



Disabled Supporter Advisory Board meeting minutes

Date: Wednesday 7th February 2018

Time: 6.00pm – 8.00pm

Location: Press Conference Room, London Stadium

Key personnel

- Karren Brady, Vice-Chairman West Ham United
- Tara Warren, Executive Director of Marketing and Communications, West Ham United
- Ben Illingworth, Head of Matchday Operations, West Ham United
- Julie Pidgeon, Disability Access Officer, West Ham United
- Jake Heath, Supporter Services Manager, West Ham United
- Nicola Keye, Head of Ticketing, West Ham United
- Joe Lyons, CEO, West Ham United Foundation
- Graham Harris, Deputy Safety Officer, London Stadium 185
- James Datson, Matchday commentator for blind and partially-sighted supporters
- Andy Sheldon, WHU Dedicated Football Officer, Metropolitan Police

DSAB Attendees

- Cathy Bayford
- Trevor Bright
- Robbie Cahill
- Neal Crowley
- Gill Fowler
- Tracy Higgins
- David Puckett
- Helena Reynolds
- Joe Seigel
- Anthony Seigel
- Pauline Tanner
- Steve Lowe

Apologies

- David Griffith
- Bradley Donovan
- Jerry Gibson

Agenda

1. Our Football Club is for everyone
2. Our Equality Framework
3. Updates from the Club
4. Photo Route
5. Submitted topics for discussion
6. A.O.B

INTRODUCTION

Karren Brady (KB) began by welcoming members to the meeting and thanking everyone for attending, before introducing a short video that was prepared for the club's immediate level Premier League Equality Standard application. KB states that she is very proud of the video. Video runs approx. 7 minutes.

KB states that the video reflects everything that club is doing and has first-hand experience of being discriminated against so knows how difficult it is, and that's why these videos are important and the club champion these issues. KB states that it is something that is supported from the top down and the club are hopeful of achieving their standard.

OUR EQUALITY FRAMEWORK

Joe Lyons (JL) introduced by KB to explain the framework for the quality standard. JL states the club have been working for 18 months to be at this point where they can apply for the intermediate level. JL states that groups like the DSAB have been highlighted as a key milestone of progress for West Ham. JL says West Ham decided to approach their application by looking at the club from the Board level and working downwards, where KB and the Board set the strategy, with a working group looking at the detail, which includes JL and Michelle Gull (MG). JL explains that the DSAB sits within one of those strands within the strategic group. JL says that he hopes groups like the DSAB can see the progress the club has made by working with the club. JL states that these are commitments from all areas of the club and says that the club have passed, they are waiting on administrative sign off from the Premier League and now the club can work for next 18 months towards the next level.

Pauline Tanner (PT) asks JL what the benefits are of achieving a Premier League Gold Standard. JL explains that it is to do with recognition of what the club is doing. KB adds that it is a test of the club's processes and explains that she wants everyone at the club to feel like the DSAB do and it's part of changing the culture at the club. JL says that it helps to address errors and unconscious bias and allows external bodies to challenge them. KB thanks everyone who has helped to take part and encourages those to keep the feedback coming in to the club.

UPDATES FROM THE CLUB

KB asks Cathy Bayford (CB) to tell the DSAB about updates. KB asks about the email address, Trevor Bright (TB) states that it is now working and live.

KB asks about resources and CB states that she does have lots of questions to deal with from Facebook once articles go out. KB urges TB and CB to let the club know if the demand ever gets too much. Tara Warren (TW) talks about some of the successes of the DSAB such as the opening of the gates at Westfield and says that wouldn't have been possible without input from DSAB members. KB

says she wants everyone to know how much she appreciates the work undertaken by TB and CB. KB also says she wants any further successes to be noted and written up for the website to show that emailing concerns does lead to change. TB says that the issue is getting the message out once problems have been resolved and asks if possible to have half a page in the programme. CB says could look at a FAQ page. KB asks Jake Heath (JH) to action and JH confirmed that pages for both DSAB and SAB will feature in programmes between now and end of season. All DSAB profiles will feature by the end of the season.

Neal Crowley (NC) asks if once Club has achieved the gold standard if the Club could do a piece on the website about it. KB says this is a good idea and would look at an on-pitch presentation to raise the profile the achievement. Steve Lowe (SL) asks about putting information on advertising boards. KB states that this is difficult as sponsors spend money on those spaces, but could do on the scoreboard and big screen outside. SL asks if it is possible for the club to produce a QR code at the search tents and for fans to scan their phones to link to DSAB site. KB says this may be possible and asks JH to look into that. KB asks for any other points about getting the information out.

