

MANCHESTER UNITED FANS' FORUM – MINUTES

THURSDAY 24TH NOVEMBER 2016

FORUM MEMBERS PRESENT

Matthew	Harris	Official Member Rep.
Jared	Winder	Local Resident Rep.
Gaynor	Bagnall	Season Ticket Holder Rep.
Andy	Whitehead	Season Ticket Holder Rep.
Ian	Stirling	Fans' Group Rep.
Keith	Udale	MUSC Rep.
Paul	Warlow	MUSC Rep.
Peter	Rickard	65+ Rep.
Alan	Harvey	Family Stand Rep.
Terry	Holland	MUSC Rep.
Chas	Banks	MUDSA Rep.
Adrain	Short	Official Member Rep.

CLUB AND FOUNDATION OFFICIALS PRESENT

Richard	Arnold	Group Managing Director
Philip	Townsend	Director of Communications
David	French	Director of Venue
Sam	Kelleher	Head of Ticketing and Membership
John	Shiels	Chief Executive, Manchester United Foundation
Guy	Smith	Director of Venue Operations
Chelsea	Mould	T&MS Operations Manager

Topic	Speaker	Topic Notes
1. Introductions / Apologies	RA	<p>Apologies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ed Woodward, Executive Vice Chairman • Andrew Dunham, Official Member Rep. (Andrew has also resigned from the position) • Roger Muckle, Executive Club Rep. • Ryan Grogan, 16-21 Rep. • Michelle Houghton, Season Ticket Holder Rep. • John Alexander, Manchester United Club Secretary <p>Introductions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chas Banks, replacing Phil Downs as MUDSA representative • Ian Stirling who is the Fans' Group Rep. (newly created position) • 1 new Forum member that was unable to attend the 1st Forum of the season; Paul Warlow (MUSC Rep.)
2. Minutes (last meeting)	RA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approved
3. Security Update	GS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further reviews have been undertaken to improve the flow of supporters through matchday security searches. More security supervisors have been deployed and we have also reviewed the searching of female spectators in an effort to address the issues raised in previous forums. • This has involved building greater flexibility to allow females to be searched by an increased number of females, which means we are generally seeing queues being processed quicker.

Topic	Speaker	Topic Notes
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We still advise all supporters to arrive as early as possible for matches, and not to bring bags as the larger queues are only seen in the period leading up to kick off. • We are obviously investigating the reported incident involving 2 pranksters hiding in the stadium before the Arsenal game. To reassure people these individuals were searched on entry into the stadium and did not pose a security risk. On this occasion our control procedures around tour groups were not effectively implemented and we will ensure this is addressed going forward. • We will also review why the individuals (when found by our security teams) were able to pass themselves off as staff. The individuals were ejected at the start of the game and interviewed by the police. We are also aware that the same people have tried to carry out similar stunts at other venues including the Emirates Stadium. • Further strategic work continues; we are the first sports club in the country to appoint a full time dedicated Counter Terrorism Manager. We have also undertaken an independent review of all our security operations and the feedback received was extremely positive. • However recent events will ensure that we will not be complacent and continue to prioritise further improvements to security.
<p>4. Ticketing Update</p>	<p>SK</p>	<p>Domestic Away Game Validation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As a reminder, we are undertaking these validations with the primary objective of getting back to receiving full ticket allocations at as many away games as possible. • To help achieve that, we need to demonstrate to Clubs that we have stopped the very small minority of fans that have previously caused trouble at away grounds from receiving tickets. It is our understanding that this minority did not obtain their tickets directly through the Club. • Since the last forum, we have met with MUST, and proposed to, and agreed with, forum reps that the sanction imposed when someone is: asked to collect an away ticket, doesn't cancel, and doesn't collect – to be reduced from a 12-month away games suspension to be asked to collect their ticket whenever we operate a ticket collection. • If someone cancels or fails to collect on a second occasion then they will be suspended from applying for away games for a 12-month period. • Unfortunately there has been little progress on the validations since we last met as Liverpool, Chelsea and Everton were all deemed unsuitable on safety grounds, and Swansea offered no assistance. • However, we still plan to conduct as many validations as possible this season, re-commencing from the Crystal Palace game. • This process is starting to work: for the first time since records began, we saw a +50% success rate for the standard pot for the Crystal Palace game and all post-match reports this season have pointed to improved fan behaviour at each away match. • Therefore we will now start to increase the pressure on other clubs to increase our allocation, and make representations to the Premier League to contest any ongoing/further reductions, however, fans must help self-police at away games to ensure gangways are kept clear.

