



## **West Ham United Disabled Supporters' Board meeting**

**Date:** Tuesday 21st January, 18:00 – 19:30

**Time:** 6pm – 7.30pm

**Location:** Stadium Store Coffee Shop, London Stadium

### **Key personnel**

#### **West Ham United and London Stadium**

- Tara Warren, Executive Director (CCO, CMO, CDAO)
- Nicola Keye, Director of Ticketing
- Michele Gull, Director of HR
- Simon Kutner, Head of Communications
- Jake Heath, Supporter Services Manager
- Julie Pidgeon, Disability Access Officer
- James Datson, Matchday commentator for blind and partially sighted supporters
- Graham Harris, Deputy Safety Officer, London Stadium 185
- Andy Sheldon, Dedicated Football Officer, Metropolitan Police
- Austin Hughes, Community Manager, West Ham United Foundation
- Megan Clarkson, Supporter Services Executive
- Chelsea Samson, Supporter Services Executive
- Lee Woodcock, Supporter Services Executive

#### **Disabled Supporters' Board members**

- Cathy Bayford
- Trevor Bright
- Sanjay Chadha
- Neal Crowley
- Bradley Donovan
- Helena Foreman
- David Griffith
- Tracy Higgins
- David Puckett
- Kevin Wotton
- Joe Seigel
- Robbie Cahill
- Pauline Tanner
- Richard Pullen
- Steve Lowe

## Apologies

- Karren Brady, Vice-Chairman
- Ben Illingworth, Head of Matchday Operations
- Sanjay Chadha
- Tracy Higgins
- Kevin Wotton
- Robbie Cahill
- Pauline Tanner
- Gill Fowler

## Agenda

1. Welcome, introductions and purpose of meeting	18:00
2. Updates on actions	18:05
3. Equality and Inclusion	18:15
4. Cathy and Trevor, Updates from the Chairpersons	18:20
5. Working together	18:30
6. DSB members – Topics for discussion	18:35
7. AOB	19:10
8. Sensory Room update	19:15
9. Meeting closed	19:30

### 1. Welcome, introductions and purpose of meeting

JH welcomes attendees to the first DSB meeting of the season and opens the meeting with housekeeping and introductions.

JH states that the last meeting had to be postponed so there was a lot to catch up on, including plenty of good work achieved through the DSB.

TW said that the Club would be live tweeting discussion points from the meeting via @WestHamHelp and that the content team were present to film the meeting. It was important that all of the good work that the DSB have achieved is showcased as widely as possible. TW asked DSB members to stay behind after if they could to be interviewed.

JH goes through the objectives for the meeting:

- Update and discuss action points from the last meeting
- Discuss our recent work in areas of equality and inclusion
- Receive an update from Co-Chairs Cathy and Trevor
- Listen to and consult together on DSB discussion topics
- Set new actions to take forward together

### 2. Updates on actions

JH provides update on all actions set at the previous DSB meeting.

JH explains that the first three actions should be grouped in order to find a solution as there had been some factors between DSB meetings that could influence how these actions are best progressed.

- Invite TfL to next DSB meeting
- DSB to write to TfL
- DSB to collate feedback on experiences at Stratford Station

JH explains that TfL have been invited to the last two DSB meetings but have not been able to attend. Given that DG had raised issues with a fellow supporter's experience at Stratford Station in the days before this evening's meeting, JH felt it was important that the DSB now write to TfL and Greater Anglia with the Club's support. NC suggested his contact at TfL Rail would be helpful to the DSB. DG said that he feels that the Club should lead this, and TW agreed but feels a collective approach is better. The group discussed who best to contact at TfL and Greater Anglia and agreed to take this forward as an action together.

TB says he wants to collate experiences of accessibility supporters. CB suggests using the OSB twitter handle and the DSB newsletter to collate the travel experiences of supporters on behalf of the group to feed back to the Club and use as a basis to contact TfL and Greater Anglia. TW agreed with this approach and offered the Clubs support.

- Contact Westfield to seek update on access routes

JH explains that through conversations with Westfield we have been informed that the potential for a more permanent access route by John Lewis will not be confirmed until after the building works have been complete adjacent to Chestnut Plaza.

