

Liverpool Football Club Supporters' Board

Summary of meeting held Sunday 22nd September 2024

Attendees:

Jay McKenna – SOS (Chair), Harinder Singh – Independent (Vice Chair), Ben Dew – OLSC Andy Hudson – Spion Kop 1906, Anna Burgess – SOS, Paul Khan – SOS, Joe Blott – SOS, Roy Bentham – SOS, Gareth Roberts – SOS, Brian Pickstock – SOS, Cassie Rattray – Kop Outs, Ian Byrne – SOS, George Bevan – SOS, Kieth Culvin – SOS

Amanda Jacks – LFC (Director of Supporter Engagement), Phil Dutton – LFC (Vice President Ticketing and Hospitality), Ben Latty – LFC (Chief Commercial Officer), Andy Hughes – LFC (Managing Director), Jo Kirkham – LFC (Vice President Fan Experience), Andy Fletcher – LFC (Vice President Product and Proposition)

Welcome and Introductions

The Chair opened up the meeting, and paid thanks to those who had left the supporters board and welcomed those new members representing their groups.

Paul Amann (Kop Outs), Jay Goodall (LFC Women), Graham Manley (Spirit of Shankly) and Mark Johnson (Spirit of Shankly) had left the board, and thanks were given to them for their time and efforts. Warm welcomes were extended to their replacements, Cassie Rattray (Kop Outs), Jamie Rees-Winters (LFC Women), Brian Pickstock (Spirit of Shankly) and Kieth Culvin (Spirit of Shankly).

A particular thanks was paid to Joe Blott, who had relinquished the chair role of the Supporters Board but would remain a member. Joe had been involved since the inception of the board, and Andy Hughes thanked Joe for the time and effort put into setting the Supporters Board up, as its first Chair, and recognising the important work done to get to this point.

Jay McKenna was introduced as the new chair, and Andy Hughes welcomed Jay into the role and thanked all on the Supporters Board for their time given to the Supporters Board.

The Supporters' Board shared their condolences with the family and friends of Phil Dooley, who had died before the recent AC Milan fixture. Thanks were given to LFC staff in Italy who had been on hand to provide support and mark the passing of Phil with the laying of flowers.

General Updates

The board received an update on plans to recruit administrative support to assist the work of the Supporters Board. This would be publicised imminently (it subsequently has been) and individuals invited to apply for the role. It was expected that an appointment to the role would be made by late October.

The Supporters Board plans to launch its own website and work was ongoing to do this, which would be used for sharing supporter board updates, as well as summary of the meetings that have taken place (for now, these will be on the club site and shared by members).

Membership proposals

Andy Fletcher gave a presentation to the board, outlining the current membership offering to LFC supporters, which showed the variety of different offerings. In bringing this to the board, the club was considering changes to the memberships available, to potentially streamline the options available and ensure it gives members, where possible, what they are looking for. The club had begun surveying all members on this. The club is looking to work with the Supporters Board, initially through a small group of SB members, to work through the survey results and look at potential changes and would return to a future Supporters Board on this.

In the discussion about memberships, board members raised a number of questions and issues including:

- That supporters might feel like getting tickets as part of the membership is something of a lottery and there was a need for transparency on likelihood of getting tickets
- The expense of memberships for the 'chance' of getting a ticket.
- What the options might be for international supporters or those who are members of Official Liverpool Supporter Clubs (OLSCs) and part of 'My LFC' already

The club explained that over two hundred thousand people were members, but that not all were members to access tickets, with just under half the membership not applying for tickets. The club was keen to hear what people wanted from membership, hence the survey and working with the Supporters Board, but that access to ticketing through membership was not something they are changing with the current system remaining in place. The questions raised in the meeting would be things the club can look at when it considers the survey responses with the small group and be part of the potential outcomes from this process.

LFC Women's move to St Helens

The club gave an update ahead of the new LFC Women's team season starting at St Helens. The club updated on the first match there and said they would work with LFC Women's Supporter Group and others to ensure it was a good experience for all, and were looking forward to the season ahead.

Discussion centred around ways that supporters might be encouraged to attend, and the club said they would be looking at ways to engage with local grassroots teams and were keen to discuss with supporters getting local children and families involved.

