

**Structured Dialogue  
Monday 11th December  
11:00-13:30**

## **Attendees**

### **Premier League**

Richard Masters, Chief Executive  
Anna Deignan, Director of Fans & Development  
Tommy Guthrie, Head of Fan Engagement  
Levi Harris, Senior Fan Engagement Manager  
Harry Simmons, Senior Communications Manager

### **Football Supporters' Association**

Kevin Miles, Chief Executive  
Thomas Concannon, Premier League Network Manager  
Harpreet Robertson, Premier League Network Manager

### **Supporters' Representatives**

Mark Meehan, Chelsea (online)  
Dave Kelly, Everton  
Sarah Keig, Fulham  
Joe Blott, Liverpool  
Adam Stoker, Newcastle United  
Neil Dady, Wolverhampton Wanderers

## **Notes**

### **Independent Regulator**

Kevin Miles (KM) welcomed the announcement of the introduction of an Independent Regulator in the King's Speech, and also welcomed the announcement that Martin Henderson, formerly of the Sports Ground Safety Authority had been appointed as interim Chief Operating Officer of the regulator. KM informed the room that he expects the government to table legislation in January, with a second reading towards the end of January. Richard Masters (RM) also welcomed Martin's appointment, and stated the Premier League were preparing for the legislative process and the ultimate introduction of the regulator.

KM stated FSA work with the DCMS (Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport) has been very positive. KM did ask the Premier League if it would still plan to run its own Owners and Directors Test (OADT) alongside a similar OADT that

the regulator would undertake. RM confirmed this would be the case, with a view to tests running concurrently enabling the Premier League to conduct its own due diligence.

## **Everton FC**

KM asked RM to explain, as much as he could, the situation regarding Everton's 10-point deduction, as well as any appeal process that is currently underway.

RM highlighted that due to the fact Everton had launched an appeal, he was not able to discuss any detail on the matter other than what had been made public. RM explained that the decision taken to deduct Everton 10 points was made by an independent commission. A new three-person panel will be set up for the appeal process, and an appeal decision would be final.

Dave Kelly (DK) highlighted that this issue isn't just an Everton FC issue, it impacts all fans given the lack of understanding of the processes in place to determine such punishments. DK believed that a breach of rules should be clear as to what the sanction is, and further transparency is needed for the sake of supporters in all cases relating to their club.

DK also stated that Everton fans had protested against the directors of the club during the time Everton were found to have broken Financial Fair Play rules, and that the punishment being given now not only affects the supporters, but doesn't punish those who were guilty of putting Everton in that position, as they undergo a change of ownership at the club.

Neil Dady (ND) highlighted the issue of sporting integrity, with Everton facing the points deduction during the season, with a further change to the points total possible if successful with an appeal. RM explained that it was right for sanctions to take effect as soon as the case had been concluded, even if during the season.

KM believed that many fans across the country believe the punishment introduced in this case was unfair, given the severity of punishment handed to clubs who attempted to join the breakaway European Super League was more financial related than point deductions. RM did say that rules have been put in place to prevent something like a breakaway league happening again in the future, with more severe financial penalties and points deductions if found guilty.

Harpreet Robertson (HR) questioned the time it has taken to deal with any allegations against Manchester City and Chelsea, whereas it seemed the Everton

process was very quick. RM was unable to comment on any other cases involving Premier League clubs.

## **Broadcasting**

Thomas Concannon (TC) asked the Premier League to update us on their views regarding the new broadcasting deal that was announced on Monday 4th December, which will see Premier League clubs share a £6.7bn deal signed with broadcasters for domestic TV rights.

RM said the Premier League were very happy with the new broadcasting deal, saying it shows improved growth for the Premier League against its competitors in Europe. RM also confirmed that the FA Cup Quarter-Final will be played on its own weekend, with Premier League fixtures from that weekend due to be played in an extra midweek round of fixtures. The last round of fixtures will also see all games played live on TV broadcast for the first time.

TC raised a document that was submitted to the Premier League ahead of the Invitation to Tender (ITT) process by The FSA, highlighting several concerns supporters had about a new broadcasting deal. The Premier League confirmed that this document was received ahead of the Tender process, and its recommendations considered by Clubs. TC shared that The FSA had concerns over the communication around certain TV slots, with a wish to see less unsociable slots that have a huge impact on match-going fans. The PL confirmed that the new deal features the same packages as the current TV deal and that any further fixture displacement will predominantly be as a result of expanded UEFA competitions. The broadcast of the entire final round of fixtures and the addition of six matches within the package format completing the planned-for additions.