NB. The current access route is working very smoothly and without issue. Fans who previously used the route, who do not have disabilities, respect that this is now an accessible entrance. Club SLOs are positioned at the entrance alongside Expedient security staff and have built a good rapport with fans who use the service as well as security staff.

JH suggests DSB write to Westfield with the Club's support. Action to take forward.

- Contact Greater Anglia to discuss accessibility operation

JH mentions that he has contacted Greater Anglia to request information on their accessible services, particularly at Stratford Station and the use of portable ramps to alight trains. Greater Anglia do advise customers to book assistance a minimum of 12 hours before travel. You can book online, by phone or textphone.

JH says he will contact Greater Anglia and it is agreed that DSB will write to them also as discussed earlier.

- Produce final copy of newsletter for publication

MC shared a copy of the newsletter with Cathy and Trevor. A copy of the newsletter was

distributed to all accessibility Season Ticket Holders and Claret members in April 2019. We will look to produce another newsletter in January 2020 and would welcome feedback and suggestions on the content from the DSB. MC to contact CB and TB post-meeting to collate information for the newsletter.

- Introduce additional posters around Stadium for reporting abuse/incidents

JH said that some fans have confided that they are worried about texting inside the stands in case they are seen by the offenders. TB suggested at the recent OSB Equality subgroup that placing SMS reporting posters in the toilets would provide fans with a discreet place to report any concerns.

JH informs that additional posters were placed in toilet blocks around the stadium. SMS reporting posters are now located in every gangway in the upper and lower tier, on the concourse, in toilet blocks and at the Supporter Information points. A poster on the Club's new equality campaign is also present alongside them.

- Distribute parking permits marked with wide or standard bays

JP updated that the relevant bays are now marked on supporter permits and Disabled Supporter Assistants are briefed to direct supporters to the bay they've been allocated. A member of the West Ham United security team is now positioned at Car Park 1A to assist with allocation of spaces at future matches.

- Add more shelving in the Billy Bonds and Sir Trevor Brooking Stands

JH confirmed that locations had been approved with the Stadium Safety and Operations teams. The shelving will be installed for the Southampton home match 29<sup>th</sup> February.

- Enhance audio descriptive commentary service

JP and JD update that they're in discussions to enhance the audio commentary service and will be finalising plans together during the close season in time for the 2020/21 season.

- Produce Terms of Reference

JH says that he and CB have discussed the Terms of Reference and the conversation is ongoing. JH advises that the Club had met with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the OSB to finalise the election process to be launched in the close season. JH suggests discussing the DSB Terms of Reference after the OSB process has been confirmed.

- Consult with DSB on Sensory Room processes

JH notes that some DSB members visited the Sensory Room at the recent home match v Everton on 18<sup>th</sup> January and invites other DSB members to visit the Sensory Room this evening after the meeting. JP advises that the Sensory Room will open officially at the Brighton and Hove Albion game on 1<sup>st</sup> February.

- Review accessible parking process in consultation with DSB

JH confirms that supporters are informing us when they cannot attend and advises that the system is working well. JH says we are open to alternate suggestions as to how the process could work but it would need to be fair for the masses.

- Further review congestion behind wheelchair accessible viewing spaces

JH notes that NC experienced issues recently with migration and overcrowding in the Bobby Moore Stand behind the wheelchair accessible viewing spaces. GH says they are aware that this issue is ongoing, and we are proactively checking tickets in areas where migration is higher. The Stadium Safety team are putting a plan in place to ensure the areas behind the wheelchair accessible viewing spaces are clear towards the end of the first half and before the final whistle where the issue seems to arise. GH to provide further clarity on the plan once he has consulted with Safety team.

CB asks if DSB can brief stewards and TW agrees this is a great idea. GH says the DSB would be most welcome. JH suggests an equality briefing from the DSB/POI to senior stewards. JS shares his experiences with stewarding to GH and consistency of stewarding. GH confirms that LS185 always try to position stewards in the same places to give people a feel of familiarity with staff.

NC asks if stewards can wear disability confident badges if they have training, and if the Club can create a 'West Ham way' training system for all staff – including stewards. TW says that it is a fantastic idea and that we are looking to develop a training programme that focuses on equality through the London Charter. TW adds that the DSB and other supporters' groups who represent different areas of equality and diversity will be integral to our work.

