



Emergency Supporter Advisory Board meeting minutes

Date: Monday 26th March 2018

Time: 6.00pm – 8.00pm

Location: Press Conference Room, London Stadium

Key personnel:

- Karren Brady, Vice-chairman, West Ham United
- Sir Trevor Brooking, West Ham United Legend
- Tara Warren, Executive Director of Marketing and Communications, West Ham United
- Philippa Cartwright, Project and Stadium Director, West Ham United
- Matthew Silvester, Ticket Office Manager, West Ham United
- Julie Pidgeon, Disability Access Officer, West Ham United
- Ben Illingworth, Head of Matchday Operations, West Ham United
- Jake Heath, Supporter Services Manager, West Ham United
- PC Andy Sheldon, Metropolitan Police
- Graham Harris, Deputy Safety Officer, LS185
- Gary Bell, Head of Commercial, LS185

SAB Members present:

- Debbie Hoffman (Treasurer of Hammers Supporters Club)
- David Baker (West Stand)
- Sean Whetstone (Claret and Hugh)
- Steve Applebee (Nominated to represent Bondholders)
- John Beavis (Chair of Bondholder committee)
- Don Adams (Representing Over 65s supporters)
- Cecilia O'Herlihy (East Stand)
- Lee Vehit (Bobby Moore Lower, member of WHU Deaf Supporters Group)
- Cathy Bayford (Representing ambulant disabled supporters; co-founder of DSAB)
- George Mann (Treasurer of West Ham United Independent Supporters Association)
- Sue Watson (Secretary of West Ham United Independent Supporters Association)
- Alastair Holmes (Representing Pride of Irons)
- Jim Dolan (Representing Pride of Irons)
- Jodie Crane (Representing women)
- Brian Gale (Club London Restaurants)
- Aaron Watkins (Bobby Moore Stand)
- Colin James (1966 Club)
- Joshua Dodd (Representing Under 25s supporters)

- Jose Sanchez (Club London Bars)

Apologies:

- Nicola Keye, Head of Ticketing, West Ham United
- Trevor Bright (Representing wheelchair-using disabled supporters; co-founder of DSAB)
- Bev Cornell (Claret and Blue Bubble social media platform)
- Sunil Karir (Representing families)
- Thomas Hickey (Sir Trevor Brooking Stand)
- Anthony Rosenthal (Representing away season ticket holders)
- Alexander Middleton (Scandinavian Hammers, International Supporters Club)

AGENDA

1. Introductions/Housekeeping/Terms of Reference
2. Opening address from Karren Brady
3. West Ham United v Burnley – questions from members
4. Supporter Consultation
5. Any other business

OPENING ADDRESS

Karren Brady (KB) thanked everyone for attending at short notice before welcoming Sir Trevor Brooking (STB) to the meeting and explaining that he had been invited as someone with a deep love for the Club, to help the Board understand the fans better and to gain a greater understanding of the issues and concerns that are being raised.

KB said that everyone at the Club wants the supporters to have an enjoyable matchday experience and that the Board are fully aware that certain things need to change and will change. The immediate priority of course she said is to maintain our Premier League status and then begin to build more bridges going forward.

KB added that the scenes of trouble at the Burnley game were sad and difficult for any supporter of West Ham United. She explained that the objective of the meeting is to give reassurances to supporters about safety and security inside the stadium. From the Club's point of view, it is incredibly frustrating that we take all of the responsibility for a matchday but without any control she explained. The Vice Chairman went on to say that the Club do work well with LS185, the Stadium operator but don't hold the safety certificate, don't direct stewards and do not set the matchday plan.

The Club has, however, worked with LS185 to issue 20 lifetime banning orders following the events that took place on March 10. The Vice Chairman was clear that the club are not banning anyone for protesting – only those who ran on to the pitch, threw objects or were particularly violent and physically aggressive towards stewards or West Ham United staff.

KB confirmed that a number of enhanced security measures will be in place for the match against Southampton on Saturday, for the benefit of all supporters.

