

ENGLAND and WALES FOOTBALL COUNCIL MEETING

DATE: Tuesday 8th May 2018

TIME: 13:00 to 16:00

LOCATION: The Bank Room, CAN Mezzanine, 49-51 East Road, London, N1 6AH



REPORT

Present:

- Antony Wilkinson [AW]
- Geoff Bielby [GB]
- Katrina Law [KL]
- Michael Green [MG]
- Neil Le Milliere (Chair) [NLM]
- Roger Ellis [RE]
- Tim Hartley [THa]

In attendance:

- Ashley Brown (CEO) [AB]
- Deborah Dilworth (Network Manager) [DD]
- James Mathie (Head of England and Wales, and Club Development) [JM]
- Nicola Hudson (Network Manager) [NH] (by video conference)
- Stuart Fuller (boards member) [SF] (by video conference)
- Tim Hillyer (board member) [THi]
- Vicki Goodfellow (Network Co-ordinator) (Minutes) [VG]

1. Apologies and welcome

NLM welcomed the new EWFC members (AW, GB and MG)

Apologies were received from Daniel Crawford [DC], Hannah Dawson [HD] and Peter Lloyd [PL].

2. Minutes and report from the previous meeting

The minutes and report from the meeting held on Thursday 15th February 2018 were agreed.

3. Board report (15th February 2018)

AB responded to questions from the board report.

AB said that structured dialogue will be discussed further at the next Premier League Trusts Network meeting.

KL asked where we are with the work around diversifying the SD board. AB said that we've collated a list of people who we can encourage to stand for the board. THa asked whether we could look at co-opting board members. AB said that it will be discussed at the next board meeting.

4. Matters arising

Chairman's Charter

DD informed the council that the EFL Chairman's Charter is based around the use of pyrotechnics. There is a three season banning order for people the use of pyrotechnics in grounds but the clubs have a leniency option.

There was discussion around the use of pyrotechnics and the regulations

EFL Fans' Forum

NLM attended the EFL Fans' Forum on 23rd April. He felt the meeting was good despite issues with the venue and some confirmed attendees not turning up. NLM confirmed it was the last meeting of the series.

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JM feels that we should provide some constructive feedback to the EFL on the meetings.

MG asked whether the removal of the match day programme rule was discussed. NLM said that it wasn't discussed at the forum but circulated via a press release at a later date.

Greg Clarke's 5 key issues

AB and KL to discuss our position on the 5 key issues ahead of KL's meeting with Greg Clarke.

The 5 key issues are: FA Cup replays, winter break, safe standing, the women's game and anti discrimination/equality and inclusion.

KL said we need to review our position on the winter break and FA Cup replay's.

There was discussion around the women's game and what can the FA supporter representatives do to help attendance number in women's game.

KL raised the question whether trusts should be incorporating the women's team into the work the trust do. It was generally felt that if the women's team is part of the football club then the trust's work should incorporate it.

DD said that we have asked to attend the annual Women's Super League Fans' Forum at St. George's Park but we're still waiting for a response from The FA.

JM reported that we were due to meet with the Head of the Women's Game at the FA but the meeting was cancelled. We would like to input into the regulation of the Women's Games and we could also get involved through SD Club Development.

AB feels that the people running the women's game at the FA don't see it as a spectator sport but look at it in terms of participation.

KL will raise it in her meeting with Greg Clarke later this month.

JM informed the EWFC that we have invited Wimbledon ladies to play Lewes FC for the SD Cup.

Non-League Finals Day

NLM reported that supporters in the neutral zone on the Non-League Finals Day will be able to wear any football shirt.

5. KPI Updates

5.1) Fans Fund

JM reported that we are currently in year two of a three year cycle.

