



Department  
for Culture  
Media & Sport

# **GOVERNMENT EXPERT WORKING GROUP ON FOOTBALL SUPPORTER OWNERSHIP AND ENGAGEMENT**

**FINAL REPORT: NOVEMBER 2015**

## Introduction

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Football is the national game, and football supporters are the lifeblood of the game.

Supporter ownership is a legitimate ambition for football fans. Whilst many privately owned football clubs are very well run, private ownership is not the only model in English football, and a small percentage of professional clubs are either fully or partly supporter owned.

As a long term season-ticket holder at Portsmouth FC - and now a proud Community Shareholder in a community owned club - I saw how private ownership failed us in recent years, and how hard the supporters, led by the Pompey Supporters Trust worked to overcome the many barriers to supporter ownership until they ultimately bought - and saved - the club in 2013.

This is football's report - compiled by those who run football and those who support football - on what should be done to remove those barriers and create incentives to increase levels of collective supporter ownership.

It is also football's report on what can, and will, be done to improve engagement and dialogue between clubs and fans, to improve transparency and trust.

Our Expert Working Group was set up by the Minister of Sport, and consisted of senior representatives from the Football Authorities (Football Association, Premier League, Football League and National League), Football Fans Groups (Supporters Direct and the Football Supporters Federations), and Supporters Trusts, with four Group members representing Trusts who own all or some of the clubs they support and have direct experience of the issues and challenges.

With so many different views and voices involved, we worked hard to develop a consensual, collaborative and progressive set of recommendations. We wanted to avoid another 'wish list' and focused on developing a plan of action, with clear, negotiated agreements.

As Chair, I would like to thank the Group members for their collaborative approach, for the time dedicated to exploring the issues in detail, and for the supportive spirit in which the proposals were developed. I would like to also thank everyone who submitted evidence, either in person, or in writing to the Group.

We believe this report offers positive benefits for the Game. It will encourage supporter ownership where it is a credible and sensible option for a football club. It will also lead to new and improved levels of engagement between clubs and fans, ensuring that the issues which matter to both can be discussed and addressed.

**Joanna Manning-Cooper**  
**Chair, Government Expert Working Group on Football Supporter Ownership and Engagement.**  
**30th November 2015.**

## INDEX

1. Background to the report
2. Our report
3. Summary
4. Detailed recommendations – Part One
5. Detailed recommendations – Part Two
6. Appendix One
7. Appendix Two

## BACKGROUND TO THE REPORT

- 1.1 The Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee (CMS) Football Governance Inquiry in 2011, and its follow up report in 2013, recognised the value of football supporter ownership, and the need to encourage its further development.
- 1.2 The Committee, in its report, set out a number of reasons why supporter ownership and engagement offered positive benefits for the Game.
- 1.3 The Committee recommended the creation of an Expert Working Group to explore the barriers to increased supporter ownership, and to recommend solutions.
- 1.4 The government agreed with this recommendation and announced its intention to create an informal Expert Working Group to report to government on issues creating barriers to supporter ownership, and recommend practical solutions to overcome these barriers.
- 1.5 The football authorities' response to the Select Committee Football Governance Inquiry, submitted to government by the Football Association, Premier League and Football League in February 2012, committed them to working with government to remove legal and bureaucratic hurdles to supporters obtaining and retaining ownership interests in football clubs.
- 1.6 It committed the football authorities to participate in a Government Expert Working Group to review the recognition, rights and responsibilities of supporters' trusts within the statutory framework.
- 1.7 The football authorities stated in the Select Committee response that they did not consider that the current football rules and regulations presented an obstacle to co-operative ownership, but committed to reviewing the rules in conjunction with the Expert Working Group.
- 1.8 The football authorities also committed to working with government through the Expert Working Group to consider the specific circumstances of Club insolvency. This includes addressing interests of supporter groups in the event of insolvency, and reviewing ways in which meaningful and direct financial support could be provided to support supporter cooperatives that have credible plans to own and operate a Club following an insolvency event.
- 1.9 A Government Expert Working Group was established by the Minister for Sport in October 2014, and launched at Portsmouth Football Club, the largest community owned club in the country.
- 1.10 It is important to note that key developments in football governance - including the introduction of Financial Fair Play Rules - have been developed in the intervening years, and the relevance of this, and of other changes in football league and club governance will be addressed in the report.

- 1.11 Whilst the original stated intention of the Expert Working Group was to examine barriers relating to supporter ownership, the remit of the Group was widened by DCMS to explore opportunities for supporter engagement and involvement in the governance and running of football clubs.
- 1.12 The Terms of Reference for the Group were published on the DCMS website and stated that the Group has a clear and defined remit **“to identify solutions to current barriers preventing greater collective supporter share ownership of football clubs and explore the greater facilitation of supporter engagement and involvement in the governance and running of football clubs.”**
- 1.13 In doing so, the terms of reference ask the Group to:
- Identify current legal, financial, tax and insolvency barriers preventing greater collective share ownership of football clubs;
  - Consider ways in which greater levels of collective supporter shareholdings can be obtained in light of current legislation and football rules;
  - Identify ways in which supporter groups can build capacity to be in a position to gain greater levels of shareholding in football clubs;
  - Explore the greater facilitation of supporter engagement and outline models by which fans and clubs can successfully be involved in the governance and running of football clubs;
  - Ensure that the measures suggested by the Expert Working Group do not adversely impact on the sporting integrity of league competitions.
- 1.14 The terms of reference require the Group to report to DCMS and other relevant government departments on what steps can and should be taken and how to implement them (including the content of any legislation).
- 1.15 The Expert Working Group was established in October 2014 by the former Minister for Sport, Helen Grant MP. The DCMS appointed representatives from The Football Association, the Premier League, Football League and National League, the two umbrella supporter organisations Supporters Direct and the Football Supporters Federation, and four Supporters’ Trusts who either wholly or partially own their football clubs and have direct experience of barriers to ownership and of the insolvency process.
- 1.16 The Core Group members appointed by government are;
- The FA
  - The Premier League
  - The Football League
  - The National League
  - Supporters Direct (SD)
  - Football Supporters Federation (FSF)
  - DCMS

The Expert Witness Members of the Group, appointed because of their specific expertise and insight into football club ownership, are;

- Portsmouth Supporters Trust
- Wrexham Supporters Trust
- Swansea Supporters Trust
- AFC Wimbledon Supporters Trust

- 1.17 The Sports Minister appointed Joanna Manning-Cooper, currently the Director of Marketing and Communications of England Rugby 2015, organisers of Rugby World Cup 2015, to be Chair the Group. She is a Portsmouth FC season ticket holder and community shareholder in Portsmouth, the largest community owned football club in England.
- 1.18 DCMS asked the Group to provide a written report outlining recommendations for government to review by the end of November 2015.
- 1.19 An interim report was submitted to DCMS in March 2015, four months after the Group met for the first time, outlining 20 interim recommendations which required further discussion and exploration over the next eight months.