It was highlighted about the upcoming fixture between Wolves and Chelsea which has been selected for TV broadcasting on Christmas Eve and the lack of supporter consultation for what was an extremely controversial decision. Mark Meehan (MM) thanked supporter organisations from all 20 clubs for releasing a statement against the decision to play a game on Christmas Eve, stating that fans should have been consulted before the announcement, rather than after. It was agreed by FSA representatives and the Premier League that the meeting that took place following the announcement between Wolves and Chelsea fan representatives and the Premier League was useful in understanding the concerns fans had.

TC also expressed supporter concerns regarding double and late notice fixture changes, with supporters severely impacted by late changes to fixture schedules that seem set in stone following the announcement of the broadcasted games for those game weeks. With a new lucrative domestic TV deal now in place, The FSA believe supporters should be financially compensated should a game be moved

twice or at late notice. The Premier League stated that double moves were rare and usually down to exceptional circumstances. The League seeks to provide as much certainty of fixture placement by seeking to avoid double movements as much as possible, however these may occur in exceptional circumstances and not all of the elements of planning are solely within the League's own control. As the new deal is constructed along the same lines as the current one, there was no reason why double moves should become more commonplace.

KM asked for confirmation that the £30 away ticket price cap will remain in place for the duration of the next broadcasting cycle. The Premier League to advise by return.

TC asked the Premier League about the impact of policing on the fixture calendar. Anna Deignan (AD) believed that progress was being made following the late change of Arsenal v Chelsea at just 18 days notice last season due to policing, and that they were hopeful dialogue between the police and the Premier League was at a stage where situations like that will hopefully not occur again. TC also raised that The FSA regularly met with the Independent Advisory Group (IAG) for the Metropolitan Police in London to discuss the issues of 'high risk' fixtures.

*NB: RM left the meeting after the broadcast agenda item due to another commitment .*

## **Ticketing**

Tommy Guthrie (TG) updated the meeting on Premier League proposals linked to ticketing.

TG shared the concerns of the fan representatives about ticket touting, with a belief that it severely impacts on match-going supporters looking to secure tickets legitimately via their clubs. TC asked about the process of tackling websites that illegally sell tickets on at highly inflated prices, TG admitted this was a very difficult process given that often the websites are registered overseas, and it is thought in many cases the tickets don't exist at all, or that sites post 'phantom tickets' then look to fulfil orders after they receive them. The Premier League have been researching options to better use technology to combat fraudulent sales and also, where possible, to improve the ticketing experience for clubs and supporters. This will build on the work that has been done by the League in relation to IP rights protection.

AD and TG said the Premier League were exploring ideas on an awareness campaign regarding ticket touting, with KM offering the services of The FSA to help guide fans as to where and how they can purchase tickets legitimately.

Adam Stoker (AS) said that some of the tickets listed on unofficial websites do actually exist, and that fans have sent evidence that the tickets exist, often with the name of the person who owns the ticket included on the digital ticket, and that more should be done to try and identify the people who are passing those tickets on, given the personal information most likely rests with the clubs themselves.

ND raised concerns about Wolves Season Ticket Holders being able to sell their ticket for games against the likes of Manchester United or Liverpool at a heavily inflated rate.

TC committed to asking the Premier League Network to gather feedback on schemes ran by clubs with regards to ticketing processes in place.

Sarah Keig (SK) highlighted the severity of the price increases that had been put in place at Fulham, with the introduction of a £3000 non-corporate season ticket, and an average of a 25% increase in ticket prices across the board. SK also highlighted issues at other clubs, for example West Ham increasing the concession age from 65 to 66, and some clubs charging supporters carrying babies upwards of £58, despite them not needing a seat. The PL reiterated that ticketing was at the sole discretion of each club, but would take supporter feedback on board and into meetings with clubs.

AS said that against the backdrop of the Premier League announcing a record broadcasting deal, clubs have more money than ever before yet fans continue to face rising ticket prices at levels never seen before in the Premier League. AS also highlighted that RM had said publicly that supporters were key as to why the Premier League were able to secure such a lucrative broadcasting deal, whilst also referencing COVID and the lack of supporters in stadiums, that supporters need to be treated more fairly when it comes to ticket pricing.

SK expressed her concerns that we are potentially pricing out a new generation of supporters, and said how her season ticket is set to rise next season at Fulham from £550 to £860, with some supporters going to extreme lengths to continue being able to afford their season ticket.

Concerns were also raised about methods being put in place at clubs with regards to the distribution of away tickets, following TG saying the Premier League had started some research on processes at each club to find best practices. AS raised concerns about a process put in place at Newcastle United, whereby supporters are at risk of turning up to a turnstile and their ticket scanning red, and then having to leave the queue and visit the box office to collect a duplicate, whilst showing ID to prove the supporter collecting is the one whose name is registered to that ticket.

Levi Harris (LH) suggested that for many clubs, the misuse of away tickets is a regular source of complaints from fans who narrowly miss qualifying for tickets as a result. Identifying individuals misusing tickets can be very difficult and requiring the reprinting and collection of a ticket that is suspected of being transferred can be an effective way of tackling misuse.

