MANCHESTER UNITED FANS' FORUM - MINUTES

MONDAY 26TH NOVEMBER 2018, OLD TRAFFORD

FORUM MEMBERS PRESENT

Chas Banks MUDSA Secretary
Seb Chowdhury Official Member Rep.
James Coatsworth Season Ticket Holder Rep.

Alan Harvey Family Stand Rep.

Mark Heaton Executive Club Rep.

Darryl Hewlett Season Ticket Holder Rep.

Janine Kasmir Local Rep.

Josephine Loughnane Official Member Rep. lan Stirling Fans' Group Rep.

CLUB AND FOUNDATION OFFICIALS PRESENT

Richard Arnold Group Managing Director

Rebecca Britain Club Secretary

Charlie Brooks Director of Communications
Sam Kelleher Head of Ticketing & Membership

JimLiggettHead of SecurityClaireMulroyT&MS Office ManagerColletteRocheChief Operating Officer

John Shiels Chief Executive, MU Foundation

Topic	Speaker	Topic Notes
		ApologiesBen Cooper (Official Member Rep)
Introductions / Apologies	RA	 Phil Cowper (65+ STH Rep) Craig Dilley (MUSC Rep) Harry Sutcliffe (16-21 STH Rep) Mick Thorne (MUSC Rep) David Young (STH Rep)
		Introductions
		Charlie Brooks, Director of Communications (and Vice Chair)
2. Minutes of Last Meeting	RA	Approved by all Fans' Forum Members
		The work to construct a slip road entry and exit to the E2 car park from Wharfside Way is progressing well. Currently it is on schedule to be completed ahead of the New Year. Once complete, the existing entry points to the car park will no longer be used. This will remove the need to have vehicles travelling near the forecourt on match days. A full communications plan will be developed and delivered ahead of this being introduced.
3. Security Update	JL	 In addition, there is a programme to install high security hostile vehicle mitigation bollards at a number of points around the perimeter of the stadium. These works are currently ongoing and the majority are scheduled to be completed ahead of the New Year. The works will be phased to minimise the impact on match days

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		All supporters and visitors can significantly assist the safety and security operation by not bringing any bags to the stadium, however, we know this isn't always possible so kindly ask that only bags of the permitted size are brought to the stadium (there are exceptions for medical or baby care equipment)
		We would like to remind everyone that on a match day no medium/large bags should come onto the forecourts, into the tunnel areas, or anywhere in close proximity to the stadium, what we refer to as the stadium 'footprint'
		The revised 'Bag Drop' facilities have now been in place since the beginning of the season and appear to be working well. We will continue efforts to ensure that all away supporters are aware of this policy before they travel to Old Trafford
		• For the fixture against Juventus, we installed temporary netting between the away supporters and the accessibility areas immediately below. A barrier reception area was also constructed on the East forecourt immediately in front of the existing away turnstiles to provide enhanced capability to process and search large groups of supporters in a safe and timely manner. The intention is to use both the netting and the temporary barrier reception area for the Young Boys fixture too. We are reviewing and evaluating the use of both sets of equipment and consulting key stakeholders. This will form part of the decision making process in respect of any future use
		Following recent instances of pitch encroachment, and subsequent fines issued by UEFA, it is important to emphasise that such behaviour is totally unacceptable. It jeopardises years of hard work that has been undertaken to ensure that supporters can enjoy games in a suitable / 'non-hostile' viewing environment. We respectfully ask that supporters abide by relevant ground regulations at all times
		We understand that supporters (as well as the team) are being impacted by the additional traffic issues that the various roadworks taking place at the same time throughout Manchester have created
		We would like to reassure you that we are collaborating with senior representatives at TfGM and Manchester & Salford Councils, and are making every effort to do what we can to help to reduce the impact (there are a number of initiatives we have proposed that are being reviewed by all parties involved)
4. Transportation Update	JL	With the ongoing road works across certain parts of the city we would encourage all supporters to review their travel plans to ensure they arrive early for all fixtures which will assist our safety and security measures. Up to date advice can be obtained from the TfGM (transport for Greater Manchester) website www.tfgm.com .
		A summary of work underway:
		 Major road improvement works began on Regent Road in August 2018 and are scheduled to take 12 months to complete. TfGM advise that the work will improve capacity by up to 20% at six major junctions in and around Regent Road, reducing congestion and delays

