

**Fans Forum**  
**Equality, Diversity & Inclusion**  
**Online Teams Emergency Meeting**  
**18:45 – 19:45**  
**7 November 2023**

**In attendance from LFC:** Rishi Jain, Director of Impact, Amanda Jacks, Director of Supporter Engagement, Lee Foley Manager, OLSC Relations

**Fans Forum:** Paul Amann, Supporters Board Representative and Chair, Rabbi Marc Levene (representing faith) Yunas Lunat (representing faith) Collette Armitage (representing LFCW) Marie Linger\* (representing Overseas supporters) Harinder Singh, Supporters Board Vice Chair and Independent Representative for Faith, Culture and Ethnicity (attending by request which was welcomed by Paul Amann)

**Apologies:** Yonit Sharabi, Supporter Liaison Officer, Sandra Walton (representing LGBT fans) Anna Orłinski (representing LGBT fans), Riaz Ravat (representing faith) Ross Hovey (representing Disabled fans)

Ahead of the meeting commencement, permission was sought and given by those attending to record the meeting for the purposes of ensuring an accurate taking of notes. The recording will be destroyed once the notes are agreed.

The Meeting opened with Paul thanking the club for the clear notes taken and published following the previous meeting of this Fans Forum. He went on to clarify that this emergency meeting had been requested after he'd received a considerable amount of concern and complaints raised by fans from different communities and arising from the situation in the Middle East and the clubs response and stance to that. Those concerns formed the agenda items:

**1. Premier League Guidance and Club Interpretation**

The Forum sought clarification of the Premier League guidance, how the club interpreted that guidance and how it was communicated.

As background to this, it was explained by Rishi that the club had had a flag policy in place for a number of years that prohibited flags of a nationalistic or political nature and that he was aware that this was what the Forum wished to discuss in more detail.

A few days after the attacks on 7th October, the Premier League advised all their clubs that they should not allow flags or items of clothing that could be linked to the escalating conflict. This reinforced our existing policy and we communicated that to supporters via email because of the clear need to do so.

The Forum felt that there was a perception of a real lack of consistency especially given the relatively recent response by the club to the Ukrainian conflict

The club are not naïve to the feedback and the review the wording of the existing policy around flags with the intention of removing ambiguity. The Supporters Board will be consulted as part of that review.

A contributor to the Forum went on to ask that it was formally noted that he was aware of the immense job the club does in how it communicates with them, how hard we all work and that it was appreciated.

The contributor went on to note that the reality is we are in the midst of a unique situation and that we should be long past 'whataboutery' (Ukraine was specified here). We are living in this moment and it is actively affecting a lot of people globally and how that should be the focus on the conversation going forward.

Harinder responded with thanks for the contribution and expressed gratitude for the request that the comments were formally noted.

He went on to say that he felt that there was sentiment from all sides with regard to how the club have acted and seen the hypocrisy of certain situations and how there was a feeling the club needed to own its position, that there was nothing available online in a prominent position. Harinder felt that people don't properly read pre match emails, rather just scan them for anything pertinent. Therefore things get missed and because things get missed people only remember what they see rather than what they read.

What they see is a history, and it's too recent. On side we are hearing no political expressions, but the Kop haven't always listened to what the club had to say and that how censoring it is a dangerous place to be because every attempt at censorship is met by people rebelling although that rebellion should not be offensive to people of culture, faith and ethnicity and how that should go without saying.

Therefore Harinder agreed with the previous contributor, that we were in a sensitive and unique place but not so unique because in our history we have had, for example, "don't bomb Iraq, nuke Manchester" sentiments.

Another Forum contributor went onto suggest that the Club could ask the media, specifically with regard to flags, not to hone in on flags. They supported the idea that strong communication needed to be made by the club.

The Forum asked if the Premier League guidance could be shared with the group. Amanda clarified that it was available on line as it had been replicated near verbatim by many media outlets and clubs.

## **1. Definition of Political**

The Forum then moved on to seek clarification of what the club deemed to be political, specifically asking are political expressions restricted and if so, what's the definition of such restriction.

Rishi, supported by Amanda, stated that it was important to recognise that the answer to the question was, to a greater or lesser extent subjective. However, that it was the policy says and to debate what it means in that context would take us on a circular discussion with no definitive answer in this context. It was clarified that the meaning of the word 'political' would form part of the review of the flag policy and that the Supporters Board would be invited to have an input. It is likely what is meant by nationalistic would be covered by the same review.