KB asks for any further ideas about how to get DSAB message out to fans. Anthony Seigel (ASe) asks about putting a forum on the website for supporters to add to. KB says that is a good idea but it's tough to monitor and asks to start with email address and then maybe look at other avenues in the future. CB says that she has looked at other clubs that DSAB might adopt and agrees that monitoring is tough. KB says if we are to provide place for people to share ideas then they need to be addressed. TW asks DSAB members to email TB and CB about ideas. CB says issue of not being able access the area outside of the away end after the match is an issue that is always raised. It can mean that a small number of fans are delayed in reaching the Accessible Shuttle Bus service or Accessible Car Park. The segregation barriers are in place post-match for the safety of all supporters and the gates are opened as soon as possible, once the safety officer confirms it is safe to do so. Julie Pidgeon (JP) says the issue is being monitored but has improved. The Club have offered an alternative route for those supporters. TB says he gets abuse as he says it's not the club's fault. TB says facilities at Arsenal are far worse. Ben Illingworth (BI) says that signage could be put up to explain situation from Club so people can read and understand. KB says it must be a simple message such as 'This is for your safety'. TW asks Graeme Harris (GH) about signage as it is an issue that keeps being raised and asks for work around the signs to be actioned by LS185. GH says that LLDC have finally given him some leeway for signage and approx. 160 podium totems are to be going up around March/April. GH says that signage around the park is not that clear and could look at improving signage on the podium island. GH says he has had feedback from Premier League visits about terminology and wording for visiting supporters. GH says he will take back to his team and discuss about actioning. CB says it is possible to make clearer on website. JH says he make that clearer. Andy Sheldon (AS) says signage around the park is not adequate and there is confusion for away fans.

Nicola Keye (NK) says that the club are pleased to say that they embraced an audit on behalf of the Premier League that looked at spaces, facilities, signage, access to a sensory room and they are content with what the club are doing and the culture at the club. NK says that comments received from the last audit were to provide additional information about accessible facilities within hospitality and the club are pleased with how that is going and are waiting for the full results in a Premier League table, and the club are hoping to get a five-star rating. TB asked about what problems had been raised. NK responded that in hospitality there were issues raised about toilets and radar keys and club responded. HR raises that her radar key hasn't worked on certain toilets and a supporter officer gave her a different key. JH asks if she has the key with her and HR says she does not but will bring to the next match to be checked. JP says that if anyone has a key that is not working then it will be checked after the match.

JH discussed Disabled Go the access survey about their five-day visit starting on 26th February. JH explains they are surveying everything from the width of doors to the height of ramps and it will be taking place at every football stadium. JP talked about the sensory room and, working closely with the stadium operator, have now identified a room within the stadium that can be used. JP says the form has gone to the Premier League, who are part funding it, and should know a decision on 26th and 27th February.

JH discussed the rest benches that had been discussed at the last meeting and explains that the club do now have a rest benches map which is on the matchday guide. JH said it has been tweaked slightly because of the routes on the west side of the stadium and is now up on the site.

JP explained that senior members of staff including KB, JH, TW, NK have been completing their sign language courses and the club have let staff sit the second module to get their official accreditation. Austin Hughes (AH) has been doing with the staff. AH said that some people are so made up that people are signing with them and that is a big positive in itself.

NK discussed online ticketing sales for accessibility supporters and explained that the new trial will be rolled out with Ticketmaster and West Ham are leading the way as Ticketmaster are going to enforce with all Premier League clubs and new mechanism should be ready for the 18/19 season.

JH talked about the newsletter and about promoting what the club and the DSAB are doing and asked the room if they benefit from it. CB said that they should wait until the email launches and then see what queries are raised there and create an FAQ. JL said that Any Old Irons have their own newsletter and one of the important thing they found is that someone who might be a bit resistant it gives them something to read in their own time. CB was concerned that this might take up too much time but TW and JH both said that this could be something the club takes on and helps with and TW said the club could look at a quarterly letter. CB said she thought it was a good idea.

HR raised issue of people who get off at the shop but must enter through turnstile K, and therefore have to walk all around the stadium. HR raised the question why the bus cannot drop them off at a drop-off point which has been previously used for the summer programme of athletics, adding that having to enter through the dedicated turnstile means the facilities inside the stadium cannot be accessed until they have reached their entrance. KB said that is an issue that should have an easy solution and asks JH and NK to sort out the passes to ensure supporters can enter at a closer turnstile and JH to speak to the shuttle bus to see if they can include a second drop off point. CB said that would be a benefit of a newsletter to publish the information once it has been done. KB asks whether in future a DSAB could be done over Skype so fans can see what is discussed. CB asked if leaflets could be put on buses and KB actions JH to do.

NC suggested that, as part of a continued effort to improving the awareness of the DSAB amongst supporters, DSAB committee members are present at SLO information tents on matchday.

JH directed people to the access statement and explains that there are almost thirty pages of information, created in house, and JH asked attendees to get in touch if they think anything should be added. KB urged the attendees to test the maps and then feedback. SL asks to make map interactive. TW said the club are looking at how to do that using a photo route. JL and KB reiterated the club's commitment to creating a visual route.