## OUR REPORT

- 2.1 It is important to set out what this report is - and what it is not.
- 2.2 It is not a 'wish list' – it is a set of firm recommendations directly addressing the areas set out in the terms of reference.
- 2.3 Over the past year the Group has worked up a clear timeline for the implementation of the recommendations - and, where the recommendations involve action by the football authorities - have been agreed by the relevant League Boards.
- 2.4 All members of the Group are supportive of the aim of removing barriers to supporter ownership and involvement in football clubs. The Group believes that fan ownership is a legitimate ambition and has looked at what can be done to make it easier where fan ownership is a genuine option for the football club.
- 2.5 In order to protect the sporting integrity of the League Competitions, the Group approached the review from a 'model neutral' perspective, aimed at removing barriers to and creating incentives for increased levels of supporter ownership, without creating unfair advantages for a supporter ownership model which would impact on the 'level playing field' of league competitions which recognise a plurality of ownership models.
- 2.6 The report focusses on two key areas - the removal of barriers preventing greater collective supporter share ownership of football clubs, and the greater facilitation of supporter engagement, and involvement in the governance and running of football clubs.
- 2.7 The Group does not have a remit to explore single or specific issues relating to football clubs and fans. Current topical supporter issues - for example ticket prices, and the 'safe standing' campaign - are clearly outside the terms of reference and remit of this Group.
- 2.8 However, our Report outlines how, if general supporter engagement and involvement in the running of clubs is improved, suitable forums for these issues to be discussed and addressed will be created.
- 2.9 With a wide range of views, and different levels of involvement in club football represented in the Group, we were determined to reach collaborative positions on the key areas for discussion, and present a report which was agreed by every Group member or organisation, and which could be quickly implemented.
- 2.10 Where unanimous agreement on specific areas could not be reached, this has been highlighted in the report.
- 2.11 Before finalising the report, and its recommendations, the Group met ten times over the course of 12 months.
- 2.12 Details of the meetings, and the attendees, are set out in Appendix One.



- 2.13 In order to ensure a full range of supporter views were considered, the Group published a call for evidence in December 2014, and considered the evidence submitted as part of its review and in preparing its recommendations.
- 2.14 The Group heard evidence from additional experts, including Supporter Trusts, academics, and experts from the financial, tax and insolvency professions, and the government departments responsible for regulation in those areas - further details are included in Appendix One.



## SUMMARY

Full details of the Group's recommendations are outlined in the main body of the report which follows this section. A summary of the Group's recommendations is provided below.

- 3.0 The Group believes that Fan Ownership is a legitimate ambition, but that significant barriers exist which have made the process unnecessarily difficult. The Group examined these barriers in detail, including hearing evidence from Supporters Trusts who own and run their clubs and have a first-hand knowledge of the purchase process.
- 3.1 To address these barriers, the Group has proposed a series of recommendations, with timelines for implementation which will give supporters a fairer, more realistic chance of achieving a level of ownership of and thus involvement in their football clubs.
- 3.2 Our **ownership** recommendations focus on three key areas - the **insolvency process**, recognising that historically most opportunities for supporter ownership at the top five levels of the game have emanated from football clubs entering into insolvency, a **revised tax structure** for supporter owned clubs, and the provision of **funding and expertise** to supporters during a bidding process.

### Insolvency

- 3.3 The report contains clear recommendations for the management of football insolvencies, and will ensure that Supporter Trusts have a fair chance of involvement in any process for purchasing their clubs from administration.
- 3.4 Key to this is ensuring that the appropriately constituted Supporters Trusts have an opportunity to bid for their clubs in the event of an insolvency, and that administrators handling an insolvency procedure should meet with the Supporters Trust and invite a bid from it, if the Trust is willing and able to mount a credible bid.
- 3.5 Having participated in and taken into account the Group's discussions on insolvency, this has now been included in the Football League's new insolvency policy, which was under review in 2015. Requiring administrators to meet with Supporters Trusts – and enforcing an 'opportunity to bid' for supporters when a club is seeking to emerge from administration is a step change for supporter ownership in this country.
- 3.6 The Group recognises that, in a bidding situation, particularly when a club is in administration, a significant barrier for Supporter Groups is a lack of access to funds in order to pay for professional fees - often needed at short notice - to aid with developing a credible bid, raising finance and promoting community ownership.
- 3.7 To remove this barrier, the Premier League and Fans Fund Panel have agreed to ensure that the terms of reference of the Fund permit Supporters Trusts of clubs in the National League, Football League and Premier League to apply for assistance with urgent and timely professional fees from an approved list of experts to assist fans in

developing their plans when a club faces a crisis. This Fund should also be available for urgent fees for a 'consented bid' from an existing owner planning to sell the club.

- 3.8 Recognising that many football supporters have professional skills, and are keen to use these skills to support their clubs when a club is in trouble, Supporters Direct, supported by Football Supporters Federation will create a database of suitable professional experts who are also football fans, or fans of individual clubs, who would be willing to provide pro-bono specialist advice to supporters' bids.
- 3.9 In addition to the 'emergency' bid expertise funding, the Premier League has also committed to ensuring adequate funding for recognised football supporter organisations that provide a voice for supporters on ownership issues, and a further £1 million will be available to the Fans Fund in addition to the existing level of funding for those groups.
- 3.10 In another move to improve the prospects of a successful supporter bid for a club, the Supporter Groups, led by SD with support from FSF and the football authorities should, over time agree a process for formally accrediting supporter representative bodies for the purpose of involvement in football club ownership. This will further ensure that the Supporter Trusts have the necessary expertise and support to develop credible bids for collective share ownership.
- 3.11 The proposals listed above will enable supporters to develop credible bids for their clubs, and ensure they have at the very least a fair chance of developing a successful bid during an administration / insolvency process.
- 3.12 Detailed examination of the football insolvency process identified further challenges for Supporters Trusts in developing credible and successful bids and a set of practical solutions which address these challenges have been developed.
- 3.13 The Group is, in principle, supportive of the Football Creditors Rule, an element of which requires football creditors to be prioritised and paid in full during an administration process, even though this can lead to the price of a successful bid being potentially cost prohibitive for supporters.
- 3.14 Whilst recognising that the Football Creditors Rule is a key part of the day to day running of the Leagues, and the means by which the integrity of the competition is protected in an administration process – enabling an insolvent club to remain in professional league football - the Group believes that one element of the FCR should be given further consideration by the football authorities.
- 3.15 In relevant circumstances, the football authorities have indicated that they would be willing to hold discussions on the potential for agreeing a compromise solution with players and their representatives if the money owed to them as football creditors is acting as an insurmountable barrier to a bid succeeding.
- 3.16 Another barrier to supporter ownership in an insolvency process is an instance in which the individuals who took the clubs into administration are able to control the

administration process by virtue of controlling more than 75% of the vote in the CVA process.