Highlights from the report:

- We are possibly setting up a trust at Sunderland although still a long way to go
- We are still talking to various clubs about potential ownership
- NH delivered board member training in Morecambe
- The majority of our time is still spent on one-to-one support with the members

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- There is another structured dialogue webinar planned and the National League structured dialogue trial is about to start
- Web hits are increasing
- Independent non-exec director's work has started (off the back of the EWG). Started to get applicants and North West league want help with their board
- Ownership diagnostic. SD & consultants providing a diagnostic for any potential ownership. Going to Fans Fund board next month

Responses that arose from questions about the report:

JM explained that we would like community owned clubs to track and display their social value, for example, how many volunteers give up their time. We are struggling to get this to take off.

5.2) Power to Change

JM reported that the Power to Change project comes to an end at the Members' Day on Sunday 20th May. We have produced a club health check which breaks down what 'good' looks like at your clubs, e.g. from how they consult supporters to how they are constituted, which could be of interest to all members. We will be getting feedback on this at the Members' Day.

JM confirmed that we are on Sport England's framework which means we should get a steady stream of small consultancy contracts over the next few years. They don't often fund football but the health check/assessments can be carried out for all sorts of clubs.

6. Divisional Reports

6.1) Premier League

DD met with the Premier League at the structure dialogue meeting along with the FSF which took place just over a month ago. They will send out the notes on structured dialogues to all their member clubs; which will include their document and our best practice guidance. However, we are waiting for the Premier League to send us their wording and we are also waiting for the FSF to comment on the best practice guidance.

DD will send out the Engage! document to clubs after the best practice guidance has been circulated.

DD has been speaking with the University of Salford about filming a day in the life of the Manchester United Supporters' Trust.

DD has been speaking with supporters at West Ham as they are looking into the possibility of an MOU with the club. We have sent them details on why they should become a trust which they will discuss at their next meeting in July.

DD recently met with a representative of the Crystal Palace Supporters' Trust and hope that they will renew their SD membership soon.

6.2) EFL

DD reported that she held a positive meeting with the EFL trusts. The trusts gave good feedback on the SD Hub.

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The EFL structured dialogue meeting is taking place on Friday 25th May. They will be discussing the possibility of sharing the chairing duties for the meeting

DD has clarified with Trust Oldham that they are able to become SD members without converting to Community and Benefit Society. Their board will discuss it at a meeting this week.

DD reported that Nottingham Forest have signed a MOU with the trust,

6.3) Non-League

NH reported that the structured dialogue trial got held up but the clubs have now been contacted to ask them to take part. Southport and Chester have both responded but we will need to chase the other clubs. We will be holding a workshop with the six participating clubs.

A date needs to be set with the National League for a meeting on structured dialogue between the fans and the league. NH will notify the EWF Council as soon as we know the date.

NH is running the tannoy announcements on the Non-League Finals day at Wembley.

JM said that due to the hard work from NH & DD across the leagues, structured dialogue is really taking off.

6.4) Clubs

JM reported that there has been good news on the pitch for some of the community owned clubs, including Lewes FC.

It has been turbulent for some of our clubs off the pitch. Hopefully things are starting to pick up with Chester. Nick Igoe is helping them with their finance diagnostics.

We are working with Merthyr Town FC on a project to plug the gap in their budget.

Kempston Rovers have registered to convert to a Community Benefit Society. We are currently working with Clapton who will convert next season.

There are a further 5 or 6 clubs with the potential to become supporter owned including North Ferriby and Dulwich Hamlet. Diagnostic funding will really help to get some of these clubs over the line.

7. FA supporter representatives update

The EWF Council discussed their views on the potential sale of Wembley Stadium. KL feels that we need more details about the deal before we can take a firm position on it. KL will ask Greg Clarke for further details at their next meeting.

KL confirmed that FA council members are now allowed to ask questions at the meetings.

There were two changes to playing name confirmed: Nuneaton Borough FC (from Nuneaton Town) and Radcliffe FC (from Radcliffe Borough FC).

8. One organisation and independent SD

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AB said that we recently ran a joint survey alongside the FSF around what a merged organisation would look like.

We are working with SD board members on what an independent SD would look like. If SD remains an independent organisation then we would need to diversify what we do.