Topic	Speaker	Topic Notes
		<p>Away Game Ticket Exchange</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Following meetings with supporter groups, some of you may have seen that we have also committed to reviewing the feasibility of operating a ticket exchange for away games with effect from the 2017/18 season. • It was agreed that such a scheme couldn't be implemented until the validation process is complete, and that ticket checks would need to continue when the scheme was launched. • We are currently reviewing options (e.g. who will be eligible to use the scheme and when), and will endeavour to provide an update in the February 2017 forum. I would welcome any immediate feedback from this forum, or am happy to be contacted over the next few weeks. • Members asked SK to clarify if a Loyalty Pot member participated in an exchange scheme, whether any such activity would count as non-attendance, and in affect potentially remove their Loyalty Pot status. SK could not confirm at this stage as we are only in the early stages of reviewing whether any such ticket exchange is feasible, but encouraged Forum Members to send in their feedback before Christmas for this to be considered ahead of proposals being submitted. • SK was asked whether, as was the case in Moscow last season, passport stamps would be required to prove attendance in Turkey and the Ukraine in order to gain the credit for the match. SK asked for this to be discussed by the group; concern was expressed by many Forum Members that without verification of travelling, people might get credits that bought tickets but did not travel (especially for Zorya, where tickets are only £5), which would not be fair on those who did make the journey, and those who did not apply as they knew they wouldn't travel. • RA said the club would consider the suggestion. The club wants to strike a balance between rewarding loyal travelling fans and not wanting to appear too draconian. Members accepted the point and thought that if the club can communicate its intentions and demonstrate its actions are addressing concerns, then such a measure would be accepted. • Note: CM emailed Forum Members after the meeting, and 100% of feedback was for the verification process to be undertaken.
<p>5. Disabled Provisions Update</p>	<p>DF</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The good progress towards improving the provision for disabled supporters at Old Trafford is continuing, with Emma James (our new Disability Liaison Officer) and Rishi Jain (our new Equality & Inclusion Officer) both in post and making a positive impact across the Club. • Over the coming weeks and months, the Club will be conduct a second wave of meetings with key stakeholders, to discuss construction plans and related policy changes; due to tight timescales, we may need to arrange a special meeting to discuss these plans with the Fans' Forum, and so I'll be in touch in due course to arrange a suitable date. • Since our last meeting, the Club has been working closely with Level Playing Field (a registered charity dedicated to disabled sports fans) to undertake a full Access Audit of the stadium, and Architects have also completed some initial structural surveys of the stadium as we prepare to undertake construction works in order to increase the provision for disabled supporters. • Additionally, we've been working hard on identifying and implementing smaller changes that make a big difference to our supporters including introducing new braille kiosk menus and increasing the number of radio headsets available on a Matchday for blind / partially sighted supporters.

Topic	Speaker	Topic Notes
<p>6. MU Foundation Update</p>	<p>JS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We had a very successful Dream Day, based at the Aon Training Complex; this is a bi-annual event, which sees the Club host predominately terminally ill young fans, to meet and greet the players after training. The UNITED 4 UNICEF Gala Dinner was another great success raising £230K; the money will go towards a project in Thailand. This is an area of work which we are looking to develop. The Foundation will be taking on some of the roles and responsibilities of MUDSA, namely the distribution of Charity Tickets and the co-ordination of a new, expanded Disability Outreach programme. The annual Santa Run will be staged on December 4th here at OT. A great friend of the Foundation, David May, will be starting each race, a 5K Santa Run at 11:30am and a 2K Family Fun Run at 12:30pm. The dates have changed for the Red Heart United games against Barcelona, the away leg will now be 30th June 2017 and the home leg will be 2nd September 2017.
<p>7. MUDSA Update</p>	<p>CB</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Since the last Fans Forum, MUDSA has undergone some significant changes. Phil Downs, who was the secretary for 27 years, has now moved on to work for the Club as a consultant. My name is Chas Banks and I am the new secretary, elected unanimously by the serving MUDSA committee in accordance with our constitution. All the members of the committee, including myself, are democratically elected at the annual AGM. We serve a term of three years and can stand for re-election at the end of the term. I've brought along some copies of Rollin' Reds magazine for everyone to see what it looks like. We give the magazine out to members on the platform free of charge and it's fair to say, with its image heavy style and professional look, it's very popular with the members. As I live within a couple of miles of the ground, it will mostly be me you'll be seeing, but if I'm unavailable, we'll have a sub on the bench ready to step in to maintain continuity. As a committee, we are changing many of the ways that MUDSA operates. This is due to the ticketing operation being moved in its entirety to the ticket office overall and more directly to Emma James the new DLO. Emma has already made a good start, even though it's early days and we look to move forward, working together to make the match day experience the best possible for United's disabled fans. As a result of the changes, the administration and organisation of MUDSA's many and varied social activities, will now be carried out by the members of the committee. MUDSA will still be there for the members to offer advice and help when needed of course, it's just that it will be delivered in a different way. The new role MUDSA has been tasked with i.e. community outreach, will be delivered from within the Foundation offices and we plan to do all we can to help it be successful. The committee will shortly be meeting with Sam Kelleher to discuss ticketing; both home and away, as we try to agree the best/fairest possible method of ticket distribution, for both home and away games. We don't anticipate this being an easy job, as there are always winners and losers in any system.