KB confirmed that the Board accept fans are unhappy, and added that the two Chairmen are devastated by what happened at the Burnley game, devastated by the way the season has gone, but absolutely committed to putting things right. The most important thing on Saturday is that the players walk out knowing that they have a crowd behind them. However angry fans are about the Board, or about the stewarding, everyone needs to get behind the team to give them the best chance of retaining Premier League status.

Finally, KB passed on some positive news following the last regular SAB meeting, confirming that the Club have reached the Equality Standard intermediate level, passing on great credit to Joe Lyons and his team at the Foundation.

Jake Heath (JH) expressed that the minutes for the meeting would be produced solely by the Club and respectfully asked that SAB members, particularly those fans who represent larger groups, to not publish their own accounts. This was important due to the sensitives around the Club at this time.

WEST HAM UNITED v BURNLEY – QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS

Colin James (CJ) made the point that had the stewarding been stronger with the first pitch incursion, those following might have thought twice about it. It appeared no one was responsible for getting them off the pitch and too much time unfolded that allowed matters to escalate.

KB confirmed that a full independent investigation is already underway into the security operation on that day. It has been confirmed by the Safety Advisory Group that there was a reduction in the number of stewards – in particular those responsible for dealing with pitch incursions. There were a lots of incidents, and resources were stretched to their absolute limit. She explained however that looking to Southampton, the physical presence of more police in the stadium will have a massive impact.

KB confirmed that Club are working with LS185 to resolve the issues. KB confirmed that she sent apologies to Mark Noble that evening for the fact that he had to take such action in what is his place of work.

Aaron Watkins (AW) expressed that some supporters felt that the cancellation of the planned protest led to a lot of the incidents and caused anger and ill-feeling among those who arrived for the match wanting to protest. He added that whilst he thought KB piece in The Sun was positive he would like to see such statements on Club channels. He asked if there was more the Club could do to raise the atmosphere pre-match. He then asked for answers as to the direction of the club going forward.

KB confirmed the Club has addressed some of the concerns that have been raised by supporters, including the appointment this summer of a Director of Football to handle the transfer policy and resolving some of the issues around the look and feel of the stadium, which has started now and will continue through to next season.

David Baker (DB) raised the opinion that the random nature of social media means that supporters are becoming their own worst enemy, and that there doesn't appear to be any specific subjects or objective behind the protests. DB also made the point that there have been many different meetings between the Club and various fan groups recently and that fans have as much responsibility as the Club to come together during this difficult time.

KB confirmed that the SAB is the Club's preferred forum for communicating directly with supporters. With regards to the planned protest, KB reminded members that the club had met with the fan groups united to understand the reasons behind their wish to protest. She explained that those meetings revealed that while everyone has an opinion and a desire to voice that opinion, there were few tangible solutions put forward and everything that was raised in the meetings were addressed in KB's open letter which had been shared immediately with the SAB for input also.

Money had been spent on transfers, she confirmed, but also accepted that the money hadn't always been spent as well as it could have been. The solution to that is to restructure the recruitment policy as had already been announced, to make the appointment and channel the transfer dealings through that figure.

KB admitted that there had been other issues raised – for example, some people like the new club badge, others don't. However, she confirmed it was the supporters who had chosen the new badge vs retaining the old badge.

Jim Dolan (JD) made the point that not all supporters recall the consultation process.

KB confirmed that there had been a clear consultation process in which 12,000 supporters took part and that the Club had showed fan groups the email chains, the dates and times of publication of articles relating to crest consultation.

Tara Warren (TW) offered to again share the open letter that had been sent to all fans following the fan groups united meeting, containing full details of the crest consultation issue.

KB admitted that it seems there is a general unhappiness among supporters, but that different sections of the fanbase have different views and requirements. There is a danger of a self-fulfilling prophecy if we don't all get behind the team and give the players full support.

KB added that the trouble seen at the Burnley game must not happen again. Unlike any other football club in the country, we don't have control over our matchday operation. But we have brought in our own safety officer, who used to work here at the stadium to review all the plans, we are conducting an independent investigation to understand what went wrong, and KB had earlier today met the Mayor, who has promised to provide the resources that are required to ensure the stadium is safe.

