

MANCHESTER UNITED FANS' FORUM – MINUTES

FRIDAY 15TH SEPTEMBER 2017

FORUM MEMBERS PRESENT

Chas	Banks	MUDSA Secretary
Seb	Chowdhury	Official Member
James	Coatsworth	Season Ticket Holder
Ben	Cooper	Official Member
Phil	Cowper	65+ Rep.
Craig	Dilley	MUSC Rep.
Alan	Harvey	Family Stand Rep.
Darryl	Hewlett	Season Ticket Holder
Terry	Holland	MUSC Rep
Janine	Kasmir	Local Resident Rep.
Josephine	Loughnane	Official Member
Ian	Stirling	Fans' Group Rep.
Harry	Sutcliffe	16-21 Rep.
David	Young	Season Ticket Holder

CLUB AND FOUNDATION OFFICIALS PRESENT

John	Alexander	Club Secretary
Richard	Arnold	Group Managing Director
David	French	Director of Venue
Sam	Kelleher	Head of Ticketing & Membership
Andrew	Lisgo	Corporate Media Relations Manager
Chelsea	Mould	T&MS Operations Manager
Dan	Schofield	Head of Venue Operations
John	Shiels	Chief Executive, Manchester United Foundation
Phil	Townsend	Director of Communications

Topic	Speaker	Topic Notes
1. Introductions / Apologies	RA	<p>Apologies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mark Heaton (Executive Club Member) Paul Warlow (MUSC Representative) <p>Introductions</p> <p>New Representatives for 17/18 & 18/19 seasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seb Chowdhury (Official Member) James Coatsworth (Season Ticket Holder) Ben Cooper (Official Member) Phil Cowper (65+ Representative) Craig Dilley (MUSC Representative) Mark Heaton (Executive Club Member) <i>not present</i> Darryl Hewlett (Season Ticket Holder) Janine Kasmir (Local Resident Representative) Josephine Loughnane (Official Member) Harry Sutcliffe (16-21 Representative) David Young (Season Ticket Holder)
2. Minutes (last meeting)	RA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minutes were approved

Topic	Speaker	Topic Notes
<p data-bbox="76 1061 300 1167">3. Security & Operations Update</p>	<p data-bbox="435 1099 480 1128">DS</p>	<p data-bbox="544 143 651 172">Security</p> <ul data-bbox="592 199 1503 2096" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="592 199 1474 286">• Since the last forum we have undertaken a full and thorough review of the Matchday Security operation and made some significant changes that have been implemented for the 2017/18 season. <li data-bbox="592 311 1503 367">• We have revised our search procedures to provide a more thorough and consistent level of search, and introduced a restricted bag policy. <li data-bbox="592 392 1474 479">• As a result of the enhanced search policy, searches will take longer, which will lead to longer queuing. Searching bags takes a long time so by removing bags from the equation it will help reduce the queue time. <li data-bbox="592 504 1490 649">• We implemented an extensive communications plan prior to the start of the season to encourage everybody to arrive early in order to ensure that they get to see all of the action on the pitch. I am really pleased to report that for the first few home fixtures this season we have seen the crowd enter in record time. <li data-bbox="592 674 1503 792">• For comparative fixtures in the 16/17 season we would expect to have had around 10k supporters in the stadium 1 hour before kick-off; for both the West Ham & Leicester games we had c20k supporters in 1 hour before kick-off. <li data-bbox="592 817 1490 904">• As a thank-you for supporters heeding our advice and arriving early at the West Ham game, we subsequently offered 50% off all drinks up to 1 hour before kick-off at the Leicester and Basel games. <li data-bbox="592 929 1497 1075">• In addition to the enhanced search procedure, we have also increased the amount of female entry lanes, changed the way we position turnstile queues to help facilitate entry, and improved our hostile vehicle mitigation measures, all hopefully ensuring a smoother & safer matchday experience. <li data-bbox="592 1099 1465 1187">• Supporters will also see a more visible police presence at games this season which comes as a result of our close working partnership with Greater Manchester Police. <li data-bbox="592 1211 1474 1330">• Since the last Fans' Forum meeting we have also been able to pay tribute to the contribution that Michael Carrick has made to the club when celebrating his testimonial game. With more than 70,000 tickets sold, over £1million was raised for Michael's newly-formed Foundation. <li data-bbox="592 1355 1503 1565">• The game took place on the same day as the One Love Manchester concert at Emirates Old Trafford and, regrettably, the night before the game we had some trespassers gain access to the stadium attempting a YouTube prank which made an already-complex delivery operation even more challenging and put both the game and the gig at jeopardy. As it was, both went ahead and between them raised over £5million for good causes. <li data-bbox="592 1590 1481 1832">• The issue of queues outside the stadium was raised and it was suggested that security staff need to be giving a uniform message to fans. The issue of female-only lanes at the turnstile had not seemed to be properly understood by some security staff with anecdotal evidence of women being asked to join the main queue, rather than the female-only lane. DS said that each turnstile bank now had one female lane. These are new arrangements and the club is still learning each game and will change the way it is implemented as required. <li data-bbox="592 1856 1503 2096">• DS was asked about flares being smuggled into the FC Basel game. Fans are increasingly ingenious in the way they conceal such devices and the club is investigating new technologies that would make detection easier. The club already writes to opposition clubs, pointing out the 'no flares' policy and provides amnesty bins, as well as rapid response teams to deal with any that are smuggled in. The number of flares confiscated was high for the FC Basel game – but a small number still got through.