GH confirms he has placed body cameras in the Bobby Moore Stand to help identify supporters who are crowding wheelchair bays. He encourages any supporters who are feeling unsafe to use the SMS reporting service so that the safety team can deal with it on the day. GH also suggests the club set up a dedicated email address for reporting on a matchday now there is free Wi-Fi provided. TB adds that crowding and abuse of accessible facilities is not a unique problem to London Stadium. GH encourages fans to report because without reports we can't act. GH states that staff are here to help.

TW says we want to lead the way for accessibility so it's really important that these things are reported.

- Circulate LLDC building plans

GH shared the plans at the previous meeting which are publicly accessible via the LLDC or Local Authority website. Anyone interested can speak with JH after the meeting and he'll be happy to share the links. GH states that the road closures in place as a result of the Sweetwater development are not due to be lifted until 2023.

- Contact Sanjay Chadha to discuss drop-off/pick-up facility

JH notes that SC was not able to attend the meeting but says that the building development

will mean that the drop-off facility is a better option. JP to advise SC of the building development update and offer assistance.

### **3. Equality and inclusion**

JH says that a lot of work is ongoing by way of equality and inclusion and the Club would like to provide an update to DSB members.

#### **Purple Tuesday**

JH discusses Purple Tuesday and the Club's commitment to accessibility through the DSB.

JH explains that Purple Tuesday is an initiative which sees retailers around the UK come together to promote accessible shopping – emphasising the importance and needs of disabled shoppers and supporting inclusive shopping. The Club are proud to support it for the second year running. On Tuesday 12 November, the Club hosted a group of local people with disabilities and accessibility needs to help them understand the retail experience and the way a store operates.

JH points to the Sensory Area which is available in store.

JP says that sensory hour will see the music turned down in the store, as well as the removal of as many of the sensory distractions as possible, to make the environment that little bit more accessible to those who may struggle with all the extra noise, lights and screens that are around us.

As well as dialling things down as best as possible, there will also be a comfortable area for those shoppers to use if they need to just relax for a while.

NC asks about Sensory Backpacks. JP advises that the Club will also be providing sensory satchels on matchdays and in store to help those that become anxious or who have sensory needs. JP says that the Club will share processes for Sensory Room with DSB.

#### **Players Project**

JH talks about stats from the Players Project and says that it has been hailed as the most ambitious community programme ever created by a Premier League club.

- Delivering over 30 programmes, engaging with up to 50,000 people a year
- £28 million invested in the community by the end of 2021
- Split into eleven strands, including equality
- Our supporters, including DSB, play an integral role

TW says that the Players Project is split into eleven strands, including one on equality and the work we've achieved together with the DSB plays an integral role in building relationships and improving across all areas for our supporters.

Cathy, Trevor, Neal, Joe, and Helena attended the Players Project anniversary event on 6th November 2019.

#### **Equality Subgroup**

JH states that the OSB has created an Equality Subgroup, which includes five equality focused supporters' groups representing a wide and diverse cross section of our fan base. This includes, Any Old Irons, Pride of Irons, BAME Hammers, DSB, JSB and Women.

JH summarises that the second equality meeting was held on December 17<sup>th</sup>, 2019 with all fan groups invited to share the experiences of supporters from all backgrounds. The Club is working towards the Advanced Level of the Premier League Equality Standard with our assessment due to take place on 25<sup>th</sup> February 2020.

JH says its important that each group get to see what we do in all areas of equality and that the Equality Subgroup had requested that a new equality video be created featuring the JSB to be shown on matchday. JH confirms that the feedback from supporters was that it would be more impactful for the juniors to be expressing the message that there is no place for discrimination or abusive behaviour and that was the basis of the video.

JH handed over the CB and TB to provide an update from the Chairpersons on the DSB.