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		 Trafford Metrolink extension works are due to continue until 2020 and significant road works are in place surrounding the stadium. The roadworks include some temporary changes in the direction of traffic, along with road closures, so we ask that supporters pay attention to local traffic diversion signs The next phase of work has now begun on the Chester Road/Mancunian Way roundabout. The approaches leading up to the roundabout have been reduced to one lane and the inner lane of the roundabout is closed Work continues to take place between junction 10 and junction 12 on the M62 as part of the Smart Motorway improvements
		Some bus routes are affected by the works detailed above however Metrolink services continue to operate as normal
		RA advised the Forum that the number of bags being left at the bag drop points is reducing and issued a reminder that all proceeds from the bag drops go to The Foundation
		It was raised that the Metrolink service could be improved with more trams operating on Matchdays, especially from 'Park & Ride' areas. JL advised the club were regularly meeting with all relevant parties about the ongoing situation and would feed this back
5. Ticketing & Operations Update		Atmosphere Given the club's and fans' desire to improve the atmosphere in the stadium we have continued with atmosphere trials this season At the Leicester game, noise levels were the loudest ever
		recorded, around 6dB up on the loudest fixture from last season (Liverpool @ 92dB) This season's average = 93.5dB which is higher than the Liverpool game mentioned above This indicates that, despite only running small trials of c600 supporters, the right supporters are participating and making a difference
	SK	We have also advised previously that following positive feedback to the MUST open letter in the last Forum of last season, we would consider a request to relocate the Family Stand
		Since that Forum we have issued a 'Matchday Experience' survey to over 70k supporters which included questions on this, and the majority of respondents were in favour of relocating the Family Stand
		We have also identified that it will be possible to relocate the Family Stand without adversely affecting family groups (as all supporters in this area will need to move out anyway at some point, i.e. when the youngest member of their booking turns 16 years old)
		 Each season c500-600 STHs move out of the Family Stand (either because of this, or through natural churn) We did not backfill these vacated seats in the Family Stand for the 2018/19 season whilst we evaluated options and undertook consultation

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		 The Family Stand has 3 natural 'splits' where we can safely divide the concourses / exits and toilet facilities to create separate 'areas'
		 We will have 'freed-up' c1.2k seats in the Family Stand by next season and will be able to allocate these as a dedicated youth area / atmospheric area
		 Those families remaining will be relocated within the Family Stand (should they choose to remain in the area) All families will be contacted once we are on sale with Season Tickets, and be asked for their preferences (e.g. to be allocated seats nearer to / further away from the 'atmosphere section')
		 In theory, this 'atmospheric / youth' area can be expanded by a further c1.4k seats in 2021/22 without 'forcing' anyone out of the area
		 Additionally, at this time, we will determine the best use of the remaining c1.4k seats, i.e. establish if there is demand for additional 'atmospheric / youth' seats (taking the total to around 4,000 seats), or keep the area for family groups
		 We will provide an update on how we intend to populate any dedicated atmosphere areas next season in the March 2019 Fans' Forum (e.g. qualifying criteria, % of STs vs. match tickets)
		 We will also consult with this forum and other supporter groups to establish the long term options in relation to dedicated family areas
		 Finally on atmosphere, following a detailed review of responses to the survey issued in the summer, we have a number of areas where we want to make improvements to matchdays but are keen to work with supporters on the detail before making recommendations back to this Forum
		 We would therefore like to create a working group, including representatives from this Forum and other key external stakeholders, to evaluate options ahead of making any recommendations in the March 2019 Forum. If you are interested in being involved, please volunteer (see Claire at the end of the Forum), thank you
		Away Game Checks / Validations and Sanctions
		 Up until 5 years ago we were regularly criticised by supporters for our efforts in relation to a) reduced away game ticket allocations, and b) ticket touting at both home and away matches
		 As a result we implemented a series of measures, aimed at increasing our allocations and reducing the tickets available to criminal gangs and touts
		 These actions were designed in co-operation with this Forum, MUST and the FSF
		This process has worked:
		 We now receive over 4,000 additional tickets per season There has been an 80% reduction in the number of games where we don't get our full allocation (remaining 20% is MCFC and Liverpool who have conditions in their safety certificates)