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		<p>Operations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To support the revised search and restricted bag policy we have introduced additional Bag Drop facilities across the site which are currently free of charge. Over the summer we have installed a new EPOS system across the stadium which means supporters can now pay for food and drink using cards (contactless / chip & pin technology) at every kiosk. Following the pie tasting at the last Fans' Forum, we have introduced our new pie supplier, Wrights, whose products have proved extremely popular. We introduced the limited edition Burger Bar Pasty at the Leicester game which was voted for by over 50,000 individuals. Other Limited Edition Pies will be introduced throughout the season. Other menu changes include the introduction of Guinness & prosecco to the menu at certain kiosks across the stadium.
<p>4. Ticketing Update</p>	<p>SK</p>	<p>General Ticketing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> SK provided a brief recap on some changes that we implemented ahead of the 2017/18 season – many of which are as a direct result of conversations with this forum. Discounts for under 16s have been extended from the Family Stand and North Stand Tier 3, and are now available in a number of new areas within the stadium. We have discounted ticket prices for the Carabao Cup by 25% (although this is subject to agreement by the visiting team – Burton agreed). We have removed all booking fees from all Ticketing & Membership products. We introduced a pack and small gift that was sent with Season Tickets (this year we sent a pin badge and wallet). We sold our first ever Season Tickets to disabled supporters and the club is now in the 2nd year of managing disabled ticketing, providing a better service than ever for all fans. We are in the final stages of recruiting a full-time Ticket Touting & Compliance Officer to help reduce the number of tickets appearing on the black-market. <p>Away Games</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> One of the things we regularly discuss in this forum is away ticket allocations and ticket validation exercises. As a club, we are extremely proud of our away support, which is renowned as the best in the country, however, we have received reduced ticket allocations for a long-time now and together we have made a commitment to get more United fans to every away game. A key part of this is ensuring that the people allocated tickets are actually the people using them and stopping the minority of supporters that behave badly from receiving tickets. This is cited by other clubs as the primary reason for our reduced allocations. Since the validations process began in 2013/14 the club has validated c10k Season Ticket Holders by asking them to collect their ticket at a game they were successful in the ballot for <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Of these 10k, c2k (20%) failed to collect their ticket, and are now required to collect their ticket if successful, for a 12 month period When the process started, the failure to collect rate was much higher at c35%, so the process is positively influencing behaviour 100 people have been suspended from attending away games as they failed to collect or cancelled their ticket on two occasions. The Loyalty pot now stands at 664 vs. 950 at the start of this process.