#### **4. Cathy and Trevor – Updates from the DSB Co-Chairpersons**

CB updates that CB and TB attended the recent Fans for Diversity, Premier League Disability Advisory Group and Level Playing Field events. CB says that Fans for Diversity event went well. CB says the Level Playing Field forum seemed to focus on what fans could do against their Clubs and the approach could have been more positive. One section focused on how fans can sue their Club's which CB and TB didn't agree with. The DSB had worked positively with West Ham since launching in April 2017 and so much had been achieved for the benefit of all accessibility supporters. CB and TB felt our relationship was one of the best in the Premier League. TB comments that at least one of the Premier League Club's refuse to speak with their official Disabled Supporters' Association. TB says they have proposed a levy on parachute payments to force clubs to make the required changes to accessible facilities. One Club did not have accessible viewing spaces and their views were blocked by stewards. Two fans at separate matches were knocked out of his wheelchair. CB thanked the Club for taking the DSB's concerns and feedback so seriously.

TB confirms the DSB and JH will be meeting Level Playing Field to help to showcase the good work of the club.

AH states that equality is at the heart of everything we do at West Ham United and ensuring that our Club is accessible to everyone is a way of thinking which is embedded throughout. We want to provide the best, not just meet a requirement.

CB says all Disabled Supporters' Boards are working together now to help to create a larger movement across the whole league.

GH says that all changes that have been made have been made as a result of the work of the DSB. JP confirms LPF completed our first ever audit at LS, and 98 issues were raised. There are only 2 issues left.

TW says we the Club will contact LPF. CB says the ultimate aim is to always feel secure in the knowledge they can travel any Premier League ground and expect the same level of facilities as they do here.

## **5. Working together**

JH says that the Club is speaking with the Guide Dogs Association and will be inviting them to a future home match in order to brief SLO and DSA staff. The DSB will also be invited to see how the training works and to discuss the experiences of having a Guide Dog as a West Ham fan. JH confirms that the Club will provide a story on the Club website and across social media.

## **6. Topics for discussion**

- Ramps inside/outside of Stadium

TB confirms new shallow height ramps outside of turnstile D. Following a testing phase, TB had previously confirmed that the ramps were far smoother than the previous ones. GH has now introduced the shallow ramps around the outside of the stadium at each of the gates in the East and West Stands with clear accessibility signage.

- Update on Carpenters Road closure

GH updated that five or six buildings are being built in this area with construction set to last until 2023. This does mean that Carpenters Road is expected to be closed for quite some time. We will provide updates to the DSB along the way.

- Half-time entertainment

JD confirms he is looking at covering commentary describing the half-time entertainment. CB suggests we explore the option of providing a BSL interpreter to ensure all supporters can enjoy half-time interviews. TW confirms the Club will look into this.

- Fundraising/charitable opportunities

CB says that when they formed the DSB, CB and TB always had vision to work alongside other charitable organisations for the benefit of all fans. CB says they would like to be involved in charitable or fundraising activities. JH says the planned partnership of the DSB, and Guide Dogs Association should be the start of that. If there are any specific causes that the group would like to support or build relationships with and the Club would review and make contact.

- Audible feedback in lifts

DG raises that the audio message in the lifts is not loud enough and is inconsistent. DG met with JH and GH on 27th November and demonstrated the issues. GH raised immediately with Vinci facilities to test and rectify any identified issues across all lifts inside and outside of the stadium.

GH has spoken to the operations director regarding faulty announcements in the stadium lifts. He confirms there will be lift engineers on site in the next couple of weeks to fix the issues. GH also advises there will be an additional briefing delivered to lift stewards to ensure they are



proactively communicating lift levels and service announcements to supporters.

- Ticketing Exchange for accessibility supporters

NK confirms that accessible Season Ticket Holders can use the Ticket Exchange facility to post their ticket for sale once all tickets for the match have sold out. Wheelchair users will need to notify Julie directly if they are unable to attend the game and she will endeavour to resell the tickets should there be a waiting list for the wheelchair accessible viewing areas for that game.

The Ticket Exchange system will only become available once all tickets have sold out.

If an accessible supporter cannot attend, their personal assistant can attend, but must first upgrade the ticket. This can be done by calling the Ticket Office on 0333 030 1966.

- Hooks on toilet cubicles

JH has passed the audit to LS185. LS185 have raised the work to be carried out by Vinci facilities as soon as possible.