Topic	Speaker	Topic Notes
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • However, we hope that through ongoing dialogue with the Club, we can eventually reach agreement on “the least worst” option. • The committee also has talks scheduled with David French about the ground redevelopment. MUDSA wants to be part of the decision making process as much as possible. After all, it’s our members who will be using the new facilities and “as end users”, with over 150 years of match watching experience behind us we feel we have a lot to offer to those making the final decisions. From our experience of trips to other club’s grounds over the past 25 years, we certainly have a lot of experience in how not to do it. • At the last MUDSA annual dinner on October 28th, the committee and the members appointed Phil Downs as joint Patron & Sir Alex Ferguson (our other Patron) presented Phil with a commemorative silver platter. We hope to see Phil around on the platform for many years to come.
8. Members' Questions	PT	
a. Club strips	RA	<p>Q: Why have the club changed all 3 of the club's strips after one season? Under Nike, the away kit cycle meant a kit lasted for 2 seasons and the 2nd and 3rd out change was staggered. Now all 3 kits changed after one year, giving little value to families. Plus adding pressure from kids who want all 3 kits.</p> <p>Can we revert back to the cycle of 2 years for a 2nd and 3rd kit?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The club has been operating a 3 kit cycle for the last 3 years. Our experience, and the experience of Adidas (and Nike previously), is that Fans actively seek newness in this area, and this is something which we plan to continue with.
b. Price and choice of beer	GS	<p>Q: This year the beer on the concourse has changed to Heineken. This has seen an increase in the price of a bottle, meaning it is now over £9 a pint. On some concourses the bottles are poured into a plastic pint pot, which delays the serving.</p> <p>Manchester City offer a selection of beers, served in pint pot's by a quick serving machine. Each of their beers are sold for under £3.80 a pint. Why can we not have this service and pricing at Old Trafford?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heineken was introduced at the start of this season; we charge £4.50 for a 400ml bottle. The configuration of the concourses means that it is not efficient to serve draught beer. We are aware there are fast pour dispensers in operation at other stadiums but these require larger serving areas. The £9 per pint figure is not correct as the bottle is significantly larger than half a pint and is also larger than the Singha bottle sold previously. We do offer John Smith’s bitter and Bulmer’s cider in all kiosks. • We have also introduced white wine this season following feedback from customer surveys. We’d also remind supporters that we have offered 3 items for £7 (hot food, snack and any drink) for the past 3 seasons and also provide season ticket holders with 4 buy one get one free vouchers for items from the kiosks. Drinks in Stretford End Tier 2 are decanted following a series of drinking in view incidents in that area. Drinks are sometimes decanted in East Lower on police request for high risk fixtures.