It was suggested instead of saying political using the expression 'heightened tensions' would be more appropriate as reflective of the current situation.

What the club's role in this situation was raised by a Forum member who went on to suggest that it could be most effective for it's supporters at a local level. How best can we support our fans in Liverpool, the Jewish and Faith communities in general? Whether its bringing communities together, supporting individual communities on an individual basis... whatever that might be. Because that' really important and at the baseline of what the club should be doing.

The level of anxiety around security and safety within the Jewish community is not new but is currently heightened. Therefore, the forum member continued to stress, if an open policy about flags was allowed in the stadium would be harmful, and that includes any person bringing in an Israeli flag who would effectively be putting a target on their back.

The club cannot ignore the actual effect it will have on Jewish people in and around the city and in and around the club and this is critically important and should be taken into consideration.

A question was asked about financial contributions and which organisation they'd be made too; Rishi clarified that this was still under consideration.

## **2. Cohesion Role of the Club**

The Forum then moved on to discuss what the club could specifically do around cohesion for those whose lives are impacted by the conflict, including OLSC members in Israel, Lebanon and Egypt. It was stated that as LFC fans the priority is about the respect for the dignity of human life and human rights and ongoing events were a source of great angst for many members of the OLSCs. The forum were keen to explore is there anything we need to be doing as a club or if there were ways we could offer support which isn't inflammatory while addressing the harms people are facing.

Rishi was happy to be transparent in his response and advised the Forum that despite exploring many, many options nothing had been decided on.

Notwithstanding that, the club are all too aware that we need to do more and are committed to doing so but it is imperative that whatever we do is the right thing do so. We are looking at some plans that will come into fruition by Spring but if we can do something before then we will and we are really keen to have this group represented as part of that, together with the Supporters Board.

Lee went on to say that people of faith are represented globally and the work is sensitive. However, in the month since he has been with the club the majority of matters he has dealt with have been related to the conflict in the Middle East and all the time people come to us we will do what we can within the parameters we, as a football club, operate in.

The Forum went on to strongly make the point that there is a distinct difference between interfaith and embracing local faith communities individually. It would be clever to reach out to local faith communities currently affected to say lets do something. Now is the time. There is no other time.

To close this subject Harinder suggested that faith isn't about one region or one space and that while certain faiths may well be local they swell the ground coming from the different parts of the UK and the world over. He sees this in the faith role he has and from the people who reach out to him and where they are from.

### **3. Fan Led Initiatives**

Paul asked, on behalf of the decent majority of fans who, he stated, simply want to call for things like a ceasefire and peace, would doing so, alongside wearing logoed clothes or displaying banners and flags with a similar message be acceptable?

Rishi clarified that neither he, Amanda or Lee had it within their gift to respond either way to that question but confirmed that it would be raised with more senior colleagues.

### **4. Sanctions**

The Forum then moved on to ask whether or not anybody had been sanction for recent breaches of the ground regs as this was being reported as being the case on twitter and via other sources.

Amanda suggested that this wasn't, to the best of her knowledge correct, and if anybody had been ejected or faced sanctions this would not be because they possessed a particular flag or were wearing clothing that identified their political beliefs but because they had not co-operated with stewards who may have asked them to remove the flags and escalated a situation unnecessarily. Broadly speaking, everybody would be given a first or even second chance to comply with stewards instructions. If they didn't then that would mean facing the consequences.

Amanda had attended stewards briefings and clarified that they were very clear – stewards had a responsibility to de-escalate a situation and not inflame it. The Forum asked that the notes reflect that it was acknowledged that the stewards do a great job and they should be thanked for it.

On the subject of sanctions, the Forum were asked if the club pursued sanctions against supporters of other clubs and how whether or not, for example, we could ensure Luton fans who'd indulged in tragedy chanting were not welcomed at Anfield.

Amanda confirmed that she would ask that this was on the agenda for the next Match Day Experience forum. She would also ask about steward training around neuro diverse conditions such as autism.

## **5. Training**

Finally, the Forum were keen to understand how stewards were trained. Amanda confirmed that all crowd safety stewards were required to undertake an NVQ Level Two in Crowd Safety. Our training records are thorough and must be retained for inspection by the Council as part of the Safety Certification process.