- 3.17 The Football League's review of its Insolvency Policy has now dealt with this issue for its clubs by removing the requirement for a CVA and creating a level playing field for bidders during a minimum 21 day sales process. The Group encourages the other football authorities to consider adopting this approach. The National League has a different policy on insolvency which it believes works for the lower leagues, but will consider the implications of the Football League's policy.
- 3.18 The Football League's new insolvency policy has also made it a requirement for the administrator to meet with the League, in order to ensure that the administrator understands the League's requirements and is in possession of all available information.
- 3.19 Recognising that football clubs play an important role in their local communities, and have a set of stakeholders, led by their fans, providing a different dynamic to a typical business insolvency, the football authorities have agreed to work with the Association of Business Recovery Professionals to develop a set of 'best practice' guidelines for administrators appointed to future football club insolvencies. The Group recognises that there will be a wide variation in guidance depending on which League the club is in.
- 3.20 The Owners and Directors Test has been successfully harmonised across competitions by the football authorities, and the football authorities commit to working together to ensure the continued harmonisation of the ODT. In examining barriers to supporter ownership, the Group considered whether the ODT should include the potential for disqualification for owners / directors if the clubs they own / run enter into administration without extenuating circumstances and they seek to take a similar role at another football club.
- 3.21 To deal with this challenge, the football authorities agreed to keep the ODT under constant review and will take into account any feedback received from SD, FSF and other relevant fan groups through structured dialogue to ensure it achieves its intended purpose at all times.

### **Tax structure**

- 3.22 Another key focus for the Group was on taxation status for supporter bids or supporter owned clubs and the Group recommends that the government undertakes a comprehensive review of Social Investment Tax Relief (SITR) or other suitable alternatives, to give accredited Supporters Trusts a tax-efficient way of accruing funds to prepare for a future bid
- 3.23 This will at least be a step towards levelling the playing field for supporters in a bidding competition with individuals, businesses or consortiums who have a range of corporate tax opportunities and advantages available in both a bidding and an operational environment.

- 3.24 Specifically, the government should review Social Investment Tax Relief (SITR) and adjust it if necessary by statutory instrument to ensure it benefits community owned football clubs.
- 3.25 Similarly, a Community Owned Sports Club model (COSC), as proposed by Supporters Direct, should be accepted by HMRC as a legitimate operating model for supporter owned football clubs, developed and put into operation alongside the Community Amateur Sports Club (CASC) scheme already run by HMRC. The football authorities need to be involved in developing this model so that it does not undermine the integrity of League football by creating any unfair advantages.
- 3.26 The Group believes that the proposals listed above will remove barriers to and create opportunities for supporter share ownership, and these recommendations have the support of the football authorities and the supporter organisations represented on the Group.
- 3.27 The Group believes that increased supporter share ownership is a positive way of improving supporter involvement in the governance and running of their football clubs.
- 3.28 Outside of increasing supporter share ownership, the Group examined additional ways for supporters to be involved in the running of their clubs.
- 3.29 The Group examined core principles of 'good governance' standard in UK companies, and in football clubs.
- 3.30 Currently, the company structure of most football clubs differs from that of Public Limited Companies and so is not subject to the same governance requirements. The Group considered whether corporate governance in football could be adjusted to better recognise football's importance to its communities and its reliance on its key stakeholder group – the fans – by improving the arrangements for structured dialogue.
- 3.31 The Group has developed a model for a minimum level of structured engagement and dialogue between clubs and fans which will deliver the commitments made by the Premier League and the Football League in their response to the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport in 2012. This is a significant step change in ensuring that clubs give supporters regular opportunities to discuss the issues which matter to supporters with relevant senior club personnel.
- 3.32 This new model will assist clubs, and their management boards, meet the obligations of the Companies Act, which requires all businesses in the UK to take regard of the need to foster the company's relationship with its customers - in the case of football, the fans - and the impact of the company's operations on the community.
- 3.33 The Leagues will recommend to their member clubs that the 2012 undertaking and the subsequent application of the relevant League rules will be met by meeting a representative group of supporters at least twice a year to discuss major issues.
- 3.34 The Leagues will recommend that this representative group of supporters includes the club's Supporters Trust. The Leagues will advise clubs that no individuals should be

excluded from the meetings without good reason, and, if attendances at these meetings is restricted to a small group of supporters – which is the preference of SD/FSF– a significant proportion of this representative group of supporters should be elected, selected or invited to these meetings in line with basic democratic principles.

- 3.35 Senior representatives from the clubs – either club owners / directors and/or senior executive management should represent the club at these meetings. The Group recognises the importance of Supporter Liaison Officers and their roles in providing a key interface between clubs and fans on a wide range of issues - and this should continue - but this formal, structured dialogue should be led by owners / directors / senior executive management.
- 3.36 The Group recognises that there is not a 'one size fits all' approach to either clubs or Leagues and that the fans' appetite for specific information, and to discuss specific issues will vary from club to club. Whilst SD and FSF believe these meetings would be most productive with a tighter, independently democratically elected representative group of supporters with an interest in strategic and governance issues, the PL and FL support clubs having the flexibility to invite a broad and open group of supporters.
- 3.37 Each of the Leagues will therefore provide a template to clubs outlining the minimum level of information which should be shared at these meetings. Although the focus of these meetings will be on strategic and major issues, all parties will be able to table additional topics where relevant and timely, to ensure that the issues which matter to supporters and clubs are discussed.
- 3.38 It also aims to develop and improve relationships between fans groups and their clubs which may, over time, facilitate new opportunities for fans to invest in their clubs and encourage opportunities for collective share ownership. Building trusted partnerships can be a step towards a sensible, managed exit route by owners who intend to sell, and giving supporters a transparent and visible view of the strategic direction of a club, is a good backdrop for dialogue on potential supporter ownership/ investment opportunities.
- 3.39 The Leagues will oversee these commitments and, if needed, clarify them in their rule books and will take into account any feedback received from SD and the FSF on the effectiveness of this approach.
- 3.40 The Premier League and Football League will lead with the new structured dialogue model. The proposed new Licensing System for the National Leagues will be reviewed to ensure that due consideration is given to structured dialogue and engagement when licensing clubs to operate in the National Leagues.
- 3.41 The football authorities have also committed to meeting fans groups who may have concerns about governance standards at their football clubs, or the way their football clubs are run. Whilst this happens formally and informally anyway, the football authorities have stated for the record that they are committed to listening to fans who have such concerns, and will meet legitimate fans groups seeking a meeting on significant issues.