Cathy Bayford (CB) questioned the number of security companies involved in the management of stewards and whether this had an effect on continuity. CB also insisted there are still issues with some disabled supporters feeling intimidated and unable to use disabled toilets due to able-bodied supporters using them.

Graham Harris (GH) insisted the issue is something he takes extremely seriously and would investigate immediately if reported.

CB also referred to the violence that occurred in front of the Directors' Box at the Burnley game, near to where many disabled season ticket holders are seated, and asked for assurances about their safety, given that the Disabled Supporters Assistants were forced to retreat from the area on the day.

GH confirmed that, having viewed hours and hours of CCTV footage, there are some new security measures that will be installed before the Southampton game to ensure the safety of disabled supporters in the area in question. GH added that the safety of everyone in the stadium is the top priority for LS185.

Lee Vehit (LV) asked for assurances that the new measures would not go the other way and result in over-zealous stewarding. LV added that the stewarding at Dagenham and Redbridge for the recent midweek friendly had been far friendlier and empathetic compared to that at London Stadium.

GH confirmed that many of the stewards at Dagenham do actually work at London Stadium. He added that 50-60% of our stand commanders are ex-Boleyn Ground stewards, who have all been encouraged to work here. A meeting is scheduled between LS185 and West Ham United's security and operational staff later this week, in which every aspect of the plan for Saturday will be pored over. The approach will be to prepare for the worst, but expect the best.

Don Adams (DA) explained that he sits in block 140, where two individuals ran on to the pitch. He said that when they left their seats, stewards were sitting down and not attempting to stop them. When they came back into the stand, one steward walked straight past them and did not react when members of the crowd then attacked the pitch invader.

GH confirmed that the incident was subject to a large part of the independent investigation, and that LS185 had already spoken sternly to the security company responsible for the stewards involved. To the point that they will have to be changed. There is action and there are repercussions.

Andy Sheldon (AS) made clear that the individuals who assaulted the fans who ran onto pitch and came back into the stand were just as guilty of an offence, and could not be condoned in any way.

Sean Whetstone (SW) claimed that one of the issues with the SAB is that the group doesn't have any credibility with the protesters, and that more needs to be done to understand them.

SW admitted that, with 52,000 season ticket holders all having their own opinions, it is difficult but supporters must remember that we are a football club and that, ultimately, the one solution is winning matches. He stated that he felt the problems are partly to do with the geography of the stadium. Supporters are able to move around freely in large areas in a way they couldn't at the Boleyn and, when supporters see inaction from stewards, will take advantage. Many of the those responsible are now becoming martyrs and figureheads. SW

concluded that if we don't represent them, we can't understand them, but didn't know what the solution to that problem would be.

KB reminded members that the Club had gone out of their way to engage with those supporters, writing to them and meeting them, and are open any supporter who wishes to engage with the club.

TW suggested that, having made several attempts to evolve the SAB in recent years, maybe it is time to rename the format and look at the constitution in terms of how supporters are elected on to it, in order to make it more diverse and more representative of wider groups.

George Mann (GM) questioned the apparent briefing to a BBC journalist after the meeting of the Safety Advisory Group last week, which led to accusations of the trouble being organised and co-ordinated through mobile phones. This was then repeated by the Mayor at the weekend, and has caused huge resentment, which is part of a wider lack of trust among the fanbase.

KB insisted that the figures being thrown around in terms of the number of incidents didn't tally with West Ham's understanding, and that the information had certainly not come from the Club. West Ham have not seen the report or the minutes from the SAG meeting, but BI and PC confirmed that the numbers talked about in the meeting were unverified and they had yet to verify the figures which appeared in the press reports.

JD made the point that it is down to information control and referenced the article on the London Assembly's website that read "how we are going to fix problems at West Ham's stadium"

KB confirmed the Club had picked up on that immediately and asked the London Assembly to amend that to ensure accuracy.

GM stated it was clear that the piece in the BBC had been briefed the evening of the SAG and that this caused suspicion towards the Club but that he had confirmed it was not coming from the Club. KB agreed it did appear that briefing was taking place determined to paint the problem as entirely down to 'hooliganism' West Ham United and our supporters by parties that do not wish to take responsibility for their own failings.

