equality and diversity aware. The Club is also looking at incorporating sign language to better assist the hard of hearing, as well as deaf fans. This is at its early stages, and the Club remains committed to drive equality and diversity

**3.4. Q2 from KP: Are there plans to incorporate subtitles within LFCTV for supporters who are hard of hearing, deaf and non-English speaking?**

3.5. AP responded by saying that the Club has looked at the practicality and cost of incorporating this within LFCTV. Regarding subtitles, the Club found that it would take a couple of days to retrospectively apply subtitles to any live broadcasts. The costs would be just too prohibitive, and the news would be less relevant once the subtitles had been applied.

3.6. IA said that the Club could investigate the feasibility of working with countries to which broadcasts are distributed for them to send them back once they have been dubbed into a foreign language. The Club will invite Matthew Baxter, as Head of Digital, to determine if there is any 'reverse' opportunity to re-run broadcasts once they have dubbed, or had subtitles applied, by foreign broadcasters.

**3.7. Q3 from KP: What progress is being made regarding the online booking facility for disabled fans, and less able-bodied fans?**

3.8. YLS responded by saying that the Club will launch a user-experience project so fans can share their experiences with the online booking process. The Club recognises that it must improve the online booking process, and involvement from the fans affected can only assist in identifying and implementing the changes necessary. The Club has made some changes already, and will be making contact with a select number of able-bodied as well as disabled fans for them to participate in usability trial.

3.9. AB said that she recognises that the Club is at the mercy of other clubs in what information they release regarding how many disabled tickets will be made available for forthcoming games. For an able-bodied fan to get a last minute ticket is a relatively simple process to get to a game, but it's a complicated process for less able-bodied fans as they need to organize their transport and any assistance required. It would be helpful to get all Clubs to commit up front as to how many disabled tickets will be provided.

3.10. IA said that this was a good point and one that he will raise at the Premier League Shareholders' Meeting this coming week and determine what forum within the Premier League this could be addressed. He continued by saying that he sits on the European Clubs Association and Uefa Competition Board and the same question can be raised at European level also.

**3.11. Q4 from RH: The Committee is receiving a large number of complaints from fans who are being forced to wait a long time for their call to be answered. The situation is not helped by the use of a 08 number which is not free from mobile devices. When is the Club going to move to the 0151 number that has been promised?**

- 3.12. GD responded by saying that the Club has made a number of changes to the telephone system in recent months that fans should be benefiting from. The Club has stripped back much of the complexity in order to speed up the process once fans are connected. The demand for telephone contact is declining with more and more fans opting to purchase tickets online. Consequently, it is not the Club's intention to move to a 0151 number, but it would seek to improve the telephone system further.
- 3.13. RH stated that he, on behalf of the fans, was disappointed that the Club is not prepared to move to an 0151 number, and asked for a further explanation as to why.
- 3.14. GD said that the Club had investigated the matter thoroughly, particularly the telephone contact preferences from supporters. The Club is looking to streamline the amount of telephone numbers in use, but the amount of investment needed to move to a 0151 number is too prohibitive for the reducing number of fans opting to contact the Club by telephone.
- 3.15. AB said why can't the Club make changes so that fans get an engaged tone, rather than waiting on a connected line. Also the Club says that fans choose to buy tickets online, but there's a feeling that people aren't actually choosing this method. For many, it's the only method. AB also asked the Club to look into keying in a membership number so only qualifying members will be connected.
- 3.16. GD responded by saying Club is keen to improve the way it communicates with fans over expected call volumes so fans can manage their expectations over call waiting times. Although fewer fans are using the telephone, it's important to manage the expectations of those who do.
- 3.17. BH mentioned the problems with the web sales page and how this is probably pushing people on to the phones. There has been various issues with the site that have been reported to the club. AP asked for a list of the problems experienced.

**3.18. Q5 from YL: Can have an update on the catering options, such as halal, and costs, for the different groups of supporters.**

- 3.19. AP responded by saying that the Club does offer halal options in some of the hospitality lounges, where the demand is there. If the demand is there on the GA concourses, then the Club will ensure that such options are made available. The club will look to determine if there is a level of demand that would make providing a Halal option a feasible proposition.
- 3.20. AP continued, in terms of price, the Club benchmarks its prices against all other Clubs so it remains fair and competitive. The Club is looking at a loyalty scheme through the provision of Epos terminals at the various food outlets, which will be installed during the summer.
- 3.21. AP continued, to combat some of the problems of the queues at halftime and

other busy periods, the Club is about to launch a mobile app that will allow fans to place orders in advance. This will be launched in conjunction with a rollout of an improved Wi-Fi signal across the ground.