It was agreed by the room that such measures have security implications and consideration needs to be given to the health and safety of supporters in attendance, and not operate a guilty before proven innocent policy.

The FSA agreed to gather evidence of problem scenarios across the league to present to the Premier League with regards to the distribution of tickets.

TC shared survey results gathered from questions asked to the Premier League Network, whereby 65% of supporter organisations in the Premier League didn't believe the club were liaising effectively with their fans over ticketing matters. Almost 85% had seen an increase to ticket prices across the league, whilst 70% said they were not consulted about price increases before they came into force.

TC expressed the wishes of supporter organisations to see further consultation with clubs on emotive topics such as ticket pricing, and to be more considerate as to the increases seen across the division. KM said that clubs should be pricing for attendance, rather than pricing for revenue.

TG referenced the Premier League's intention to conduct fan research before any proposals were finalised and considered by clubs and undertook to update the FSA on plans once they are finalised in the first quarter of 2024.

### **Premier League Fans Fund**

TG updated on the Fans Fund, a new programme launched by the Premier League through the Premier League Charitable Fund.

The Fund will invest £5m over two seasons into projects that strengthen the bond between clubs, fans and their communities. 120 clubs across the mens' and womens' game pyramid are eligible to apply. Club community organisations submit the bid, however fans must be involved in designing (and where relevant delivering) the project. At Premier League level the Fan Advisory Board should be consulted on the proposed project bid. TG requested assistance in raising awareness of the new programme across fan groups.

### **Fan Engagement Standard**

TG updated on the Fan Engagement Standard, explaining that 19 of the 20 clubs had published a Fan Engagement Plan with the Luton Town edition due to

launch in January. It had been delayed while the club prioritised work on the ground and other pressing areas in its first season as a Premier League club, however dialogue with fan groups has taken place. All had established or were progressing Fan Advisory Boards, with four expected to meet for the first time in the new year.

TG stated many clubs had added extra resources, for example new roles in fan engagement or supporter services departments across the league. This included new roles looking at strategy or consultation delivery. He felt that good progress was being made. TG said he planned to arrange a meeting with the chairs of all FABs in March to understand the feeling from the supporter side as to how the FEPs are being implemented and followed at each club. The Chairs will also be asked to produce a report, independent of the club, to give their view on progress in the first season.

TC raised concerns about some clubs who have supplied extra resource for supporter services yet are trying to reduce the level of engagement that was already in place with established supporter organisations because of the introduction of a FAB. The FSA believe clubs should still be committed to meeting individually, board to board with the official supporter organisations in place at all clubs, and not be seeking to reduce the engagement had, rather increase and welcome the input of supporter representatives on a regular basis. TG commented that the Fan Engagement Plan should be used to create different methods of engagement, and that although the FAB was a key facet it was not intended to be the only platform clubs used. Clubs had been briefed that it could be additive, and didn't need to disrupt existing forums that work well. Each club should consider its strategy holistically.

Joe Blott (JB) informed the meeting about dialogue that took place between the Liverpool Supporters Board and the Board of Directors at Liverpool FC. JB said all directors were in attendance either in person or online, with some flying in from overseas, to meet with supporters and discuss the strategic plans of the club for the coming years. JB said the meeting was extremely productive, and welcomed the dialogue with key directors at their club, which shows encouraging signs of supporter involvement in key decisions moving forward.

### **PGMOL - Refereeing Working Group**

The FSA updated the Premier League that a Refereeing Working Group has been established with the PGMOL. The group will consist of fan representatives from the Premier League, Championship, League 1 & 2 and the Women's Game. This follows on from dialogue a previously established 'VAR Working Group' had with PGMOL. The FSA are keen to gather thoughts of supporters on refereeing issues, and work with the PGMOL on seeking to improve and support refereeing throughout England and Wales, all the way through to grassroots.

AD believed that support in the grassroots area from supporters in the game is key in encouraging further participation, and the Premier League welcome the introduction of the working group. ND said the level of dialogue with the PGMOL had been very productive, despite obvious concerns from Premier League fans about VAR and refereeing standards.

TC will update the Premier League about the progress of the new working group.

## **AOB**

ND told the Premier League about a Green Working Group at The FSA and asked the Premier League if they would be willing to engage further. TG said that Will Hutton has started his role as Head of Sustainability at the Premier League and that dialogue between the two would be very productive.

JB expressed his wishes for full attendance at future meetings of key directors at the Premier League, highlighting just how positive the dialogue is between The FSA, supporter representatives and the Premier League and that this should be seen as important dialogue.

TC also raised that future meetings should potentially be extended in time due to the depth of conversation on key topics. TG suggested the Premier League would be open to any proposals from the FSA on the format of future meetings if they wished to review these for 2024 and beyond.