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As a result ticket applications reducing by 41% (i.e. many people who had no intention of going to a game have stopped applying), the success rate in the standard pot has now increased from c18% to c35%. • We are also starting to see the benefit of lots of hard work to increase our ticket allocations; when we started this process in 2013/14 we identified five clubs where we did not receive the full allocation of tickets. Four of these teams remain in the Premier League and we anticipate receiving the maximum allocation of tickets for each game this season. • The only reduced allocations we anticipate this season are at Manchester City and Liverpool, who have both had their safety certificates issued on the condition that clubs are not allocated certain seats if their fans persistently stand (resulting in an allocation of c2.7k for each). In the case of Manchester City, it is due to the narrowness of the allocation, split across three levels. Standing at height is deemed dangerous. • Additionally, following discussions in last year's forum meetings we have launched an away game ticket exchange for the 2017/18 season. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It should be noted that this has only been used to exchange six tickets so far this season (four for Swansea and two for Southampton). <p>European Away Games</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We announced in this forum last year that we would be moving away from the historic 'one-year' credit system deployed for European away games, and would move to a rolling three-year system. • This means for Euro away games this season we will look back to the 2015/16 & 2016/17 campaigns, as well as any games played in 2017/18, except for any finals and the UEFA Super Cup. • With CSKA Moscow just over a week away, we have again committed to helping supporters by a) refunding the costs incurred for visas, and b) arranging free coach travel from the City Centre to the stadium, courtesy of our partner Aeroflot.
<p>5. Disabled Provisions Update</p>	<p>DF</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All new disabled facilities have been completed ahead of the 2017/18 season, creating over 300 new positions for disabled supporters, including the widening of vomitories, installation of new reversible wheelchair user platforms, new amenity seats for other disabled supporters, as well as new accessible toilets and kiosks. • As you will recall, because the changes will displace some 2,600 STHs, the club developed a three-year phased programme of relocating fans from their current seats, in order to allow time to find suitable alternative seats, with all new facilities being in use for the 2020/21 season. • As per the club's announcement on Wednesday 12th July, unfortunately the introduction of new accessible facilities in the Sir Alex Ferguson Stand is subject to some delay while the club undertakes necessary assessments from both a safety and customer service perspective. • The club has a duty of care to assess fully the impact of disabled and non-disabled supporters using a shared concourse, before introducing any new facilities; to that end, a third party will carry out both computer modelling and 'real-time' assessments in a controlled manner during the course of the 2017/18 season, to ensure the safety of, and provide the best possible experience for, all supporters. • Assessments started in the East Stand at the first home game of the season (v West Ham on Sunday 13 August); this is where the majority of existing wheelchair platforms are and where we have introduced a new disabled supporters' entrance and facilities, meaning both disabled and non-disabled supporters would share a concourse for the first time.