- Update on Wi-Fi trial

Stadium Wi-Fi was trialled at the Newcastle United match and introduced fully for our match v Spurs. We noticed that connectivity was intermittent at the Spurs match and some could not gain access to the network. Trial is going well, and full launch is scheduled for February.

## **7. AOB**

RP raises feedback on the Accessible Shuttle Bus service from the station. When the bus arrives at the ground, sometimes staff are not available to assist him off the bus. Additionally, the bus keeps going a different route to the station.

GH advises that the Shuttle Bus route has to change because of the construction around the area, and road closures are in place until 2023, but we will always find the best route for the buses to travel.

RP asks why there is a delay on the Shuttle Buses leaving the Stadium after the match. GH confirms the Shuttle Bus cannot leave until the roads are clear of pedestrians. The road closures are in place for every vehicle, including players and Directors. No preference is given to away fans, it is just the fact that 60,000 supporters are leaving the Stadium all at once, meaning roads are full of people, blocking safe routes for vehicles to get to the Station and beyond. Once the pedestrians have cleared, the Shuttle Buses can depart.

DP raises the issue of fans blocking the route for the Shuttle Buses after the games on Marshgate Lane. There are a number of fans using the route and the Shuttle Bus drivers have raised their concerns. JH and JP will review with GH.

HR reports there are large numbers of children using the wheelchair bays in Block 154. Stewards are moving young children into the bays if they can't see the pitch. GH said he will

review this at the upcoming home matches.

TB reports he had some problems with the Ticket Office phonenumber on Monday 20 January. NK confirms there was a technical problem with the Ticketmaster hotline as they are based in the Philippines and had a shortage of staff due to the volcanic eruption which also affected other Premier League clubs.

DG raises that there could be an accessible function for blind or visually impaired supporters when selecting options on the phone. His iPhone does not have physical buttons for him to navigate and it is a challenge using a phone with buttons on screen. JP to review option to provide accessible functions on phone line.

TW thanked all for attending and brought the meeting to a close. TW offered to DSB members that they could visit the Sensory Room after the meeting.

## **8. Sensory Room update**

MC and Matchday Managers visited the Sensory Room with DSB members.

The DSB members who did not attend on Saturday are then taken to view the sensory room. NC expresses how impressed he is by the three-step process the Club have put in place. Supporters will first be able to use the sensory room, then move to a viewing room and finally have the option to use seats in the stadium bowl. The goal of the room is to ensure supporters can eventually be confident and comfortable in the stadium environment. JS makes suggestions regarding decorating the door and placing shades on the windows.

All of the facilities are now in place inside the Sensory Room. Some DSB members visited the room ahead of the Everton match and the feedback was very positive.

The Club have employed two Matchday Managers who will be responsible for managing the Sensory Room, including the booking process and the area itself on matchday.

We plan to launch the Sensory Room at our home fixture v Brighton on February 1st, 2020 and will keep the DSB updated on any progress.

TW thanked all for attending and brought the meeting to a close.

### **Actions to take forward**

<b>Action</b>	<b>Lead</b>
Write to TfL and Greater Anglia	DSB/TW
Publish second edition of DSB newsletter	DSB/MC
Review of audio descriptive commentary system during close season	JP/JD
Share Sensory Room plans with DSB	JP
Launch Sensory Room at Brighton home fixture 1 <sup>st</sup> Feb 2020	JP
Launch Sensory Packs at Brighton home fixture 1 <sup>st</sup> Feb 2020	JP
Review exit of vehicles from Accessible Car Park after the game	GH
Create staff training programme focused on equality and working with fan groups	TW

DSB to attend senior stewards briefing and talk to staff about accessible experience	DSB/BI
Explore option to include email reporting system alongside SMS reporting service	JH
Share KPMG report with DSB	TW
Contact Level Playing Field with request to meet	TW
Work with Guide Dogs Association and DSB to train SLO and DSA staff	JH
Explore option to have BSL interpreter feature in matchday content	TS
Review area behind accessible viewing spaces	GH
Include accessible functions on Club telephone lines	JP
Improve audible lift announcements	GH
Review assistance offered on Accessible Shuttle Bus service	AH
Review pedestrians using Marshgate Lane shuttle bus exit to prevent congestion	GH
Include decoration on door of Sensory Room and shade sky light	JP