AB is working on an information pack to circulate to the members ahead of the AGM on Saturday 28th July. We are looking to run 2-3 consultation sessions with the members around the country in early July. We also have two sessions at the forthcoming Members' Day.

The FSF AGM will take place at the same venue on the same date and will be the first of the two organisations AGM's. Their AGM is taking place first to allow for a wider discussion.

We are working with our lawyers about how the vote will work. We currently think that we need three different EGM's.

AB said that the SD board need to decide at next meeting whether to issues their recommendation in the AGM pack.

9. Regulatory reform

JM reported that there is research being conducted around the protection of football assets. An audit of how grounds are owned and if they are split from their club, a review into the circumstances into how that came about and the extra considerations that brings. We hope that ultimately it will bring about changes in regulation to safe guard clubs' facilities which has been triggered by the situation at Dulwich.

Tracey Crouch MP made a commitment to investigate this area so we put in a proposal in to her team. She's written to the FA asking for them to review it. The FA is keen to take the lead.

The second part of the work (which RE is leading on) is based on the recent Fans not Numbers campaign. This will be presented to the FA board. MC is attending meeting and KL suggested that RE take her place at the meeting. We are working towards 31st May.

The EFL Owners and Conduct review is due to be presented at their AGM in June.

RE summarised what we are proposing to the FA:

- Regulation of football is currently spread across all bodies (The FA and the different Leagues). We are proposing that all regulation is given to The FA so the leagues can concentrate solely on their competitions.
- At the heart of regulation needs to be a change of what it means to own a club. The club is often the most important institution in a town or city. Owners and directors should be obliged to should how they will respect the clubs heritage
- The owners and directors test is different across board. The two rules are treated as the same thing but they should be differentiated between an owner and a director. All owners should have to have a business plan and they should state that they are going to adhere to the code of practices on heritage. This should then be rubber stamped by the FA and should be an annual requirement.

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The information should be done in an independent way and given to the FA. Directors should demonstrate they have the necessary skills needed or to undertake training if not. This should apply to the Premier League, the EFL and the top 4 tiers of Non-League.

There should be a suggestion on the restriction of removal of capital and grounds.

JM said that we've developed quite a strong view on some of the points. RE said that there is no expectation that they will go with the all of the suggestions but we will see it as a success if some of the points are brought into action e.g. the definition between the roles of owners and directors and the FA being the sole regulator of the game.

RE confirmed that there is a small FSF/SD working group. There is an overview paper but the background still needs to be written. We do not want the information to be leaked. The document can be shared ahead of meeting but it will need to remain strictly confidential.

JM is producing a document for the SD Members' Day so will share this with the EWF Council.

NLM said that there is some suggestion that all trust members of community owned clubs need to complete the owner and director test. NH said that she is waiting for the National League to come back to her to clarify the rule around clubs displaying all the owners as it wouldn't be possible for community owned clubs to display every member.

10. MOU update

DD created a pipeline of trusts that could potentially complete an MOU with their club. There are 11 trusts that are working on completing an MOU soon, 4 that we've approached to ask them to consider an MOU and 22 we are looking to approach soon.

11. Members Day

VG provided a verbal update on the forthcoming Members' Day.

AB, Tom Greatrex and Oliver Holtaway will be leading a consultation session on the future of SD. Any other board members are welcome to attend and/or sit on the panel.

12. New partnership with Football Business Awards

DD confirmed that we have partnered with Football Business Awards for a 'Best Club/Supporter Group Relationship of the Year' award. We are launching the award via a press release in the next few weeks. We are asking trusts to submit why their relationship with the club is the best.

We are also partnering with North West Football Awards for an Unsung Hero award again this year.

13. New online training tool

NH demonstrated the new online training to the council.

NH confirmed that she is still happy to do the occasional face-to-face training where needed.

14. AOB

DD is running a series of social media competitions to get web more sign ups. If anyone has anything for us to give away then please get in touch.

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15. Date & time of next meeting

The council discussed the possibility of an interim council meeting around a possible board meeting.