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Once results of the initial, incremental assessments in the East Stand are known and have been fully considered, we will look to broaden assessments to include other areas during the season; the need for this test programme has been communicated to the EHRC, Premier League and MUDSA Committee and we've advised that we will therefore also need to review the roll-out plan & communicate ahead of the 2018/19 season. The club would again like to thank those Season Ticket holders who were relocated over the summer, and all disabled supporters, for their understanding and continued loyal support.
6. MUDSA Update	CB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Since the last time the forum met, MUDSA organised an aircraft and coaches to take 96 disabled fans and their carers to Stockholm for the final. It was a tremendous occasion and great that we took up every one of our allocated places. The club helped out with logistical support via the ticket office team and also made a financial contribution that helped hugely. A big thank you goes to Richard Arnold and Sam, Emma & Lenny from Ticketing and Membership. We really couldn't have done it without you! We are now well in to the first full season of the new ticketing procedures. This means that for the first time ever, disabled fans are able to buy season tickets. However, it also means they have to pay for their tickets (although the charging is being phased in) whereas previously they were free to most disabled fans, though not all. The club was reluctant to introduce charging but was advised that it should treat all supporters in the same way. The money raised goes back into MUDSA and the community outreach programmes it conducts with the Manchester United Foundation. This is a huge change to the way things have been done for 20 years or more. Consequently and understandably, although it has made the great majority of people very happy, there is a significant vocal minority who are viscerally opposed to change. As we all know, change can be uncomfortable. The changes are here to stay though and are part of the long term plan to ensure that the club is compliant with disability law. By the time we get to the end of this process in time for the 20/21 season, 83% of the wheelchair spaces and accessible seating will be STs, because that is the same ratio used in the main bowl for the able bodied. Some won't like that, many others will be thrilled. Even though the necessary building work has been completed, the club has had to postpone taking into use this season the new facilities in the Sir Alex Ferguson stand. Clearly this is disappointing, but the great majority of members understand the reasons and the club have explained very clearly why this decision was made. This is because a significant amount of work has to be carried out, working on how a large group of people in wheelchairs, interact with a large group of able bodied fans in the concourses. This is a serious safety issue and cannot be overlooked. It will be a lengthy process, but has to be done. On a brighter note, the new access steps for the Visually Impaired (VI) section are a great hit. The work that was completed in the Summer has made getting in to and getting out of the VI section smoother and very much safer. So, a big thank you to Group Property Services for all their hard work from our VI members. The Friends and Family seats in the Quadrants are proving to be a big hit too and are used constantly by disabled members, allowing them to see the game with their family or friends.

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The new MUDSA is now up and running very smoothly and the membership is now well over 800, which makes us the biggest Disabled Supporters Association in Europe by some distance. Membership is free to disabled fans who are already members of the club's Official Membership Scheme.
7. MU Foundation Update	JS	<p>Legends Game</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We had a good crowd at Legends game against Barcelona of over 34,000 and we used the opportunity to give space to socially deprived young people of Manchester. <p>Schools Hubs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It's the start of new school year. We are starting in two new Hub Schools, one in Wigan, the other in central Manchester. We are now chasing bases in Bolton and in Bury to complete the 10 Greater Manchester Boroughs. We are talking to government about working on a programme directed at 15-17 year olds. The programme will help immensely with the young people's development. <p>Apprenticeships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> JS was asked if the Foundation provided apprenticeships. The Foundation works with schools and partners to offer them. In addition, where possible, it likes to recruit people from its own schemes to vacancies that arise. The club has, for a number of years, run an apprentice scheme, which has been recognised as offering top quality work and educational experience to those on it. Greater Manchester mayor, Andy Burnham and former Chancellor of the Exchequer George Osborne have both visited to meet the apprentices. <p>Pies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Foundation has been working with the local authority to find a way of making sure the pies not sold at a game are kept warm and distributed to the homeless in Manchester.
8. Members' Questions	PT	
a. Security Searches	DS	<p>Q: How can the security requirements be made more uniform & efficient?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Covered in the Security & Operations update.
b. Kiosk Efficiency	DF	<p>Q: How can kiosks be made more efficient pre-match and at ½ time?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We are always looking at improving service levels in the kiosk operation. Recent improvements include the introduction of card / contactless payment at every till point, increased hawking cart numbers and the smaller kiosks now carrying a full range of products. We also have staff whose specific role is to help queue bust / solve problems. We hope that these improvements will have a positive effect on the efficiency of kiosks; we will monitor the effects closely and keep you informed of any future improvement plans. The use of vending machines is being looked at but the lack of space on the concourses is an issue. The use of hawkers could be expanded.