Topic	Speaker	Topic Notes
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members asked if the decanting of beer in West Tier 2 could be reviewed. GS confirmed this would be reviewed ASAP but would require a discussion the GMP. Members asked the Club to consider expanding the range of beers and drinks on offer. RA said the club would do and asked for suggestions.
c. Safe standing	PT	<p>Q: Several clubs have now come out in support of rail seating. Celtic FC have installed a section of rail seats at Parkhead, which has improved the atmosphere. To date this has been a success. A recent survey by SEF showed 93% of Manchester United fans favour rail seats and want to see them installed at Old Trafford. Can Manchester United commit to a trial of rail seats and ask for this to be undertaken at Old Trafford next season?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No, the club cannot commit to a trial as there is no clarity on the legality of rail seating within the current safety requirements for English clubs. The Premier League clubs discussed it at their recent meeting and there was no overall consensus. Clubs have, however, asked the League to scope out the safety, supporter, technical and legislative issues around this as a precursor to further discussions. The club's view remains as set out to this Forum in 2014; namely that it supports the idea in principle and it would expect to be among the leaders of change if the hurdles can be overcome.
d. Away supporters in home sections	SK	<p>Q: Use of tickets in home end by away supporters - I received an e-mail referring to this subject on my exec numbers but nothing on my normal ST, please confirm that this has been issued to every ST Holder, because there have been instances of away supporters being in the execs and the main stands this season.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is a reminder of policy for all games, but has been circulated specifically around the Feyenoord match. An electronic version of this message has now been sent to all Season Ticket holders, with printed versions posted to those without email.
e. Matchday toilet facilities	GS	<p>Q: Toilet Facilities outside the ground on match days - there are no facilities outside the ground on the day of the game, can something be considered, if you are waiting to meet people and get caught short, there is no option than to walk to a pub/hotel or go into the ground. Even a small bank of porta-loos would suffice, (marked, if required for Male and Female users). they could be located towards the fence at the back of the north stand so as not to impact on car parking spaces</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Portaloos have been introduced in N1 car park next to bag drop cabin for recent matches. Toilets are also available in the East Stand tunnel on matchdays prior to turnstiles opening.
f. Matchday transport	GS	<p>Q: Coordination of buses/trams and trains - 3 seasons ago GMPTE (Greater Manchester Passenger Transport Executive) did a presentation on the upgrade of the tram lines, bus services etc, I did ask at the start of last season if they could provide an update of the services and what they have achieved/failed to achieve in this time. There were questions about the trains leaving before the end of the game, due to the schedule they need to, has this been addressed?</p>

Topic	Speaker	Topic Notes
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transport for Greater Manchester (the new name for GMPTE) will be invited to present at the next forum. We have held meetings with Northern Rail about train scheduling from Ground Halt station. Trains only leave earlier than the scheduled time if they are full to capacity- this potentially reduces the wait time for supporters queuing for the subsequent service.
g. Two wheeled parking options	GS	<p>Q: Why is the club no longer providing facilities for 2 wheeled motor vehicles in which to park safely and freely, or for a nominal fee reflective of the use of space that such vehicles make, as compared to cars?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our current car parking policy doesn't differentiate between 2 and 4 wheeled motor vehicles, i.e. they are required to buy a parking permit to park on MU car parks. We are aware of a recent incident where a motorcycle was left without authorisation and required removal as it was parked next to a designated exit point. We will now review options to create a designated motorcycle parking area with a discounted rate compared to 4 wheel vehicles. Please note that we do have designated pedal cycle parking areas where no charge is made.
h. Wheelchair platform	SK	<p>Q: Would the club consider reintroducing the International Application Process as many of our overseas disabled members find it very difficult to arrange trips in advance?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We don't offer an International hold any more for various reasons. Firstly, there are many reasons as to why supporters may only be able to visit once or twice a season that are not specifically due to location. It would be unfair of us to offer favourable treatment to one group of supporters over another. Also, as this was only offered to wheelchair users, this placed supporters with other types of disabilities at a disadvantage. There is no fair way of allocating the International hold as we may get multiple requests for one game, and none for another. A regular item we cover in this Forum is that the Club want to show transparency when it comes to allocating tickets, and after advice from the EHRC, Level Playing Field and other expert bodies, we were advised to not discriminate between disabled and non-disabled fans. We do not offer an International hold for non-disabled fans, and with games not being confirmed until a few weeks before anyway, all supporters are in the same position with arranging travel & accommodation. We have however, openly agreed to review any cases with exceptional circumstances and supporters are welcome to make such requests.
i. Concession ticket prices	DF	<p>Q: When will the club look at offering concessions in other parts of the ground?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concessions are already offered in all areas of the stadium for supporters aged 65 and over, and between the ages of 16 to 20.