HR raised the issue that vendors are not taking the tops off the bottles in the outside vendors. SL said that security didn't check him last night. GH asks to speak to SL following the meeting to get

information regarding his journey into the stadium. KB asks SL to take a note about which gate and steward he comes through should that happen again.

NC said that at Twickenham the bars have lower counters dedicated for wheelchair users. PT said that you can apply for 'unable to stand' badges from TfL. KB said she is surprised that there are not lowered counters after the Olympics although they are trialling new system in the upper tiers. GH said he will go back to Delaware and ask for a full accessibility report as the whole idea of the stadium is that it is accessible for everyone. HR said she cannot access the milk and sugar stands. KB said that there needs to be at least one in each concourse. GH said he does not have answer now but will look to find out and said maybe better signage is needed. TW said that she spoke to someone with cancer who needs bottle top to stay on bottle in case of infection and has a card that says that. GH replied staff will be educated on these issues and there is now information about the cards in the staff matchday briefing document. JH said the club are exploring an at seat service in the upper tier as a trial that may be rolled out next season. JH explained that they are finalising whether it will be through West Ham or catering staff. JS said that bottle tops were not removed at the last game. GH said he would look into that and will deal with it. KB said that a common-sense approach is needed as one rule will not suit everyone.

JP said that at a previous DSAB meeting an accessibility pass was raised and this will be introduced at the Burnley game and asked attendees for feedback and JP said she will email everyone for more information. KB said that the most important thing is that security recognise it and are not afraid to use it. JP said it was something the DSAB group were keen on introducing KB said this was a good idea.

JH explained that during the Burnley game there will be a new route through Westfield at Jamie's Passage as feedback had been that there needed to be access through Westfield for accessibility fans, especially those with mobility issues. JH said that his team and JPs team are working closely together to make sure the new route works. JH said that the first person they meet once through the gate will be from West Ham and if attendees want to trial it then to get in touch. JH said he would be happy to clarify and create maps for the three-game trial. TW thanked both CB and TB for attending meetings to get to this point.

JP discussed the audio commentary could be rolled out more across the stadium and now the corporate areas now have commentary. JP explained that there will be two further pick up points at turnstiles C and G from the Southampton game. JP reiterated that audio commentary needs to be booked. KB added that non- booking wouldn't mean fans wouldn't get one but it would just be quicker.

JH explained about Visit Football scheme that is partnered with the Premier League who act as mystery shoppers and one part is measuring accessibility. JH said that West Ham have gone up 9% since their last visit and improvements were on pre-arrival and arrival and provision of information. JH said he wanted to get the information out there better. JH said WH are moving up the stadium after being 19th and hoped to move up 6 places as a minimum.

SUBMITTED TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

KB moved meeting onto topics for discussion. KB asked GH to discuss accessible toilets. GH said that 100% of the toilets are now radar compliant and GH asked attendees if the system had improved and asked for feedback. GH reiterated that there is a larger plan around signage now which will be consulted with the DSAB. GH said he would share with JH who could then share with the group. GH explained how they have changed their stewarding company from one to five companies. KB raised

issue of non-disabled fans standing in front of disabled toilets and stewards are not moving fans on. GH asked if still an issue to which room said yes.

NC said that a fan abused him for having a wheelchair at the Palace game with lots of people the bridges to get out of the rain. NC said chief steward asked NC why he didn't raise with him but NC said he couldn't get through because it was too busy. CB said she has had similar issues raised with her but was told there were not enough stewards in that area to police it. GH said that this was unacceptable and would speak to the chief steward personally as there are enough people to man that area and fans should not feel intimidated. KB assured NC that BI would make sure someone is there to look after NC so that issue does not reoccur.

JP said one supporter was asked to remove medical equipment at a search point on the bridge. KB said it's important that stewards understand it, but also the club need to communicate with fans that they need documentation. PT said that stewards are unwilling like opening doors if you're leaving early. GH said he can control large doors and has cameras to monitor. GH said he will take issues on board and raise with management team. KB said it is important that people raise these issues so they can be put to GH.

KB asked CB to raise the London Parallel event. CB asked if DSAB could get involved with. KB asked what the event is and AH said that it is an accessible marathon event and the Park is chosen. AH said the Foundation got involved and tried to bring in extra sports such as football. AH said they may be looking to go to a different area.

TW said the website had been audited and 70 issues had been identified to improve things. TW said this involved making sure links and heading and labels were working. TW said 95% of those issues had been resolved and urged the group to test everything on there to make sure the club can achieve its double A accessible level.

KB asked for any other issues. CB said she wanted the DSAB for their own website for disabled away supporters as TB noticed that Watford have their own website. TB said on Boxing Day at Bournemouth they had two areas for disabled supporters, one where the personal assistant cannot come and one where you are uncovered. KB said it was good to get experience of other grounds and make the website a 'trip-advisor' for away ground of what services and facilities grounds do and do not have.

KB thanked everyone for attending and for their valued contributions to the DSAB and the wider fan experience.