- 3.42 Whilst the Group is broadly supportive of the idea of supporter directors on club boards in principle, we believe that strong, structured dialogue with a representative group of supporters, embedded in the rule books, is a more inclusive way of ensuring supporters have access to strategic information, can discuss key issues with club owners, directors and senior executives and hold them accountable.
- 3.43 The Group reviewed the appointment of independent non-executive directors to club boards. Whilst the football authorities have a model-neutral approach to club ownership and corporate structures, the Group believes independent non-executive directors can add value to club boards, but it would be a matter for individual clubs to decide their approach to this issue.
- 3.44 The Group notes that The FA, PL and FL Boards now all include Non-Executive Directors which is in line with ‘good governance’ recommendations.
- 3.45 The Group also notes that The FA has, during the course of the Group’s discussions, announced its own review of decision making structures within The FA. The Group recommends that, as part of The FA’s review, The FA considers how to best engage with representative supporter groups within its decision making structures. The Group noted that there is only one supporter representative on the 123 person FA Council and SD/FSF have asked that this is reconsidered as part of The FA’s structural review.
- 3.46 The Group recommends that Supporters Direct and the Football Supporters Federation are formal consultees in this review, to ensure improved and more effective representation for supporters within the key decision-making bodies, including the Professional Game Board and the National Game Board – a commitment made in 2012 – is delivered.
- 3.47 The Group recognises the importance of the name of the club, location of the ground, club colours and the club crest to supporters. Requirements now exist within both the Leagues and The FA for ground changes and name changes. In 2015, The FA Council approved a new procedure for name changes which is supported by the Group. The Group also reviewed the Leagues’ requirements for ground changes which make it clear that such moves should not adversely affect supporters, and should, where possible, include consultation with supporters as part of the planning process. The football authorities agreed to keep these regulations under constant review. The Group would recommend that any substantial changes to club colours or crest are discussed as part of the structured dialogue.
- 3.48 In addition, in an insolvency situation, if a club has been liquidated and lost its place in the football pyramid, The FA will review, with Supporters Direct, whether it is possible under insolvency law to act as guardians of a club’s identity and see whether it is possible to provide supporters trusts with the first opportunity to re-form a new club.





## **Detailed Recommendations**

### **Part One, identifying and removing barriers to greater collective share ownership of football clubs**

A very small minority of clubs in English football are supporter owned or have significant supporter shareholding.

In the Premier League, Swansea City has a 20% supporter shareholding.

There are no clubs currently in either the Championship or League One with a supporter shareholding of over 20%.

In League Two, AFC Wimbledon, Exeter City, Newport County and Wycombe Wanderers are majority supporter owned. Portsmouth has a 48% community shareholding - although the majority of the additional shares are owned by long time Portsmouth supporters who invested as individuals. Carlisle United and York City both have a 25% supporter shareholding.

In the National League, Chester City and Wrexham are 100% community owned by supporters.

There are a number of other clubs with significant supporter/community ownership further down the non-League structure, but, in the main pyramid of competitive English football, supporter ownership is clearly in the minority.

It is important to note that the Group has only examined collective supporter ownership, and community supporter ownership.

The Group recognises that many owners of football clubs - or investors / directors of football clubs - are lifelong, loyal supporters, and the Group recognises their huge contribution.

The Group also recognises that the fan surveys conducted by the Premier League and Football League do not show a major desire by football supporters to own their football clubs. Fans recognise and support a variety of ownership models, and the Group believes that plurality of ownership models is the right approach for English football.

The Group also notes that attendances continue to rise at football grounds at all levels. Football League crowds over the last few seasons are at their highest for half a century and season ticket sales are the highest on record.

Premier League clubs have an average attendance of 95% of ground capacity, and season ticket sales continue to increase.

Football is still the national game in this country, and continues to attract strong and increasing levels of support.

However, within this context, and after hearing detailed evidence from Supporters Trusts who have direct involvement in the purchase of and running of their football clubs, the Group

believes that the process of gaining collective supporter share ownership has been unnecessarily difficult, and has developed a set of proposals to address and remove barriers to collective supporter ownership - barriers which are currently too high.

### **Insolvency**

Most majority or minority collective supporter shareholding in football clubs playing in the top five levels of the game have been the result of a club entering either an insolvency process or a period of significant financial distress. The insolvency process has contained too many barriers and not enough incentives for supporters to take ownership of their clubs - at a time when previous owners have failed to run the business sustainably.

Within the insolvency process, the Group recommends a series of proposals which begin with ensuring that an accredited Supporters Trust always has an opportunity to bid for the club if a club goes into administration.

If a club has failed, supporters must be given a fair opportunity to be part of rebuilding the club, and ensuring that the club plays a positive role in the local community which it represents.

There have been instances where Supporters Trusts have not been invited to be part of a 'rescue process' by football club administrators.

The Group heard convincing evidence from the Portsmouth Supporters Trust which outlined how the original administrator for the Portsmouth FC administration in 2010 initially refused to meet the Supporters Trust unless £100 million in proof of funds could be provided.

The Portsmouth Supporters Trust was clearly capable of mounting a credible bid for the club, as is proven by its eventual successful purchase of the club, but there was no requirement for the administrator to meet with a club's Supporters Trust.

### **The Group believes that administrators should meet with a club's Supporters Trust and invite it to bid for the club.**

As part of its pre-existing review of its insolvency policy, the Football League, having taken into account the Group's deliberations, has amended its insolvency policy to require the administrator to meet with the club's Supporters Trust within 21 days. The Premier League and the National League will review their own insolvency policies where appropriate.

The Group discussed the different approaches to insolvency policy across the Leagues. Because of the varying levels of income and investment, there are different Financial Fair Play (FFP) policies in place across each of the four professional Leagues, and a further financial sustainability policy in place in the National League.

The policies have very different thresholds, but are all designed to ensure the financial sustainability of the clubs. The Group notes that these policies have worked well in the last couple of years since being refreshed. It is important to note that the terms of reference of this Group do not cover examination of the financial structure / debt capacity of football clubs.

The Group also notes that the financial mismanagement seen at Portsmouth, for example, is unlikely to be able to be repeated now that FFP is in place, and that the Leagues have detailed oversight of a club's business plans, income and costs, player contract values and returns to HMRC.

A robust 'early warning system', with the ability to impose sanctions and embargoes, is now in operation by the Leagues, and the Group believes the continued strengthening of these early warning systems is the best way to prevent football clubs going into administration.

Whilst the process of club insolvency can be improved to ensure that supporters have the opportunity to bid for the club, the Group also notes that the costs of purchasing a club from administration can be a large barrier to a Supporters Trust's bid.