Topic	Speaker	Topic Notes
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Under 16' Season Tickets are currently limited to the Family Stand and Sir Alex Ferguson Stand Tier 3 as they have suitable toilet and refreshment facilities and it helps to group young supporters together. • The stewarding policy around the ground, especially regarding foul language and persistent standing reflects the mix of tickets sold, e.g. we are far less tolerant in areas where there are a high number of children. • As the aforementioned facilities are sold out seasonally, we do sell 'Under 16' Match Tickets in all areas of the stadium to ensure that additional younger fans can come to some matches. • This policy is reviewed each season, and a number of factors are considered; we are currently finalising proposals for the 2017/18 season and will announce full plans in the coming months.
<p>j. Away price cap effect on home ticket income</p>	<p>DF</p>	<p>Q: What is the view of safe guarding plans for home fans who may not benefit from away price cap as they only go to home games? It's rumoured a high percentage of adult tickets turning into OAP concessions in the next 8 years or so. How do the club anticipate the impact of that potential drop in ticket income and will they avoid passing that cost onto other full priced STH's?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The number of '65+' concessionary Season Tickets has been increasing consistently year on year over the last 10 years, so this is not a 'new' trend per se. • We have no immediate plans to increase general admission ticket prices to compensate for any drop in income, which is demonstrated by Season Ticket & Match Ticket prices being frozen for the last five consecutive seasons (it is also the sixth time in seven seasons that prices have been held).
<p>k. Persistent standing warnings</p>	<p>GS</p>	<p>Q: Letters were received by 3 supporters after the match v Burnley claiming they had been spoken to on 'Numerous occasions' by a steward about persistent standing and as such received a warning that any further incidents and they would receive a 3 match ban. It is claimed by the supporters no such warnings were given. What is the procedure for issuing warnings to supporters and what action should be taken when warnings are disputed? (Notes to consider – there were 37 shots and 19 corners for us. I'd imagine the majority of the stadiums was stood for a considerable length of time!- Stats from ManUtd.Com.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are aware of this issue. We will ensure that a steward supervisor visits the supporters in question to ensure that any miscommunications are resolved. There have been issues with persistent standing in this area which have blocked the view of other supporters. The club is satisfied that these issues are only reported if they occur persistently. • The issuing of a written warning and possible 3 match ban are in line with the Official Club Sanctions Document agreed in this Forum. • Further to discussion, it was confirmed that this sanction/warning has been removed from the account of the 3 ticket holders
<p>l. MUSC contact with the Club</p>	<p>SK</p>	<p>Q: There have been complaints from branch secretaries about differing levels of service in the ticket office. It's understood that staffing issues with temps have led to this (and is being resolved soon There's concern that the relationship between the club and MUSC's is deteriorating. How soon will the proposed changes in staffing in the ticket office be implemented to address this?</p>

Topic	Speaker	Topic Notes
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We are in the process of recruiting additional permanent staff which will help to improve the service generally offered to all supporters. However, there have been some minor changes in the handling of MUSC's / Policy applied to MUSC's which will not be impacted by this recruitment. In order to answer the question, we will need to see the specific complaint – please feel free to forward this to me separately or raise at the next Forum.
<p>m. MUST statement re Official Club Sanctions Document</p>	<p>IS</p>	<p>IS asked to make MUST's position clear on the Official Club Sanctions Document:</p> <p><i>"MUST has been lobbying the Club for some time to be more transparent about the penalties that would be applied to fans who contravened rules affecting match going fans.</i></p> <p><i>This was not at any point about developing new rules or penalties but rather asking the Club to publish their existing policies so that MUST and fans were fully aware.</i></p> <p><i>During that process MUST did raise concerns about many of the sanctions in terms of severity and appropriateness but in the end it is the club's decision whether it accepts those points. However we do not see that as the end of the exercise by any means. Now we have a published sanctions document it is possible for us to consult with supporters and then feedback views to the club with regard to how fans feel these rules and sanctions should be reformed. That process has already started with a new survey being opened to match going supporters last weekend.(v Arsenal)</i></p> <p><i>Furthermore, having helped hundreds of individual fans over recent years, MUST also pushed for a proper and transparent appeals procedure with a panel to sit regularly to consider appeals. That appeals panel is now operating and at our request the club has agreed in principle to take on additional independent panel members so we are seeking supporter views on who might be best placed to serve in that role.</i></p> <p><i>The letters sent out to supporters state that the sanction were put in place after consultation with supporters' groups but does not detail any of the objection given by them. We would ask that further clarification is given on the letters sent or any mention of consultation is removed."</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> RA agreed to a request from Members to increase the independent representation on the appeals panel which considers cases. DF said that the new appeals process has upheld, reduced and overturned a number of cases; demonstrating its effectiveness and it is being used as an example of best practice across the League. However, the club is open to making further improvements and will present suggestions to the next Forum meeting.

Topic	Speaker	Topic Notes
<p>9. Any Other Business</p>	<p>RA</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some concern was expressed that the organised fan groups do not speak for united fans as a whole, and it was revealed that some of the official supporters' clubs had been getting together to present alternative views. This group and a new collective, the Manchester United Supporters' Group want to talk to MUST but to date have not had much success. PT said that the seat on the Forum for the organised fan groups was open only to Football Supporters' Federation recognised groups but the Club actively encourages different groups to speak to each other; there is no downside to dialogue. RA said that whatever the outcome, the club is committed to listen. • Date of Next Meeting: Wednesday 1st February 2017 (Hull City Matchday); 12.30pm Lunch for a 1pm Start.