GH confirmed that LS185 have not yet finished their report on the incidents – with staff still up in the control room gathering evidence from CCTV footage. GH added that LS185 have released no press statements. There are 600 cameras at the stadium, all recording live footage over a five-hour period. Once something is found, it then has to be tracked back over multiple cameras. It is not a case of clicking your fingers and produce.

GM questioned the veracity of the information given to the mayor, that the violence was pre-planned, and who gave it to him. GH claimed that CCTV footage showed that to be true in the areas around blocks 112, 113 and 114. SW disagreed and insisted it was completely spontaneous. SW gave his opinion that the whole situation has become too political and that LS185 are caught in the middle of it. SW asked AS if there had been any intelligence before

the game on organised protests or disorder occurring inside the stadium. AS confirmed there had not been.

KB insisted that it is not fair to criticise GH, as someone who is working very hard alongside the club. KB added that she is convinced that someone is briefing the mayor about information on our event day that we as a club are not privy to, which is fundamentally wrong.

Steve Applebee (SA) raised the issue of the retractable seating model as being not what was promised, with the seats being too far away from the pitch.

KB insisted that was not true – the seats are in exactly the same place as they were shown in the original video. The only thing that is different is the mechanism that is used to move them in and out of football mode. The video was produced and given to us by E10/LLDC and we shared it with our supporters in good faith.

JD raised again the issues of the difficulties in engaging and communicating with various fan groups who all have different opinions and agendas, and that in order to ensure clarity and structure it would perhaps be wise to give the SAB a more prominent profile among the wider fanbase, a sentiment that was then shared by DB, CJ, DA and CB.

KB agreed it would be a great idea to increase that profile and for SAB members to get out into the various communities and their relevant sections of the fanbase to spread that word.

Sir Trevor Brooking then addressed the meeting, first reflecting on the Burnley game – describing it as a very sad day, and personally for him to be sitting in that area where much of the protesting was focused, some of which was quite venomous and spilled over into unacceptable scenes of coins and objects being thrown. He added, speaking purely as a fan, with no formal attachment to the Board or any specific fan group, that any grievances or issues that supporters may currently have must be parked for the next six or seven weeks in order to give the team the best chance possible of staying in the Premier League. He went on to say 'because if we go down, many of these discussions go out of the window, as damage limitation comes in and the consequences of relegation become real.

STB made clear that there are issues that the Board clearly need to address in the summer, but they cannot be addressed before then. Therefore, the only way through this period is to get behind the players and management staff. He added that, as he has known for 50 years, 99% of the fans are the best fans in the country but the perception is that their reputation has now been damaged. What we need to do now in the next few weeks is recreate what we know West Ham fans are capable of.

The simple fact is that the big issues – who will be the manager? Who will be the Director of Football? Which players do we need to bring in? – cannot be addressed until we reach that first target – staying in the Premier League. The sooner we can achieve that, the better. And let's get that message out to as many groups and supporters as possible.

STB stressed said he had no idea of the number of fan groups there were until he had come along tonight and following recent weeks but said one thing was clear all of the talking and

things the fan groups wanted will fall away if we can't stay on the division so a truce was needed to get behind the team and come and support the team on the pitch. If you love and support the Club he said that is what has to happen and he urged all supporters to go and spread the message to their groups. SW said STB should do a video stating that powerful message to all supporters so all supporters could hear it. STB agreed to do so on the Club's website ahead of the Southampton game.

LV asked what could be done by supporters, ahead of what is a huge game against Southampton on Saturday, to ensure that the atmosphere and environment is as positive as possible, to give the players an environment they can perform in.

KB confirmed that Mark Noble is writing to all season ticket holders to encourage everyone to unite and get behind the team.

GM added that STB posting a message on club channels would have a strong impact.

Joshua Dodd (JD) referenced the power of social media, we could we not use @WestHamHelp to put out information about the SAB and its members?