The Group spent significant time discussing the Football Creditors Rule, an element of which requires football creditors to be prioritised and paid in full as part of an administration process.

The Group is in principle supportive of the Football Creditors Rule, which addresses potential issues around financial default - on transfers and ticket sales for example - which protects the integrity of League competition, and is used every day, not just in insolvency events. In general the Football Creditors Rule ensures that clubs maintain their financial obligations to other clubs, and underpins the financial operation of the league.

The FCR rule is important in that it underpins a rescue culture for football clubs and ensures that one insolvency is not to the detriment of the other League clubs, and can prevent a domino effect of insolvencies if a series of clubs owe transfer fees - for example - to each other.

The FCR exists in various forms in the Premier League, Football League, UEFA and FIFA regulations and other sports such as Rugby Union.

However, the Group believes that one element of the Football Creditors Rule - the requirement for a 'new club' to pay in full the contracts of players at the club in administration, even if they have found other employment - can be a barrier to supporter ownership.

It requires supporters to effectively pay up contracts from a previous regime which may have been financially unsustainable.

**To deal with this barrier, the football authorities have indicated that they would be willing to hold discussions on the potential for agreeing a compromise solution with players and their representatives if the money owed to them is acting as an insurmountable barrier to a Supporters Trust's bid succeeding.**

Even if a Supporters Trust's opportunity to bid in an insolvency process is ensured, there are other barriers which can unfairly impact a supporter bid.

Consecutive ownerships each side of an administration process, and owners / directors who are part of one club's administration process who seek to take a similar role at another club can impact on a supporter bid, particularly if a supporter bid has a more sustainable business plan and no track record of failure.

The Group notes that some club administrations have had extenuating circumstances - the collapse of ITV Digital for example - and these extenuating circumstances must be taken into account.

The Groups also noted the successful harmonisation of the Owners and Directors Test (ODT) across competitions by the football authorities, and that it operates within legal constraints.

**However, the football authorities have agreed to keep the ODT test under constant review and take into account any feedback provided by Supporters Direct, the Football Supporters Federation and other representative groups to ensure that the ODT achieves its intended purpose at all times.**

Similarly, a potential barrier to supporter ownership - which was presented in the evidence sessions - is the requirement for a football club to agree a CVA with creditors before exiting administration and changing ownership.

In some cases, the largest creditor is the previous owner, who has run the club in an unsustainable manner and taken it into administration. Consecutive ownerships - pre and post administration- based on the need to agree debt repayment with the owner as part of a CVA is a major barrier to supporter ownership.

The Football League's new insolvency policy deals with this by removing the requirement for a CVA to exit administration, effectively placing a supporter bid on a level playing field with any competing bid during a minimum 21 day sales process

Finally, when examining the insolvency process, and accepting that it needs to operate within UK Insolvency Law and the promotion of a 'rescue culture', the Group believes that football clubs have obligations to their local communities and core stakeholders - the fans - which are not recognised by insolvency law.

To address this, the football authorities intend to work with the Association of Business Recovery Professionals to develop 'best practice' guidance for administrators involved in future football insolvencies, and request government support in enabling this co-operation and collaboration to take place.

## **Taxation**

The current UK tax system has offered no incentives for supporter ownership, and the Group believes this should be addressed.

Individuals and corporations have a series of tax incentives available in purchasing and operating football clubs, and in starting new businesses. This includes group tax relief for wealthy owners holding football clubs within group business structures.

Collective supporter ownership of football clubs, to be run for the benefit of their local communities, do not have the benefit of new business, social investment or charitable tax status.

The reality is that supporters who buy shares in their clubs do not expect to see a return. It is not a traditional 'investment', and yet it does not qualify for tax relief as a donation - Gift Aid, for example, does not apply.

The Group invited HMRC and HM Treasury to discuss whether supporter owned clubs could qualify for an amended version of the Enterprise Investment Scheme (EIS).

Changes to EIS within the European Union mean that the scheme would not be suitable for football clubs. EIS is also not relevant to an insolvency situation.

A small number of supporter groups have historically been able to make use of EIS, but these changes will significantly reduce opportunities.

Social Investment Tax Relief (SITR) recognises social enterprises including community interest companies and community benefit societies, and can offer opportunities for supporter owned football clubs.

**The Group believes that there is a policy rationale for supporter owned football clubs under SITR, and that the government should review SITR and adjust it if necessary by statutory instrument to ensure it benefits community owned football clubs.**

The Group fully appreciates that making a case for a football club to effectively receive tax breaks is difficult given the many public funding priorities in the UK.

However, our proposal is based on levelling the playing field, and allowing supporter and community owned football clubs access to some of the tax incentives and benefits which are available to companies and to wealthy individual owners.

If the government is serious about providing incentives to supporter ownership - which the terms of reference of the Group require us to explore - then tax incentives within SITR should be available for football clubs which are based on collective supporter ownership.

Similarly, the Group recommends that HMRC should review, develop and put into operation the Community Owned Sports Club model (COSC) developed by Supporters Direct as a legitimate operating model for a football club competing in any of the football competitions. The football authorities would need to be involved in developing this model so that it does not undermine the integrity of League football by creating any unfair advantages.

The government already accepts the Community Amateur Sports Club (CASC) operating model, allowing CASCs to claim fiscal benefits including Gift Aid, corporation tax and rate relief, and the Group believes this should be extended to COSCs which recognise supporter owned football clubs, run for the benefit of their communities, in which supporters have made a collective financial investment.

The Group also believes there is an opportunity to provide tax incentives for supporters to prepare and save for a supporter ownership opportunity within an ISA style savings model. However, this will require detailed examination by HM Treasury and tax experts, and the Group recommends that the government examine this option, working with SD to see if an appropriate savings model can be created.

### **Expertise and Funding for Supporter Ownership bids**

Access to short term funding and expertise in preparing a bid for ownership was a clear barrier identified by the Group, and the Group has developed a number of proposals to remove these barriers.

The acquisition process for supporters attempting to acquire a collective shareholding in their football club can be unnecessarily challenging.

In these situations, supporter bids for shareholdings require professional expertise - in financial investment and planning, accountancy, law and marketing and promoting the investment opportunity.

Whilst Supporters Direct is able to provide some support, and this report also recommends funding for financial support to prepare insolvency driven and owner consented bids, more pro-bono expertise is required to avoid the Supporters Trust incurring prohibitively large costs.

Many football supporters have the necessary professional skills and would be willing to offer them to support a Supporters Trust bid for a majority or minority shareholding. Long term supporters also have a real and valuable emotional commitment to their clubs which can be of great benefit to the club, its community and to running the club in a financially sustainable, long term custodian manner.

