



## **EFL/FSA Supporter Engagement Meeting**

**Date: 22 May 2024, Time: 6PM**

**Venue:** Online Meeting

### **ATTENDEES**

**EFL** Trevor Birch (Chief Executive Officer), Mark Rowan (Chief Communications Officer), Andy Pomfret (Head of Supporter Services)

**FSA** Ashley Brown, Dave Rose, Jane Hughes, Jess Grundy, Hannah Kumari

**Fan Groups** Stuart Rogers (Bristol City Supporters' Club), Peter Tarbitten (Hull City Supporters' Trust) Tom Ghee (Blackpool Supporters' Trust), James Young (Cheltenham Town - Robins Trust), Sarah Turner (Reading/STAR), Ally Simcock (Port Vale)

### **1. Welcome & Introduction**

MR welcomed everyone to the online meeting, thanking those in attendance for their time, and referencing the two outstanding agenda items that were not covered in the time available at the in-person meeting on 17 May. MR referenced the EFL's Club Fan Engagement work and Supporters Survey results, noting that it was appropriate to give them sufficient time in this separate call, to properly update the FSA and fan representatives.

### **2. Club Fan Engagement 2024/25**

MR provided some brief background information, noting that the EFL has been considering amendments to its Club Fan Engagement requirements, specifically relating to Regulation 128. MR noted that the EFL's new proposals for changes in this area will go to the AGM in June 2024 for Club consideration.

The proposed creation of a statutory Independent Football Regulator (IFR) had included the introduction of mandatory license conditions – one of which related to Fan Consultation.

AP provided further context as to Clubs' previous Fan Engagement activity, noting that the Governance Bill provides an opportunity for a new approach although added that Clubs have made good progress under the requirements of Regulation 128, and this has been acknowledged by Government. New EFL measures will strive to achieve the primary objectives of greater consistency of approach across our 72 Clubs, and enhance transparency, leadership and accountability (AP).

AP added that, the new regulation proposes each club shall comply in full with the League's requirements to create a 'Fan Engagement Plan' and agree to: produce and publish a Fan Engagement Plan on an annual basis; nominate a senior Official to oversee delivery of the Club's Fan Engagement activity; and provide to the League (by no later than 30 June in each



Season) an end of season summary of work carried out to achieve the Club's Fan Engagement Plan objectives.

Guidance has been provided to Clubs detailing the proposed new requirements and the EFL will remain engaged with the FSA on progress with template/Q&A and ongoing club support (AP).

JY welcomed the strengthening of the current regulations, acknowledging that in his view, some clubs would do the minimum regarding fan engagement and sought clarification on the timeline and how fan groups can help.

MR added that the EFL wants to have flexibility in the approach to fan engagement so has not mandated Fan Advisory Boards, but it will be a live and ongoing discussion (MR). AP emphasised the importance of transparency; and that the new minimum requirements will raise the bar in this respect.

JG asked how implementation and progress would be monitored throughout the season. This is to be determined, but AP expects work to be ongoing with clubs throughout the first season. MR concluded by adding that there will be correct and appropriate tools for assessment and failure to comply will result in application of the rules.

**ACTION – EFL/FSA to collaborate on fan engagement guidance for Clubs.**

## **7. EFL Supporters Survey 2024**

AP provided a summarised walkthrough of some of the key sections of the EFL's new Supporters Survey 2024 results.

AP noted that the results again demonstrated the benefit of the League's commitment to consulting with fans, with over 33,000 people giving their views. The results allow comparison with previous 2019 and 2022 surveys and will again assist Clubs to understand the views of their fans across a range of areas.

AP then summarised each chapter, first highlighting the importance of matchdays for EFL Club fans, with nine out of 10 believing 'nothing can beat the live football matchday experience', and 93% ranking 'atmosphere' as the most important element of their experience.

Encouragingly, and consistent with previous surveys, 86% of fans said their Club provides an inclusive and enjoyable matchday experience and overwhelmingly (96%) believe Clubs offer a safe environment to watch live football, becoming even safer in recent years.

AP noted that supporters were broadly in agreement that home matchdays offer value for money, although the opinion on away games was slightly more mixed, mainly from fans of Championship Clubs.

In terms of on-pitch action, AP relayed that supporters are also sympathetic to the challenging role of match official, with 74% of supporters agreeing that they have a difficult job, while 67% stating that the job has got increasingly harder in the modern game.

In other areas of the survey, fans also provided feedback on how they consume football content, the affordability of the game and the role played by the EFL in administering its competitions and promoting inclusivity and accessibility within the game.



AP summarised by noting that a full copy of the survey has gone to clubs, and they also have access to their own fans' response data.

MR concluded by adding that the rationale for the surveys being conducted is to obtain a good overview of fan sentiment from across the League, but primarily it is of great benefit to EFL Clubs, providing them with rich insight to support their decision-making processes. MR added that summarised results will be published shortly.

JG then outlined the FSA's involvement in a pan-European project to encourage younger fans to become involved in their clubs and fans groups, a tool kit is being developed to support this. The FSA would like to look further at the data in the EFL survey that relates to younger fans (under 35) and see if there is scope for further collaboration. MR and AP stated they would be happy to pick this up in due course.

When asked if clubs welcome this information and value the survey results (SR), MR confirmed that while the national picture may not always reflect the local circumstances of every club, overall, clubs welcomed the insight and having a national overview to compare the views of their supporters against was useful.

**Action – FSA to share details with the EFL on the pan-European young fans project. Meeting to be arranged.**

MR thanked all for their contribution and attendance and the meeting was concluded.