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		We have gone from multiple arrests and ejections at each away game, to an average of less than one so far this season
		 Ticket Touting is still an issue, but the above means we can take a more targeted approach
		 At the first few away games this season (based on intel from fans) we have conducted 90 ticket checks, of which 84 turned out to have been bought on the black market or passed to people who were not eligible Season Ticket holders, meaning only 6 'innocent' supporters have been asked to validate their attendance
		Therefore the impact on match going fans is negligible
		 Our aim is <u>not</u> to stop genuine, loyal fans, going to away games and we are aiming to be more precise in the application of sanctions (particularly in the cases of long standing supporters where the evidence leans towards it being an isolated incident)
		 As a reminder, in 2016/17 we created the Club Sanctions document (which was fed into by this Forum, MUST and the FSF)
		 Whilst amendments were made in the summer, I would like to recommend that we immediately review the sanctions applied for domestic away matches
		 Currently, we issue a 3-Year home and away game suspension to people who pass on their tickets to ineligible supporters (but do not tout), however, we would like to reduce this sanction to away games only - does anyone in the room object?
		 Given this remains a new process, coupled with our desire to ensure loyal fans are treated fairly, over the summer we conducted a cold-case review, under these new guidelines, of all sanctions issued since 2016/17
		 This was supported by MUST, and whilst we found that the system was consistent, transparent and effective, in some instances, the sanctions were draconian compared to the offence committed
		 For every instance where we identified this, we went back to affected fans and applied a reduced sanction
		 Looking ahead, we are proposing four further changes are made before next season:
		 Introducing more Levels, to make clear distinctions between sanctions that will be imposed More transparency, e.g. we will remove indefinite suspensions wherever possible Introducing the concept of repeated breaches vs. isolated incidents Removal of 3-Year suspensions, with 1-Year suspensions replacing these
		 Upon approval, any change to sanctions will be applied retrospectively (e.g. any current 3-Year suspensions will be removed, and we will conduct a further cold-case review)
		This proposal for away game sanctions was approved

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		Forum Members asked what effect the 100% collection policy had on away games in Europe. SK confirmed there had been a significant improvement and only a handful of tickets were left uncollected at each game. SK also advised that UEFA accept this is best practice and the process has already been adopted by Chelsea, and is under review from other clubs
		SK raised a desire to improve the process for our disabled supporters travelling away in Europe – e.g. European teams tend not to allocate Carer/PA tickets as standard, and when we do eventually receive tickets, ensure they are in close proximity to the disabled supporter. Chas Banks & SK agreed to undertake an end-to-end review of the next match (UCL Round of 16)
		Reps thanked the club for the communications around the Juventus away game that were well received. A forum rep asked if at future matches the club could provide a phone number for them to raise issues – SK will review this ahead of the next forum
		Accessible Facilities
6. MUDSA Update		• MUDSA has never had a better relationship with the club, and we have worked hard to be proactive in our relationship with them. A great example is the netting that was put in place in front of the away fans at the recent Juventus game (which will be deployed again for the Young Boys match). We also negotiated a ticket exchange with the club for use by disabled supporters, we restored trips to the AON Training Complex twice a season, restored universal access to the Phil Downs Ability Suite (after the Young Boys game) and expanded our work with The Foundation, including Nathaniel's work as Junior Ambassador and the staging of the inaugural MUDSA Cup. All of these activities feature in the latest Rollin' Reds magazine
	СВ	 MUDSA have been in continuous conversation with the club regarding the ongoing development of the future provision of disabled facilities for the last two years. It's no secret that the club faced structural problems within the North East quadrant area and we have been working with them to try to find a better solution than the original proposal
		We're pleased to say that having had the luxury of time to explore the options the Club has agreed to make some extremely positive changes (Claire is passing around a hand-out as I speak)
		 These new options provide a much greater choice of seating as facilities will be dispersed throughout the stadium at different levels and various prices (East Stand, South Stand, NE Quad, NW Quad, Stretford End Tier 1 in close proximity to the Family Stand, Stretford End Tier 2 and the Away End), while also creating a safer environment
		Overall, 118 new wheelchair positions and 158 new amenity seats will be created, bringing the total for both to 278, in line with the ASG guidance for a stadium with a capacity of c74k