**Supporters Direct, with the support of the Football Supporters Federation, will work together to create a database of professional experts who are also genuine football fans and who would be willing to provide pro-bono specialist professional advice to Supporter Bids.**

**This database would also be available to clubs looking for professionally qualified independent non-executive directors who have a genuine and proven love of the game.**

Access to short term funding, where supporter bids or registrations of interest have to be developed quickly, can also be a barrier for Supporter Groups who simply do not have enough ready access to capital.

**In these circumstances, and where the supporters can offer a credible bid, the Premier League - via its established Fans Fund - will provide emergency short term funding towards urgent and timely professional fees from an approved list of experts to enable Supporters Trusts to develop and prepare a bid either when a football club enters administration, or if they have the consent of the owner to bid.**

The Premier League and Fans Fund Trustees will develop an application process which has a clear 'cap' on funding and time limits for accessing funds after the initial application, to ensure that only bona fide, credible projects are accepted for funding on an emergency or opportunity basis.

**In addition to the 'emergency' bid expertise funding, the Premier League has also committed to ensuring adequate funding for recognised football supporter organisations that provide a voice for supporters on ownership issues and an additional £1 million will be provided over three years to the Fans Fund for these purposes.**

In making this commitment, the Premier League notes that is conditional on current revenue projections and would need to be revisited if the current OFCOM inquiry affects the 2016-19 TV deal.

In making these commitments and recommendations, the Group believes that Supporters Trusts are the best vehicle for leading and acquiring collective supporter share ownership in football clubs.

The Group supports the primacy of Supporters Trusts in the ownership debate because trusts are properly incorporated and constituted, have effective, elected representation and democratic operation and governance, make minutes and accounts publicly available, and aim to actively increase membership.

They are also committed to engaging the wider community and to delivering social value - which the Group recognises the importance of for football clubs in their community.

**The Group recommends that Supporters Direct, with support from FSF and the football authorities, agree over time a formal, official accreditation process for Supporters Trusts for the purpose of involvement in football club ownership. This would ensure clarity of purpose with respect to aims of equity and acquisition, and ensure that the trusts have suitable expertise and appropriate representation to deliver increased levels of collective supporter share ownership across all levels of football competition.**



## **Part Two - Exploring the greater facilitation of supporter engagement and involvement in the governance and running of football clubs**

Supporter engagement can mean many things to many people. In the context of this report, it means dialogue between a football club and its fans, ensuring that the views of the fans - the lifeblood of any football club - are listened to, and acted upon.

The Group recognises that strong levels of engagement already take place at many clubs. The Supporter Liaison Officer role, made mandatory by the Premier League and Football League in 2012/13, is developing and working well in most clubs. Feedback from fans in the annual League surveys is broadly positive about the potential for and impact of this important role.

The majority of clubs in the Premier League and Football League hold regular Fans Forums, where topical issues which are important to fans are discussed in an open and productive manner. The recommendations of this Group are intended to ensure that structured dialogue will now take place at all League clubs.

However, the evidence heard by the Group, and the need to develop relationships between Supporter Groups and clubs with a view to creating an environment of trust, and increasing ownership opportunities as and when they arise, means that a level of structured dialogue on major club issues needs to be agreed and implemented.

**The Group has developed a model for a minimum level of structured engagement and dialogue between clubs and fans which will deliver the commitments made by the Premier League and Football League in their response to the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport in 2012. This is a significant step change in ensuring that clubs give supporters visibility of the strategic direction of their football clubs, and regular opportunities to discuss the issues which matter to supporters.**

This will include a commitment to meeting a representative group of supporters at least twice a year to discuss strategic / major issues.

The Leagues will recommend that this representative group of supporters includes the club's Supporters Trust. The Leagues will advise clubs that no individuals should be excluded from the meetings without good reason, and, if attendances at these meetings is restricted to a small group of supporters – which is the preference of SD / FSF – a significant proportion of this representative group of supporters should be elected, selected or invited to these meetings in line with basic democratic principles.

The Group recognises that there is not a 'one size fits all' approach to either clubs or Leagues and that the fans' appetite for specific information, and to discuss specific issues will vary from club to club. Whilst SD and FSF believe these meetings would be most productive with a tighter, democratically elected representative group of supporters with an interest in strategic and governance issues, the PL and FL support clubs having the flexibility to invite a broad and open group of supporters.

Senior representatives from the clubs - either club owners, directors and/or senior executive management - should represent the club at these meetings.

Each of the Leagues will provide a template to clubs outlining the minimum level of information which should be shared at these meetings.

Although the focus of these meetings should be on strategic / major issues, all parties will be able to table additional topics where relevant and timely, to ensure that the issues which matter to supporters and clubs are discussed

The Group believes that codifying this new level of structured dialogue between representative groups of fans and senior club personnel will be a major factor in improving and increasing opportunities for fans to be involved in club governance.

It brings clubs closer to complying with the core principles of the Companies Act - which while applying to all companies, does not apply to the vast majority of football clubs - which states that company boards should give due regard to the interests of its stakeholders, as well as its shareholders, and have due regard to the impact of the company's operations on the community.

This structured dialogue can help facilitate a partnership approach between a club and its supporters, recognising that supporters care about the strategic direction of the club as well as operational issues and the match day experience.

It will encourage transparency and, in the long term, can provide opportunities for supporter investment and shareholdings as and when appropriate, particularly where partnerships of trust can be developed.

The Group discussed the opportunity for football club boards to include greater supporter representation.

Whilst the Group is in principle supportive of the general idea of greater supporter representation on club boards, it recognises that there are challenges with appointing - or electing - supporter directors, who then have board confidentiality, accountability, and potentially, liability issues as a formal club director.

The Group recommends that SD, with the support of FSF prepares guidance for clubs and supporters who intend to pursue supporter director roles and opportunities.

The Group also reviewed the appointment of independent non-executive directors to club boards. Whilst the football authorities have a model-neutral approach to club ownership and corporate structures, the Group believes independent non-executive directors can add value to club boards, but it is a matter for individual clubs to determine their position on this issue.

The database to be established by SD, with support from FSF, referred to earlier in this report, should be available to football clubs if they are appointing non-executive directors.

The Group notes that the Premier League, Football League, National League and The FA boards all include independent non-executive directors, which is in line with good corporate governance principles.

The Group also noted that The FA has, during the course of the Group's discussions, announced its own review of decision making structures within The FA.

**The Group recommends that, as part of the ongoing review, The FA considers how best to engage with representative supporter groups within its decision making structures and that Supporters Direct and the Football Supporters Federation are formal consultees in this review.**

The Group noted that there was only one supporter representative on the current 123 person FA Council, and the FSF and SD asked for this to be reconsidered as part of The FA's ongoing structural review.

In addition to the level of supporter representation on The FA Council, the Group notes that there is currently limited opportunity for supporters to be consulted by the Governing Body.