Away tickets for Women's matches would now be sold via LFC, and not via the opposition website where possible.

Matchday Experience Working Group

Following discussions with supporters at the Matchday Experience Forum, the club and the Supporters Board lead for the forum had spoken about ways to help improve things for supporters and the team inside the ground. Amongst the suggestions made were proposals for a 'Kop Migration', similar to that in 2007 when supporters moved seats into the 300 blocks on the Kop.

It was felt this might further improve the atmosphere, as well as addressing potential issues for supporters who did not wish to stand, or those who wanted to be with friends and family. Before making any commitments on what was possible, the club has said it is keen to work with the Supporters Board to understand the views of the wider support and hear from them. A small group from the Supporters Board would work with the club on an initial survey and subsequently pick up the issues from it, and any others as they arise.

Supporters raised that there might be financial consequences for moving seats, as well as that any focus on perceived atmosphere is not just about the Kop. It was also felt that this issue wasn't just about atmosphere as it might be described but about the clubs traditions and heritage, and how we protect and continue that. These issues would be picked up in the initial small group and would feed back to the next Supporters Board meeting on progress.

Ticketing review

The club gave an overview of the ongoing work on ticketing, including proposals for ticket principles. The club had previously met with the supporters board to discuss these, and would be using them as part of the clubs strategy on tickets in the forthcoming seasons. An update on this will be made public shortly.

In the short term, the club is looking to introduce a change to season tickets to ensure they are used for each game. Currently, there are an average of 2,000 seats that are empty for each game. Supporters asked for a breakdown of these seats by ticket type, and raised with the club the need for them to 'nudge' and remind supporters when tickets go unused, rather than just taking action and the club would be doing this. A full announcement on the clubs plans will be made later this calendar year, and the Supporters Board will share information with supporters on the discussions that take place.

In the coming weeks, the club shared that they plan to survey supporters to understand their views on ticketing, and would feed these into the ongoing review and potential changes.

The club also updated on the challenges that had been faced during the members sale process, and updated the Supporters Board that they would be reviewing the current sales process and platform to see if there were alternatives that worked better for supporters. The club shared that one of the challenges faced is the sheer scale of bot activity targeting the site and sales. Updates on this would be shared with supporters if changes are made.

The club committed to meaningful engagement with the Supporters Board on ticket pricing, following internal club discussions on pricing, ahead of the usual announcements in March. The Supporters Board welcomed this and reiterated they are keen to speak with the club about this.

In the discussion, supporters raised:

- The need for data to drive decisions and the importance of transparency in sharing this with the wider support, including on ticket types, allocations and use of tickets.
- The importance of price and that in seeking reductions we might want to look at other ways of reducing the need to increase prices through alternative revenue streams
- The concern from some that the club is looking to do away with season tickets

The club was clear that they value season tickets and are not planning to do away with them. They do though, like on all tickets, want to ensure they are used. The club recognise the importance of transparency and will look at what can be published and speak with the supporters board about this, and recognise that pricing and what we can do, needs to be discussed.

Any other business

Customer Service – supporters raised issues with the problems supporters faced, particularly during sales process and trying to contact the club without a phone line available. The club outlined the volume of contacts they get, but will work with the Supporters Board in a session covering this, outlining the current process and look at what supporters might like to see and would feed back.

Value of fans – supporters raised the worry that the club might see the value of commercial deals above those of supporters, and whether they link to the club values through initiatives such as Red Way. The club were clear that the value of commercial deals was not more important than supporters and commercial partnerships are linked to the club's environmental, social and governance commitments. A session would be planned with the Supporters Board to talk through the partnerships process.

Anfield Road – the issue of the potential permanent closure of the Anfield Road was flagged as a concern, particularly for the impact on the local community and that the consultation needs to be transparent and not predetermined. The club said that as per the planning permission the road is built and ready to open, and that some residents had come forward asking for it to remain closed welcoming the pedestrianised area and raising concerns on safety. The club said that the issue won't affect supporters on a match day as the road is closed anyway, but recognise it is a contentious issue for residents and there will be a full consultation in compliance with the planning process.

Away travel – it was asked if as part of ongoing work, opportunities to help supporters with away travel could be reviewed and the club committed to taking this away and including it in discussions.