JH confirmed it could definitely be arranged and asked if anyone would have any objections to having their profiles posted on our channels for contact purposes.

SW asked if KB had one thing to take away from the meeting with Sadiq Khan earlier in the day.

KB admitted she doesn't think he understands how difficult the situation is but acknowledged it is not easy for him to sort out. In reality, he has got an £8m bill to move the seats for athletics who currently do not contribute towards the stadium. If it were able to be just in football, rugby and concert mode, everyone agreed the stadium would be profitable. He knows we are unhappy with the look and feel, but this is currently being used by his consultants to frustrate us.

KB added that the reality is that no progress can be made in the current set up. The Chairman of E20 wrote and said he couldn't meet us because he is a non-executive chair and has no executive power. Alan Fort wrote and said he was just a consultant, and not to take anything he said as representative of E20's views or agreement and that Alan Skewis position is the same. Peter Hendy said he couldn't meet me. Gerry Murphy said she is only the interim CEO so couldn't meet us. It has taken 18 months to meet the Mayor And so it goes on. Now Lyn Garner has taken it on, though, and she appears to be pragmatic so we are hopeful the situation will improve.

SUPPORTER CONSULTATION

TW returned to the general subject of supporter consultation and potentially restructuring the format of the SAB. Many ideas and formats have been used in the past, but there appears to be a general consensus that opening up the application process more widely so there is only one forum representing all the various groups and having supporters voted on (as had been the case previously) should be the way forward.

SW suggested that the Club communicate that the SAB in its current format is to be disbanded, in order to clearly draw a line under it, and then rebrand. In order to inject credibility, we have to draw a line under what has gone on before.

DA made the point that, when speaking to members of the wider fanbase, he finds that the majority are not aware of the SAB or what it exists for. The key to whatever the rebranding includes is to communicate to a wider audience.

TW encouraged members to give their opinions and ideas on how the club can better communicate their messages generally and it was agreed how the SAB would take its evolved form would be finalised at the meeting on 24 April.

AW and LV both raised concerns over some of the social media content in particular containing marketing messages - SW called for less marketing messages to be included within content.

Regarding the matchday experience, AW called for more motivational music to be played before kick-off. TW again encouraged fans to email in their selections and suggested a playlist feature.

TW added that work has already started on improving the matchday experience as committed to by KB in her open letter, including displaying more of our heritage, having the flag bearers at every match. The recent decoration in the Bobby Moore stand was also displayed. The club were very much seeking the SAB to be the driving force for initiating and verifying the selection shortlist that would then be put to the wider fanbase.

Members were then shown some images illustrating potential themes to kick start the discussion around gathering a list of potential themes for the new concourse decoration that the Club have committed to around the stadium:

- Boys of 86 – Parkes, Stewart, Gale, Ward, Cottee, Devonshire, McAvennie, Martin
- Bonds / Brooking - FA Cup Finals
- Vic Watson (and other notable goal scorers)
- Final game at Boleyn – Mark Noble, Reid - final goal
- Managers/Academy of Football - King, Paynter, Fenton, Greenwood, Lyall, Bonds
- Hammers of the year history – this gives an opportunity to feature some popular former Hammers
- 1940 War Cup Final Winners - Wembley
- Old Programmes, a wallpaper of covers (Cup final programmes bigger images)
- Crest history - from TIW to present day
- Academy/The West Ham Way - Malcom Allison, Ted Fenton, Ron Greenwood
- Boleyn Ground History from 1904 to 2016
- Fans and crowd scenes

It was agreed a final list of ideas from members would be submitted by COP on Thursday in order for them to be posted on club channels for all supporters to vote upon in advance of Saturdays game so they could get together and discuss at the match.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

JD asked about the statue TW confirmed it was believed this was going to cabinet in April. PC explained the history of the statue including the move having been approved in principal by cabinet previously.

SW asked about the progress of naming the main bridge to the stadium The West Ham Way.

TW admitted that as explained in KB's letter are things that we need collaboration with from E20, but we believe it will be possible to achieve that outcome.

SW asked if it came under the authority of LS185 or E20.

PC confirmed it would come under the authority of E20.