The Group recommends that The FA's ongoing governance review recognises that supporters need a more representative voice at governing body level. The Group agreed that supporters' access to the Professional Game Board and National Game Board should be improved through formal consultation with SD and FSF.

Whilst the Group does not have a remit to look at specific supporter concerns and issues, we wanted to address the recent issues and challenge around football clubs changing their names, first team colours, crests and the location of their grounds.

These are major strategic issues which matter greatly to supporters, and the structured dialogue which will now take place between the club and its supporters, is an important way of ensuring that any such changes are discussed with the fans.

The Group recognises the importance of the name of the club, location of the ground, club colours and the club crest to supporters. Requirements now exist within both the Leagues and The FA for ground changes and name changes. In 2015, The FA Council approved a new procedure for name changes which is supported by the Group. The Group also reviewed the Leagues' requirements for ground changes which make it clear that such moves should not adversely affect supporters and should, where possible, include consultation with supporters as part of the planning process. The football authorities agreed to keep these regulations under constant review.

The Group also considered whether it was possible to safeguard a club's heritage if it fails to be rescued during the administration process. The intellectual property of the club in this position would be governed by insolvency law, but The FA will review with Supporters Direct whether it is possible to act as guardians of a club's identity in such circumstances and see whether it is possible to provide Supporters Trusts with the first opportunity to re-form a new club

## Appendix One

### Supporter Ownership and Engagement Expert Working Group Terms of Reference

#### Introduction

The coalition government's *Programme for Government* made a specific promise to '...encourage the reform of football governance rules to support the co-operative ownership of football clubs by supporters'.

The Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) Select Committee Football Governance Inquiry (2011) and subsequent reports have recommended that there was a need to set up an expert working group to explore the barriers to increased supporter ownership and provide solutions.

With the backing from Helen Grant MP, the Minister for Sport & Tourism, the Expert Working Group was launched on 21 October 2014. The Group will build on and develop the earlier work carried out by the Select Committee. The Expert Working Group will develop practical approaches to the barriers to supporter ownership and engagement.

#### Terms of reference

##### Aim of the Group

The Supporter Ownership Expert Working Group's aim will be to identify solutions to current barriers preventing greater collective supporter share ownership of football clubs and explore the greater facilitation of supporter engagement and involvement in the governance and running of football clubs

##### The Group should:-

- Identify current legal, financial, tax and insolvency barriers preventing greater collective supporter share ownership of football clubs;
- Consider ways in which greater levels of collective supporter shareholdings can be obtained in light of current legislation and football rules;
- Identify ways in which supporter groups can build capacity to be in a position to gain greater levels of shareholding in football clubs;
- Explore the greater facilitation of supporter engagement and outline models by which fans and clubs can successfully be involved in the governance and running of football clubs
- Ensure that measures suggested by the expert working group do not adversely impact on the sporting integrity of league competition and

- Report to DCMS and other relevant departments on what steps can and should be taken, and how to implement them (including the content of any legislation).

## **Method of Working**

## **Membership**

Core Membership of the Group will comprise representatives from:

- Supporters Direct
- Football Supporters Federation
- the Football Association
- the Premier League
- the Football League
- The Football Conference
- Department for Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS)

Attending the group's meetings as expert witnesses will be trusts from:

- Portsmouth FC
- AFC Wimbledon
- Wrexham FC
- Swansea City AFC
- Any other clubs/trusts as appropriate

Along with DCMS, the following Government Departments will be advised of the groups programme of activity, and attend or contribute expertise as appropriate:

- HM Treasury
- Business, Innovation & Skills / Insolvency

There may be occasions when the subject matter under discussion could benefit from input from other specialist representatives. When such occasions arise the Group may agree additional representation including from additional Clubs and Supporter Groups / Expert organisations

## **Chairperson**

The Group will be chaired by Joanna Manning-Cooper.

## **Timescale**

The first meeting will take place in November 2014.

## **Duration**

The Group will initially meet at least four times in the first year and the function of the group reviewed after one year.

## **Output**

The output of the Group will be:

1. November/ December 2014: agree the full work programme for the group, including establishment of specialist working sub groups if required
2. January, February and March meetings, with presentations and expert evidence/input
3. March 2015: Initial report to Government
4. July 2015: Concluding report and announcement of technical work to be undertaken where rule or law changes are proposed
5. November 2015: Progress report

The Group will provide the Minister with a progress report as outlined above and the function of the group will be reviewed after one year.

## **The working arrangements for the Group are:-**

- Secretariat duties will be performed by the Football Association. The Football Association will also provide a venue for meetings;
- Informed by the wishes of the Group the Secretariat will draw up agendas for meetings and the Chairperson will authorise them;
- The agenda and supporting documentation including papers for discussion will normally be issued 10 working days in advance of the meeting;
- Draft minutes and summary action points of each meeting will be produced and sent to members and relevant advisors within 10 working days of each meeting;
- AOB can be tabled at the discretion of the Chair; and
- The Group will meet at least four times per calendar year and as often as necessary.

## **Proposed agenda for the first meeting**

- Welcome and introduction from the Chair
- Around the table introduction – note Terms of Reference (which need to be agreed in advance of the meeting)
- Prioritise themes for forthcoming meetings (legal, financial, tax, insolvency, engagement/involvement), followed by a Presentation by Portsmouth football club outlining the legal, financial and other challenges faces by the Supporters Trust as part of the process of purchasing the club out of administration
- Agree outline work plan
- Agree information requirements
- Discuss budgetary requirements of the Group
- Agree composition of sub-working groups if required
- AOB

Confirm date of next meeting (Secretariat will suggest future meeting dates in advance).



## Appendix Two

### A) Full list of Group members

#### Chair

Joanna Manning-Cooper, Independent Chair

#### Legal Advisor

Tim Jones, Independent

#### Supporters Direct

Robin Osterley, Chief Executive

Brian Burgess, Chair (replaced Robin Osterley on the group)

James Mathie, Club Development Manager

#### Football Supporters Federation

Kevin Miles, Chief Executive

#### The Football Association

Jonathan Hall, Director of Football Services

Robert Sullivan, Director of Strategy (replaced Jonathan Hall on the group)

James MacDougall, Head of Public Affairs

#### Premier League

Bill Bush, Director of Policy and Communication

#### Football League

John Nagle, Head of Communications

#### The Football Conference

Mike Smith, Director, Conference

Jack Pearce, Vice-President, National League

#### Department for Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS)

Francesca Broadbent, Head of Elite and Professional Sport



Sam Haylen, Football Policy Advisor

**Portsmouth FC**

Ashley Brown

**AFC Wimbledon**

Zoe Linkson

**Wrexham FC**

Alan Fox

**Swansea City AFC**

David Little

Phil Sumbler

**Remuneration and expenses**

The four Supporters Trust representatives on the Group were entitled to claim travel expenses from the Fans Fund for attending the ten meetings in London. None of the other Group members claimed any expenses. The Chairperson did not receive any remuneration or expenses for this role – it was undertaken on a voluntary basis.

