

Fans Forum

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

Online Teams Meeting

18:00 – 19:00 19th October 2023

In attendance from LFC: Yonit Sharabi, Supporter Liaison Officer; Rishi Jain, Director of Impact, Amanda Jacks, Director of Supporter Engagement; Bryan Denny, Digital Research Manager.

Fans Forum: Paul Amann, Supporters Board Representative and Chair, Ross Hovey (representing Disabled fans), Rabbi Marc Levene (representing faith) Yunas Lunat (representing faith)

Apologies: Marie Linger* (representing Overseas supporters) (representing Sandra Walton (representing LGBT fans) Anna Orlinski (representing LGBT fans) Collette Armitage (representing LFCW), Riaz Ravat (representing faith)

*Marie manged joined us for the last five minutes of the meeting.

Paul opened the meeting thanking and welcoming those who'd attended and confirming apologies.

Rishi Jain started the meeting with an update on the clubs forthcoming priorities and campaign activities explaining that the club's overarching theme is to celebrate diversity and it's importance to the club and how it makes Liverpool FC the best in the world both on and off the pitch.

This month is Black History Month and we will mark that with an interview with a player in which he talks about the important of role models within the black community.

We will mark Rainbow Laces Day (now in its tenth year) in December and are currently planning our campaign content.

The International Day of Disability is on Sunday, 3 December and we will mark that by releasing a film with film featuring a young disabled supporter, his story and that of his families and his love for LFC.

We are constantly looking at all our campaign content as we strive to improve what we do.

In June of this year, we were assessed for the Premier League Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Advanced Level. We already hold the highest level – Advanced – and were the first club to reach that level. This was a 'health check' but ultimately involved a lot of hard work and a complete resubmission. We will be announcing our progress on this important piece of work shortly.

It is very both extremely rewarding and gratifying to know that LFC are amongst the leaders in this hugely important area that is integral to all we do including our engagement with supporters.

Finally, Rishi confirmed that his role has recently expanded, and his new title is Director of Impact which means he has taken on extended remit around The Red. –Rishi will still be continuing with his EDI work but given the changes in responsibility, it was agreed that some elements of his role needed to change. Therefore, Amanda Jacks will take on the role alongside her supporter engagement responsibilities a decision which makes good business sense as it perfectly complements ongoing work in the Supporter Experience team which Yonit also works in. A joined-up approach will continue across the club.

Paul thanked Rishi for all he had done and continues to do and acknowledged his incredibly hard work and that of others with the value Yonit and others across the team brings given a special mention.

Next on the Agenda was Personal Assistants for our disabled supporters be they ambulant or wheelchair users.

Ted Morris, chair of the LDSA, had asked that the forum was updated with the information he is addressing the issue of those who may need x2 PAs at away games and at Anfield. Those who need the additional level of support are not denied it per se, however it was acknowledged that not all stadiums have the space to offer this. Wheelchair users who need x2 PAs will often try and secure a ticket close to where they are located. Here at Anfield, we will look at requirements on a case-by-case basis.

For some this lack of provision (2 PA spaces) means additional challenges although it was recognised that it wasn't necessarily a lack of will on behalf of clubs rather difficult to overcome logistical issues.

The LDSA will continue to try and press clubs to be as cooperative as possible in this regard.

Notwithstanding the great atmosphere at the Derby on Sunday (15th October) unfortunately significant issues were reported with regard to the selling order of the tickets, EFC fans grouped in the Kop and lengthy queues for the women's toilets.

It was ascertained that that tickets for the SKD were sold first and then the Kop was released for sale, and there was a dedicated block for EFC supporters.

Bryan Denny advised that a survey had already been circulated to ensure supporters voices are heard and that early indications had already identified issues with the selling order. It was also noted that the WSL was encouraging no segregation at its fixtures. The Forum suggested that the survey didn't ask some of the relevant questions and therefore some feedback had to be left via the comments section.

There had already been an early review from an operational stance and all this additional comment would feedback into a further one.

LFC want to host more WSL fixtures at Anfield and are clear that where there are areas for improvement these will be addressed and worked on.

Moving on to the alignment of the new investors with the values of LFC. It was acknowledged that club staff on the forum would not be involved and these relationships were managed at the very highest levels of the club. However, research had been done, and this had been communicated with senior colleagues – no concerns were found.

Similar searches had been conducted by forum members and it had been identified that one of the founders of Dynasty Equity is on the board of a NFP organisation in New York that concentrates on EDI and cohesion in New York City.

It was noted that there was some concern, including from Kop Outs, that any investment may come from parts of the world that may not be in line with LFC values. It was further stated that it wasn't always about looking at the geography but behaviour too.

The Forum remain vigilant to the values that are championed and want to see taken forward.

The Forum then moved to bring to the club's attention the lack of availability of the female goal keeping kit. Club staff on the call were unable to respond to this issue but will investigate the matter and update at the next meeting.

Finally, the Fans Forum held a sensitive and thoughtful discussion about the current conflict in the Middle East. It was made clear from the outset that the discussion should centre around recognising the impact on not just the clubs diverse fanbase but its staff and players too. The Forum were keen to understand that everybody is able to get the support and care that they may need - especially considering the abuse some are receiving on social media.

Rabbi Marc Levine was keen to stress that Rishi was never anything less than supportive and always had the time for conversations which invariably reflected the need for peace in the world.

In Rabbi Levine's view, despite differences of opinion locally, he supported and recognised the need for the club to maintain a stance of neutrality. Following the lead of the Premier League with black armbands and recognising all suffering was the best route for the club to take alongside being in touch with the local communities. This way, they could be the voice of local cohesion and support.

Rabbi Levine was clear that there was a current and unprecedented level of genuine fear within the local Jewish community which, together with a high level of anxiety, having a real impact. He reiterated the need for the club to show it's love for everybody and lead by example over what will be a sustained period of conflict.

It was put to the Forum that the benefits of bringing faith and football together were 'amazing' and brought real happiness and strength. LFC recognises that it can do more around interfaith work – whether in private or in public, it doesn't matter but it needs to be done. We are able to and should work on bringing people together around the table to start conversation about faith in a secular society. This isn't about the Jewish faith specifically but all faiths.

The forum put forward various suggestions about how best to do this; for example, November is Islamophobia Awareness Month (which has never been marked by the club) – could we tie this in with an event with this Jewish community? Other ideas were suggested that combined celebrating key dates in different faiths.

Rishi advised that all options are on the table and it was unfortunate how previous ideas had not come to fruition. The club will be sure to celebrate faith in the right way and its reliance on experts would be key to this. There was a further suggestion that we shouldn't fall into the trap of over thinking initiatives and that simply getting people in a room together would be a good and healthy way to start.

Mo Salah's video message was commented on. At the time of the Forum it was estimated that 1 out of 72 people globally had listened to it underlining just how powerful football is and how sometimes 'less is more'

The discussion was brought to a close with a commitment that supporting our people – be they colleagues, fans, players – was our priority and that consistency was so important together with having people at the heart of our decisions.

The meeting concluded with Paul emphasising how important full attendance was and considering this he will poll Fourm members to ensure the next meeting is held at a date and time convenient to the majority.