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DF was asked if the club had considered pre-ordering of food and drink for collection at kiosks. He said that it had been trialled in the past but needed looking at again. The possibility of opening kiosks after the game was raised. There are practical issues with it, such as whether it would be a universal service and what effect it would have on the club being able to close down the stadium in an efficient manner, but DS promised to look into it. It was generally felt that the introduction of half price drinks for those who arrived more than one hour before kick-off had worked very well. More research is needed but early indications are that it was a success. DS said he would look into benchmarking beer prices against local pubs with a view to reviewing our current prices.
c. Ticket Exchange	SK	<p>Q: Can the Season Ticket match sell back scheme / ticket exchange be reintroduced? (<i>amalgamation of a number of questions</i>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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.
d. Mobile Coverage / Wi-Fi at OT	DS	<p>Q: Can the phone signal at OT be improved / any Wi-Fi plans for fans?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We are constantly evaluating options to improve connectivity at the stadium, however right now there is not a definitive plan, but we will look to update the forum as soon as viable options have been assessed. The mobile networks around the ground are owned by independent companies and it is not in the club's gift to improve them.
e. Fan Areas	DS	<p>Q: Any plans for pre & post-match fan areas to help improve the matchday atmosphere, especially now Sam Platts has closed?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Matchday atmosphere is very important to all of us and we are evaluating a number of options for 'Fanzones' or 'Fan Areas' both in and around the stadium. We would welcome suggestions from all of you and those you represent, as to how collectively we can improve. It was agreed this should be an agenda item at the next meeting.
f. Anniversary of George Best's Death & the Munich Air disaster	PT	<p>Q: Are there any plan to mark the anniversary of George Best's death on the 25th November (died 2005) and the 60th anniversary of the Munich Air Disaster in 2018 (i.e. mark on nearest match to the dates; perhaps a special banner)?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> MU Media are producing content to pay tribute in the case of both these anniversaries, for use both in the build-up and on the actual day. The idea of a banner is a popular one. For the Munich anniversary, the club will be respectful to the memory of all those lost and those that survived such a tragic event (details to be confirmed in due course). We are aware of plans for an event in Germany and will seek to be represented at that, as well as any events in Manchester. We want the fans & families to be integral to any commemoration.

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g. South Stand Expansion	DF	<p>Q: Will there be an expansion on the South Stand due to the capacity being lowered because of the increased disability section?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We continue to explore stadium development ideas, including the South Stand, with a view to enhancing the experience for all. When we have more concrete concepts we will look to share with fan representatives.
h. Match Update Confirmations for Exec Members	DF	<p>Q: Executive Members used to get an e-mail confirmation when games had been agreed for TV coverage. This was really helpful to them book flights/travel arrangements and hotels. The e-mail doesn't get sent anymore - could it be re-instated?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will ensure that going forward such updates/date confirmations are communicated via the weekly Executive Club Newsletter. JA informed the meeting that, in a break with previous announcements, the next live games for the months of December and January will be announced together by the Premier League.
i. Exec Members Purchasing Additional GA Tickets	SK	<p>Q: Why isn't it possible for Executive members to buy regular tickets for games at Old Trafford, without having to be a member?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is possible on occasion for Executive Club members to buy additional tickets without being an Official Member. We prioritise selling match tickets to Official Members, but for certain games where we allow Official Members to purchase more than one ticket, the same offer is always extended to Executive Club members and Season Ticket holders.
j. Safe Standing Trial	DS	<p>Q: What is the possibility to develop safe standing in old Trafford or trial it during a period of time? <i>(similar question asked a few times)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Earlier this year we responded to a consultation request from the Premier League around standing, and have indicated that we would consider being more involved in a more detailed study and permitted standing pilot should the opportunity exist. RA reiterated the Board's support for safe standing.
k. Away Allocations	SK	<p>Q: What is the possibility of splitting the allocation for away games evenly across age groups in order to make fairer, and/or creating a loyalty pot for young people?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have committed to prioritising the increase of ticket allocations before we commit to undertaking an exercise to review the methodology applied to ballots and considering additional 'pots'. However, having analysed four years' worth of data (relating to teams who have been a constant in the Premier League), we found that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 26% of people who were in the Loyalty Pot were no longer attending matches and have been removed, increasing the number of tickets available to others, while retaining the same success rate for those in the Loyalty Pot. And more supporters are now only applying for games that they personally intend to attend, giving those in the Standard Pot a greater chance of success; the net result is that the average success rate of those in the Standard Pot has increased from c18% to 35% in recent years.
l. Young Person / Student Discounts	SK	<p>Q: Can young person/student discounts be increased for cup games as the price difference is very minimal to full priced adults?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This topic has been raised before in this forum, and we feel the current 25% discount offered to 18-20 year olds (as well as the 50% reduction offered to 16 and 17 year olds) is at the right level.