**3.22. Q6 from SA: What controls are in place to ensure that the items purchased in the shops justify the prices being charged. What changes are being made to improve stock levels, both size and variety?**

3.23. IA said that in order for the Club to answer the questions, it would need more detail. The Warrior product is not one that the Club can directly control, although they are subject to quality control checks on receipt. The LFC apparel items are entirely controlled by the Club and are therefore subject to direct checks across the supply chain. In terms of sizes, Lee Dwerryhouse, as head of retail, could give a better indication of demand. A demand of, say, 100 pieces, does not work in this retail environment as it's too cost prohibitive. That said, the Club is happy to share the data regarding the type of demand it gets for larger sizes. If the Committee could provide specific examples of problems beforehand, this will help move the discussion on.

**3.24. Q7 from PA: Parking arrangements was raised at the fan forum and fans are concerned with the changes that will be effected on completion of the new Main Stand. There is scant information on the website about parking arrangements, both now and after the redevelopment. What plans are in place?**

3.25. AP said that if fans book parking in advance, it could be achieved for just £5 at St Domingo. If paid for on the day, it's £8. These prices are far cheaper than any non-Club controlled parking services. Current parking information is included on the "Visiting Anfield Guide". As part of the requirement with the redevelopment of the Main Stand, the Club is required to provide an adequate number of disabled parking spaces as well. In absolute terms, there will be additional parking, for both non-disabled and disabled supporters.

3.26. IA said that as part of the plans for the redevelopment of the Main Stand, and the wider Anfield area, plans were considered to make use of the Bootle Branch Line that would have seen it change from a goods line to a passenger line. It became cost prohibitive, so the plans were shelved.

**3.27. Q8 from GS: What plans are in place to improve the Lower Centenary Stand in light of the developments going on elsewhere across the stadium?**

3.28. AP said that prior to the current owners, there had been a lack of investment across the Stadium for a long time. The Club is conscious that not only does it need to improve the Main Stand, but all the other parts of the Stadium as well. There has already been a good level of investment in the Centenary Stand over recent years, and during the summer the Reds and #7 Lounges will be renovated also. There are also plans in place to improve the concourses across the Centenary Stand over the next few years. With changes needed to the toilet facilities and catering, the Club has a great deal to do over the coming years. But, the plans are in place and improvements will be made.

**3.29. Q9 from SA: The Committee had received some negative comments about the Americanization of the announcements, in particular the announcement of the team sheet. In addition, the quality of the sound**

***is poor in several parts of the ground. Can the Club improve the tannoy system.***

- 3.30. AP said that the entire tannoy system will be replaced this summer which should solve the problems of announcements being inaudible in various parts of the ground. However, fans should note that some announcements are directed at specific parts of the ground and are not meant to be heard by everyone. With regard to the Americanization of the team announcements, the Club will take this away and will address it appropriately. Committee was asked to provide further information around this issue.
- 3.31. Q10 from BH: When Mighty Red is used appropriately, in schools, the Fan Park etc., it is well received by fans. However, the fans don't think it is fitting to have a character, such as Mighty Red, pitch-side. What is the Club's view?**
- 3.32. AP said that the use of Mighty Red is subtle, and the feedback received by the Club is very positive, both from the mascots themselves and the fans who interact with the character. Committee was asked to provide further information around this issue. The Club will take the matter away and consider the ongoing role and use of Mighty Red.
- 3.33. Q11 by DM: The fans will be getting first-class washroom facilities in the Main Stand, but from an operational perspective, in the Kop and Anfield Road, the water temperature is inconsistent and there are no proper drying facilities. What is the Club's plans for these areas?**
- 3.34. AP said the Club would need to get more feedback on any operational failings before it can take appropriate action. The Club has regular cleaning checks in place, before, during, and after each game. The Club also scores favourably following mystery shopping visits. The club will look into the inconsistency of water temperatures in the toilet facilities reported in the Kop.
- 3.35. PA advised the Club of a new Dyson product that is a combined wash and hand-dryer that is ideally suited for areas that have a large influx of people over very short time frames. The Club agreed to investigate.
- 3.36. Q12 by AB: What is the Club doing to assist fans getting to and from away games aside from, not out of, the £200 000 pot. For example, Chelsea laid on a train for £10 return for League Cup semi-final at Anfield, and Tottenham uses the Premier League contribution for transport, and not to subsidise tickets.**
- 3.37. AP said that the Club is open to ideas as to how it can improve the experience for travelling away fans, and has the £200,000 fund from the Premier League to help. Contrary to popular believe, the fund does not have to be used exclusively to subsidise tickets, but can be used in away individual clubs deem appropriate to support travelling fans.
- 3.38. IA suggested that it would be useful if the Committee, in conjunction with the wider fan base, could provide some suggestions on how the Club could best use the £200,000 fund for the benefit of its own travelling fans.
- 3.39. Q13 from MS: Can the Club apply some flexibility and encourage the fans, particularly in the Kop, to continue to keep the flags flying after kick-off so the atmosphere is maintained throughout the game?**