**B) Full list of meetings, topics, dates and attendees (including invited guests/presenters)**

**Meeting 1: Supporter Ownership and Engagement Expert Group, 25/11/14**

Joanna Manning-Cooper	Chair
James MacDougall	The FA
Francesca Broadbent	DCMS
Sam Haylen	DCMS
Robin Osterley	Supporters Direct
James Mathie	Supporters Direct
Kevin Miles	Football Supporters Federation
Jonathan Hall	Football Association

Bill Bush	Premier League
John Nagle	Football League
Mike Smith	Football Conference
Ashley Brown	Portsmouth ST
Alan Fox	Wrexham ST
Phil Sumbler	Swansea City ST
Zoe Linkson	Dons ST

**Meeting 2, Insolvency Sub-Group, 22/01/15**

Joanna Manning-Cooper	Chair
James MacDougall	The FA
Sam Haylen	DCMS
Official from	Insolvency Service
Official from	HMRC
Nick Igoe	Supporters Direct
James Mathie	Supporters Direct
Tim Hillyer	Football Supporters Federation
Neil Prescott	Football Association
Bill Bush	Premier League
John Nagle	Football League
Shaun Harvey	Football League
Ashley Brown	Portsmouth ST
Zoe Linkson	Dons ST
Tim Jones	Independent legal advisor

**Meeting 3, Taxation, Financial and Legal Sub-Group, 30/01/15**

Joanna Manning-Cooper	Chair
James MacDougall	The FA
Sam Haylen	DCMS
Official from	HMRC
Official from	HMRC
Robin Osterley	Supporters Direct
James Mathie	Supporters Direct

Neil Prescott	Football Association
Thomas Guthrie	Premier League
John Nagle	Football League
Nick Craig	Football League
Ashley Brown	Portsmouth ST
Kris Stewart	Dons ST
David Little	Swansea ST
Rob Parry	Wrexham ST
Andy Green	MUST
Duncan Drasdo	MUST
Mark Rawlinson	MUST
Tim Jones	Independent legal advisor

**Meeting 4, Core Group: Supporter Involvement in Club Governance and Broader Engagement, 09/02/15**

Joanna Manning-Cooper	Chair
James MacDougall	The FA
Francesca Broadbent	DCMS
Official from	DCLG
Robin Osterley	Supporters Direct
James Mathie	Supporters Direct
Kevin Miles	Football Supporters Federation
Bill Bush	Premier League
Cathy Long	Premier League
Thomas Guthrie	Premier League
John Nagle	Football League
Ashley Brown	Portsmouth ST
Zoe Linkson	Dons ST
Alan Fox	Wrexham ST
Phil Sumbler	Swansea ST
Tim Jones	Independent legal advisor
Sara Ward	MMU
Tony Hines	MMU

Tim Payton Arsenal ST

**Meeting 5, Core Group Meeting, 06/03/15**

Joanna Manning-Cooper	Chair
James MacDougall	The FA
Francesca Broadbent	DCMS
Robin Osterley	Supporters Direct
James Mathie	Supporters Direct
Kevin Miles	Football Supporters Federation
Bill Bush	Premier League
John Nagle	Football League
Ashley Brown	Portsmouth ST
Zoe Linkson	Dons ST
Alan Fox	Wrexham ST
Phil Sumbler	Swansea ST
Tim Jones	Independent legal advisor

**Meeting 6, Core Group Meeting- Review of Interim Report and next steps, 16/06/15**

Joanna Manning-Cooper	Chair
James MacDougall	The FA
Sam Haylen	DCMS
Brian Burgess	Supporters Direct
James Mathie	Supporters Direct
Kevin Miles	Football Supporters Federation
Bill Bush	Premier League
John Nagle	Football League
Mike Smith	Football Conference
Ashley Brown	Portsmouth ST
Dai Little	Swansea City ST

**Meeting 7, Improving the organisation and funding of Supporter Groups to prepare for bids / increasing share ownership, 27/07/15.**

Joanna Manning-Cooper	Chair
James MacDougall	The FA
Sam Haylen	DCMS
Official from	HMRC
Official from	HM Treasury
Official from	HM Treasury
Brian Burgess	Supporters Direct
James Mathie	Supporters Direct
Hillary Clifford	Supporters Direct
Kevin Miles	Football Supporters Federation
Bill Bush	Premier League
Cathy Long	Premier League
Nick Roberts	Football League
Ashley Brown	Portsmouth ST

**Meeting 8, Remove barriers and create opportunities for accredited supporter trusts during the sale of Clubs and within the insolvency process, 21/08/15**

Joanna Manning-Cooper	Chair
James MacDougall	The FA
Francesca Broadbent	DCMS
Official from	BIS
Official from	BIS
Official from	Insolvency Service
Official from	DCLG
Brian Burgess	Supporters Direct
James Mathie	Supporters Direct
Hillary Clifford	Supporters Direct
Tim Hillyer	Football Supporters Federation
Bill Bush	Premier League
Robert Sullivan	The FA
Neil Prescott	The FA

Jack Pearce	Football Conference/National League
John Nagle	Football League
Ashley Brown	Portsmouth ST
Zoe Linkson	Wimbledon ST
Alan Fox	Wrexham ST

### **Meeting 9, Formalising structured engagement between clubs and fan, 13/10/15**

Joanna Manning-Cooper	Chair
James MacDougall	The FA
Francesca Broadbent	DCMS
Brian Burgess	Supporters Direct
James Mathie	Supporters Direct
Michael Brunskill	Football Supporters Federation
Bill Bush	Premier League
John Nagle	Football League
Jack Pearce	Football Conference/National League
Ashley Brown	Portsmouth ST
Alan Carling	Bradford City Supporters Board
Tim Payton	Arsenal Supporters Trust
Tom Gorringe	Brighton and Hove Albion FC
Tim Jones	Independent legal advisor

### **Meeting 10, Improve governance and increase fan representation, 03/11/15**

Joanna Manning-Cooper	Chair
James MacDougall	The FA
Sam Haylen	DCMS
Francesca Broadbent	DCMS
Official from	BIS
Official from	BIS
Brian Burgess	Supporters Direct
James Mathie	Supporters Direct

Kevin Miles

Bill Bush

Jack Pearce

John Nagle

Ashley Brown

Zoe Linkson

David Little

Duncan Drasdo

Tim Jones

Football Supporters Federation

Premier League

Football Conference/National League

Football League

Portsmouth ST

Wimbledon ST

Swansea ST

MUST

Independent legal advisor



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