Topic	Speaker	Topic Notes
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The club does have relationships with local universities and 'blue light' groups to try and make more tickets available to a broader number of people and to encourage new fans to come to the stadium.
m. Waste Bins	DS	<p>Q: Could more waste bins be provided for supporters who purchase food from the vendors outside the ground?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each of the external vendors are contractually required to provide waste disposal provision. We have taken this feedback on-board and will pay particular attention to this going forward. We have also installed more 'rings' on the stadium perimeter wall in which we place clear plastic bags for waste disposal.
n. Accessibility Stadia Roll-Out Plan	DF	<p>Q: MUDSA members in the main appreciate the unanticipated problems the club have faced with the expansion, resulting in the new North Stand facilities not being able to be used at the start of the season as originally planned. However, can the club reassure the members that the facilities in the Sir Alex Ferguson Stand will be open in time for the 18/19 season, plus the corner section adjacent that was planned to be opened for the 18/19 season?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> At this point we can't confirm when the new facilities in the Sir Alex Ferguson Stand will be taken into use, as we will need to await the results of the on-going assessments. As mentioned earlier, following the assessments, we will need to review the roll-out plan & then advise ahead of the 2018/19 season, however please be assured of the club's continued commitment to equality and the fulfilment of our Stadium Accessibility Plans for the start of the 2020/21 season, as previously communicated.
o. Accessible Stadia Assessments	DF	<p>Q: Whilst we appreciate it's still very early days, is the club able to share the early results of the assessment of the impact of wheelchairs operating within the East Stand concourse?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We don't as yet have enough data from the on-going assessments taking place during the course of the 2017/18 season, and will also need to augment the data modelling results with qualitative survey and other feedback; supporters, both non-disabled and disabled, and carers, who have attended a match this season and are located in the relevant areas, will be sent a post-match survey to complement real-time surveys conducted at half-time.
p. Leg Room Issues	DS	<p>Q: New seats have been put due to the accessible stadium plan changes, but the new seats seriously restrict leg room. So much so, that the knees of the person behind stick into my back, but there is nothing he can do. Can the club look at the amount of leg room available and also ensure name plaques are reinstated?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We appreciate that the new reversible seating system has reduced the amount of leg room in some cases, however the 'Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds' stipulates that row depths need to be at least 610mm, and the minimum amount offered in these new seats is 640mm. We will however, look to see if anything can realistically be done to improve the space in the worst affected areas. Reinstating name plaques is already underway.

Topic	Speaker	Topic Notes
<p>q. U16 Season Tickets in J Stand</p>	<p>SK</p>	<p>Q: I have been in J stand for almost 30 years and I am happy there. My little boy is now 8 and in his third year as a Season Ticket holder and I have paid the adult price for him for three years. Are there any plans to extend the availability of Junior Season Tickets to include J stand?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> As mentioned previously, ahead of the 17/18 season, we have increased the number of areas in the stadium where under 16 season tickets are now available, however only certain areas were felt suitable, i.e. where younger fans can benefit from suitable facilities, appropriately trained staff, and atmosphere - and J Stand didn't (and doesn't) fit those criteria. Members should note that representatives from J-Stand have actually expressed concerns about the number of under 16s in that area.
<p>9. Any Other Business</p>	<p>RA</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AOB from Reps As it was to be JA's last Fans' Forum, as a result of his impending retirement, IS made a small presentation of a dressing gown and slippers, on behalf of forum members. Date of Next Meeting: Friday 17th November, Old Trafford