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		 MUDSA feels the new proposals put forward by the club to provide the spaces needed to reach compliance with the ASG, is very much to our liking and we feel it will be very popular with our members
		Netting
		The Juventus game finally saw the introduction of netting in front of the away fans. This was a very popular decision with the members who felt considerably safer and has only taken 20 years to get done
		 MUDSA have been pressing the club to make the deployment permanent, which if granted would come as a great relief to all those who have suffered over the years from the various items that have been thrown in our direction. From Flares to Mars bars, from coins to bottles filled with urine and even a pie at the Newcastle game
		• The most infamous incident being the famous Derby match when Michael Owen scored the winner at the Stretford End. I sent someone out after the crowds had died down and he collected £13.48 in coins that had been thrown at us. Plus disposable lighters, bottles, various confectionary, programmes and a small umbrella
		Other
		The newest member of the committee, Nathaniel Yates was elected unanimously at the last AGM and he was thrilled to put it mildly. He has been busy working closely with the foundation, paying visits to the Power Chair football and Pan disability football sessions on a monthly basis. His role is to encourage the young disabled kids to become members of the club and members of MUDSA too. He'll be giving out some free stuff (which always helps) and telling them how MUDSA has changed his life for the better
		The MUDSA annual dinner featured my childhood hero, Denis Law. I can safely say that as ever, it was a brilliant night and the love in the room for Denis was palpable. We were fortunate in having a great comic in Sean Styles too
		The MUDSA trip to the AON training centre took place on November 2nd and was a huge success. A big thank you goes to Emma James who helped organise the trip plus of course the club for making this trip possible
		Context
		As Chas has mentioned we have worked closely with MUDSA and other stakeholders over the last couple of years to ensure we have the best available facilities for our disabled supporters
7. Accessible Stadia Update	SK	These new plans will meet the original timeline (i.e. all be implemented ahead of the 2020/21 season), and will also impact far fewer Season Ticket holders
		We will shortly be in contact with the affected supporters, including those who are due to be relocated from their seats as a result of the original plans

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		We anticipate that any supporters impacted by the revised plans will be accommodated with alternative seating in the same area (e.g. NW Quad Tier 2 has availability to accommodate all affected supporters from this area), and they will also receive the goodwill package of complimentary cup games for the first season after they move
		Supporters previously relocated from an area which we expect will no longer be used by disabled supporters will not be offered the opportunity to move back to their original area. This is because we need to test all new areas of the revised plans before they can be permanently introduced. It is only after this process is complete, that we will consult regarding the best course of action
8. MU Foundation Update		Women's Goalkeeper, Emily Ramsey, returned to the Girls Regional Talent Centre to spend time with our youth teams. The keeper also took the opportunity to talk about her international experiences after coming 3 rd at the U20 Women's World Cup with England. Her visit was not only inspirational for the young players but showed that the pathway is now complete for players to reach their long awaited ambition of playing for Manchester United Women
	JS	Chris Smalling spent an afternoon at the Manchester Dogs Home visiting their new facility four years on from a devastating fire, which took the lives of over 60 dogs. The United defender delivered hundreds of disused footballs, blankets, and a large donation of dog food. As a result of Chris' visit two long-term residents, who had been at the centre for 6 and 9 months, were successfully rehomed. NOTE: This activation was as a result of a request made at a Fan's forum
		In September, the Foundation hosted cross-party delegates from the Department of Culture, Media and Sport at Old Trafford. The agenda for the summit was to discuss the Impact and Social Value of Sport. The event was attended by representatives from partner schools, councils, Greater Manchester Police and community organisations, as well as key Foundation staff and participants. Conversations are now ongoing with key contacts across the political spectrum as to how the Foundation and government can align strategies for making a positive and lasting impact on the lives of young people
		The Foundation has successfully completed a pilot project with Ulster University to engage young people from the Derry-Londonderry area. A group of 20 young people visited the University over the course of 9 days to take part in the United the Business Enterprise project. Work will continue in the coming months to move from this successful pilot in to a longer term arrangement with the University
		Our long-standing Ability Counts project has launched a new initiative with the aim of increasing the number of female participants attending disability football sessions. To launch the initiative a special one off training session was held at the Aon Training Complex. While touring the facility the youngsters met David De Gea, Lee Grant, Juan Mata and Ashley Young. Our objective is to roll out communications until the end of the year to treble the number of females attending weekly sessions at The Cliff Training Ground in Salford