- 3.40. AP said that the only issue around flags flying during the game is around some fans not being able to see the action. BH suggested that the entire Kop is made restricted view and suggested that the ticket includes a warning that 'this ticket comes with restricted views'. AP confirmed that Stewards do ask fans to lower their flags, but this is only to facilitate a better view experience for those who've come to watch the match.

**3.41. Q14 from KG: Would it be possible for the Club to arrange some sort of organised facility whereby players can sign memorabilia or provide autographs as Melwood, rather than the current, potentially dangerous, practice of some supporters trying to get autographs as the players are attempting to drive away from training?**

- 3.42. IA responded by saying that the facilities today don't allow for such a process to take place, although the Club is looking at making changes to some of the facilities at Melwood. This is not something that the Club can provide quickly, but it is prepared to take it away and consider what options are available.

**4. Any other business:**

- 4.1. YL asked, in light of the negative comment on Twitter about two fans performing prayers during a game, what is the Club doing about that?
- 4.2. SB said that the Club only received the Police report in the past few days, but would now look at what action would be appropriate to take.
- 4.3. YL asked, what facilities will be made available in the new Main Stand for those fans who would like to engage in prayers or quiet contemplation?
- 4.4. AP responded by saying that an area will be created where fans can pray or contemplate and that this will be available to fans of all faiths. The Club will look at what can be done in the short-term while the Main Stand is being developed.
- 4.5. BH said that following a review of the Committee there will be new faces in the coming season, and would now look to the Club to highlight the good work the Committee does on behalf of the wider-fan base so that the strongest candidates come forward for the soon to be announced positions.
- 4.6. IA said that prior to the recruitment process commencing in the close season, it would be good if the Club could consider a PR campaign highlighting the work of the Committee.

**5. Date of the next meeting:**

- 5.1. The next meeting will be on the weekend of the 16/17 May 2015 when the Club will be at home to Crystal Palace.

**6. Key actions from this meeting:**

- 6.1. Club to encourage the owners to attend the next Committee Meeting. [1.11]
- 6.2. Club will report back to the Committee in advance of the May meeting with an update on the letter concerning reciprocal arrangements with other clubs. [2.3]
- 6.3. Club to put in place a policy whereby a fan turning 65 during the season with



- have their age related discount applied at the start of the season. [2.5]
- 6.4. Club to determine if there is any 'reverse' opportunity to re-run broadcasts once they have dubbed, or had subtitles applied, by foreign broadcasters. [3.6]
  - 6.5. Club to determine what forum within the Premier League would address the need for advance notification of seats for disabled fans. [3.10]
  - 6.6. Club will take consider feasibility of making halal options available in the catering areas. [3.19]
  - 6.7. Committee to provide specific examples of problems relating to size and quality of merchandise sold in retail outlets. [3.32]
  - 6.8. Club to share the data regarding the type of demand it gets for larger sizes for kit and general apparel items. [3.32]
  - 6.9. Club to review the Americanization of the team announcements, and committee to provide further information in support. [3.30]
  - 6.10. Club to consider the ongoing role and use of Mighty Red, and committee to provide further information in support. [3.32]
  - 6.11. Club to investigate further the provision of toilet facilities in the Kop for both disabled and non-disabled fans. [3.34]
  - 6.12. Club to consider feasibility of the new Dyson product that is a combined wash and hand-dryer. [3.35]
  - 6.13. Committee to provide some ideas on how the Club could best use the £200,000 fund provide for travelling fans. [3.38]
  - 6.14. Club to consider applying some flexibility with regard to the waving of flags on the Kop during the game. [3.40]
  - 6.15. Club to look at providing a facility whereby fans can easily obtain autographs at Melwood. [3.42]
  - 6.16. The Club to consider response options following press reaction to negative Twitter comment. [4.2]
  - 6.17. The Club will look at short-term arrangement for multi-faith prayer facility. [4.4]
  - 6.18. Club to consider a PR campaign highlighting the work of the Committee. [4.6]