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9. Members' Questions	СВ	
	SK	Q: Because Exec Club Members can only nominate 1 person per ticket they hold (with those people then being the nominated individuals for the entire season), if Mr X and his father are the nominated people, and they receive 2 away tickets in the ballot, only they can use the tickets.
a. Away Tickets for Executive Club		Problem being, they can't always both attend every away game, so Mr X would like to be able to send other family members. But the new process means you cannot do this, because only Mr X and his father (as the individuals nominated at the start of the season) are eligible to use away tickets.
Members		This is correct. Given that some Executive Club Members hold multiple facilities under one name, we requested such members register the details of those that regularly use the relevant facilities so they could be authorised to use away tickets
		Our intention is to ensure that the people in attendance at away matches are those supporters who attend home matches, we therefore will not permit Executive Club Members to pass on tickets to other friends / family members or clients, as we have in previous seasons
b. Discounted Food & Drink	JL	 Q: Can the club extend the period for half price drinks until 15-30 minutes before KO? As this will encourage fans to enter the stadium will before KO and reduce the length of queues outside. We will look to trial extending the 50% offer until 30 minutes
		prior to Kick-Off at the Fulham, Huddersfield and Bournemouth fixtures in December, and report back at the next Forum
	SK	Q: Can there be a review for the release of all home game tickets at the start of the season? I know there are subsequent release dates but for fans missing the day of initial release due to work or school or being unable to access the website, the subsequent dates there seems to be a very minute number of tickets.
		Like all other clubs in the league I feel the tickets should be released 6-8 weeks before the game is played giving priority to local fans.
c. Ticket Releases		Whilst we do only have one 'main' release of tickets each season, it is important to note that only c25% of the tickets made available for each match are included in this release
		For example, to-date this season we have had an average of 10 releases per fixture as there are different dates that tickets may be released back to us (e.g. from the away team, or for European matches UEFA)
		Therefore, whilst some of these releases may be minimal, I can confirm that the vast majority of tickets made available for matches are done so outside of the initial ticket release in June, we believe this addresses the two main audiences, i.e. those supporters who want to book tickets early and those who live locally and want to book tickets closer to the game

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		It was accepted that this was the most suitable process and noted this was put in place following requests from the Fans' Forum based on difficulties securing reasonably priced travel / accommodation
d. Matchday Experience Survey	SK	Q: Can the club update on the survey Matchday experiences and the findings? And what is planned from the results?Answered in SK update
	JL	Q: Within a quarter mile radius of the ground on match days, the only foods you can get (with the very odd exception) are burgers. The Willow catering vans have "fish and chips" on the price lists. However, the listing does not have a price because it is never available. There are no provisions for vegetarians, halal or healthy eating options. Many away grounds have far better outdoor facilities.
		 All mobile units outside the footprint of the stadium are not managed by MUFC, however, within the perimeter of the stadium we work very closely with our current mobile catering provider to offer a varied selection of food and beverages
e. Catering Options		The most popular choices are purchased from the burger and fish and chip vans, hence we have placed these popular units in high footfall areas (although there are a range of options including Mexican, pizza, jacket potato, carvery and curry units)
		 However, we welcome your feedback and agree there is opportunity for improvement in the facilities and offering on our footprint. This is something we would like to discuss at the focus groups mentioned earlier which are aimed at improving the fan experience
		 Forum Members who had visited away grounds advised they felt things like Real Ale stands and live music were much more enjoyable and encourage people to arrive earlier
		 It was agreed there were several options and we would be looking at working with fans (as part of the subgroup mentioned earlier about atmosphere) before presenting options back to the forum
f. Thomas Cook / European Away Trips		Q: Why did Thomas Cook not run a trip to YBB? This was announced after the ballot closed and caused great inconvenience to many supporters. It has been recorded in last season's minute that 'Thomas Cook guarantee a trip for each game'. Is it time to review the 35% allocation of European away tickets reserved for them if they are unable to guarantee a trip for every game?
	SIZ	TCS have provided the following statement
	SK	- "Thomas Cook Sport was unable to offer an Official Trip to Young Boys for logistical, timing and cost reasons. Any trip departing after the game was not possible to operate (including day trips and one night stays) as the airport used to service the away stadium operates night closures. As the match kicked off at 9pm local time, there was not enough time to get supporters back to the airport, through security and on board the aircraft to push back before the airport closed. Extensions to the opening hours were refused by the local government"

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		As I have mentioned previously in this forum the 35% in the contract is rarely exercised, TCS will only ever request the number of tickets required to fill the aircraft they have secured (whether that be 1 or 2 planes)
		We will do everything we can to ensure a trip is operated at every opportunity going forwards
g. Home Game Ticket Exchange		Q: With the increased number of inspections and sanctions of home match tickets would now be the right time to introduce a home ticket exchange service? Supporters are finding it increasingly difficult to attend all matches especially now as they can be moved (sometimes twice) at short notice. Seats are being left empty due the fear of a sanction if the ST ends up in the hands of a tout. If these tickets were sold to members or even new members there surely would be a benefit financially to the club. As a point of note a ticket exchange system is provided for away and disabled fans.
	SK	Our previous experience with a ticket exchange is that, perhaps obviously, most potential buyers were interested in the big games, whereas very few people were looking to sell, and vice versa; there was lower demand for smaller games when more people were trying to sell
		Therefore, we have no plans at present to re-introduce a ticket exchange, but I'd like to remind everyone that Season Ticket holders can freely share their ticket with friends & family
		The pros and cons of a ticket exchange were debated, it was agreed to review further, including analysing historical data, as part of the subgroup mentioned earlier, before presenting options back to the forum
		Q: Is it possible to create a poppy pin badge for next year and future years that connects Manchester United and the poppy appeal? For example the crest and poppy on pin badge or the crest printed onto the poppy.
h. Poppy / Badge	СВ	The club supports the Poppy Appeal in many ways, with players wearing poppies on shirts and the traditional paper poppies and pin badges on sale throughout the stadium. We also installed commemorative banners and signings around the stadium for the run up to Remembrance Sunday and worked with Manchester City to participate in joint activities, with the actual day falling on the same day as the derby
		The suggestion of a pin badge with the club crest has been received already and will be looked into for next year
i. Hospitality Sales	SK	Q: Does the club filter ticket requests for hospitality as there appears to be a problem with away supporters sitting in the hospitality section of the Sir Alex Ferguson stand? Our sales team work with closely with our security team to identify away supporters who may have purchased hospitality packages
		Our hospitality terms and conditions remind all of our guests that facilities are located in the 'home' section of the stadium and away fans risked being ejected from the stadium

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		If security / stewards are notified of away fans in home areas they will handle this on the day, retrospective sanctions will then be issued in-line with the published sanctions document
j. Safety Netting	JL	Q: After the success of the deployment of netting for the Juventus game and the subsequent incidents of items being thrown at the last three PL games; would the club please consider making the deployment a permanent item to improve the safety of its disabled fans?
		Answered in Security Update
		• AOB
		Q: How will the introduction of VAR impact the club?
10. Any Other Business	RA	We are waiting to hear from the Premier League to advise us what it requires to be in place for both the Referee and fans, until we have this information we can't assess the impact VAR may have
		Next Meetings:
		Friday 1st March 2019 (before Southampton); OTFriday 10 May 2019 (before Cardiff City); ATC