

London FA Council Consultation, Monday 27th March 2023 (via Microsoft Teams)

Attendees:

Paul Bickerton, James Middlehurst, Amanda Lewis, Oren Flynn, Atik Ahmed, Duncan Hart, Drew Patterson, Jamaal Horne, Bobby Bernini, Tony Sharples, John McCulloch, David Wolff, Anita Poulman, Graham Etchell, Aquila Burgess, Ian Wallis, Tom Barnard, Mandy Okeye, Chris Conroy, Paul Mortimer, Lockie Bramzell, Jordan Sapler, Roger Fox, Jordan Crichlow, Conor McBrearty, Jo Hind, Michael Burke, Eddie Webb, Dave Hooker, Ian Burke, Priti Trivedi, Yasmin Hussain, Alejandro Sanchez-Buitrago, Alf Brown, Louise Dorling, Russell Howes, Jenn Athill, Neil Twitchett, Ruth Heppinstall, Kevin Wilmot, Lib DiCesare, Martynas Stonkus, Christina Oshodi, Colin Reid, Alan Clarke

Apologies: Lockie Bramzell, Carl L, Luke Thomson, Michael Chard, Nina Stewart, Bob Henderson, Abu Nasir, Tony Gilbey, Chloe Copsey, Freddie Law-Keen, Neil Fowkes, Bill Neicho, Ian Yearwood, Chris Conroy, Jill Berry, Yashmin Harun

1. Welcome & Purpose of the Meeting

James Middlehurst (**JM**) introduced the meeting and explained that key purpose of the evening was to consult with the Council as part of the formal London FA Council Review in the lead up to the 2024 – 2027 appointment cycle.

2. Minutes of the 5th December 2022 meeting

Approved

3. Matters Arising

None

4. Council & Board Appointments Process / Timeline for 2023

Paul Bickerton (**PB**) ran through a presentation setting the scene for the Council review and also explained the Council and Board appointments process and timeline for the year.

ACTION: PB to circulate slides with notes of the meeting

Question: Tony Sharples (TS) asked if he would be required to go through the appointments process as a Life Vice-President. PB confirmed that he would not, as he had been elected for life as per the Articles.

Question: Louise Dorling (LD) asked whether she and other long standing Council Members term limits came to an end in 2023. PB confirmed that they did not – term limits had been set in 2017 and so she and other long standing council members were eligible for one further term (2024 – 2027)

5. Consultation – Review of London FA Council for the 2023-2027 cycle

The Council were then split into 6 separate breakout groups, each facilitated by a London FA member of staff. These groups debated several pre-set consultation questions, with the key themes fed back to the Council in the meeting.

ACTION: staff to send notes of discussions for PB to collate. These will be included in the minutes of the meeting (see below) and considered by the Council Review working group at their next meeting on 12th April 2023 and the Board at their next meeting on 20th April 2023.

Consultation Feedback:

Question 1: why did you join the London FA Council?

- To understand better how the London FA and the FA work
- To have an opportunity to positively influence and affect grassroots football in London
- To give back to the grassroots game, having been involved in it for so many years
- Some members reported wanting to improve specific aspects of the grassroots game (e.g., refereeing, discipline and on-pitch-behaviour, women & girls' football)
- Offering expertise to the London FA to help support and develop the grassroots game

Question 2: Is it what you expected?

- Those who started on Council in 2017 reported that initially the disputes over governance dominated proceedings and were very disruptive, but they agreed that these issues had now passed
- Those who had been on Council for many years prior to 2017 reported on how the role of Council members had changed, from a group of volunteers actively delivering work on behalf of the Association, to more of an advisory body
- Newer council members (those appointed in 2020) reported being unclear about their role and that they did not feel they had had the opportunity to contribute and get involved as much as they thought they would
- Feedback on whether Council Members felt they had made an impact and influenced the organisation was mixed, with some feeling that they had, and others concerned that they hadn't as much as they thought they would

Question 3: what has surprised / disappointed you?

- Members reported being very pleased with the growth in the game, in particular around the Women & Girls game
- Members reported being engaged in London FA's Equality, Diversity & Inclusion work and that they felt that the Inclusion Advisory Group was a good group to be part of
- Several members reported not having had the opportunity to feedback enough through the meetings, with the information being too top-down
- There were significant reports that the divisions / regions had not worked well and that members remained unclear about their role and purpose, despite the recent review and changes. Several members queried whether the regions should continue.
- It was felt by some that the Council was less dynamic than they thought it would be and can feel old fashioned
- Several council members reported frustration that a lot of the work was being carried out by some whilst others did not appear to be making an effective contribution
- Many members reported that they were currently unclear what their contribution should be

Question 4: what is the key purpose of the London FA Council?

- To provide that vital link between the grassroots football community in London (clubs & leagues) and the London FA staff and Board
- To feedback information and issues from the clubs and leagues back into the organisation, to influence and better inform the work London FA do

- To provide information to clubs and leagues from Council Members directly, as a means of disseminating information. Several members did query whether this was not the role of the staff team, as they were closer to the operational work of the organisation
- To act as a sounding board for key plans and strategies across selected areas of work
- Hold the Board and London FA staff to account for progress
- To form key working groups and committees linked to the delivery of the London FA strategy and contribute to the delivery of this work

Question 5: what is the role of a London FA Council Member?

- The importance of committing to attendance at council meetings and any relevant Committee / Working Group meeting was raised by several members
- Several members also raised the issue that if we are trying to attract Council Members who are actively involved in grassroots football in London then we have to be aware of their time constraints
- A common theme was that the Council itself and Council members should be more visible to clubs and leagues, and they should understand better their role and function
- It was fed back that the role Council members played on Committees and Working Groups was very important and that those groups should be clear on their purpose first, as this would drive the role of Council overall
- The Council members should provide the key link between the clubs and leagues and the London FA, supporting the staff team and Board to better understand what is happening out on the ground

Question 6: what would you suggest to improve engagement?

- Be clear right from the outset about the role of the Council / Council members and the expectations
- Link the role of the Council directly to London FA's strategy and set this out through the recruitment pack
- Some members suggested that staff should have a more prominent role in the Committees and Working Groups, as they were responsible for the operational delivery of that work
- Consider a newsletter to clubs and leagues that regularly highlights the work of the Council
- We could consider a smaller Council, but the size should only be determined once we are clear on the role and purpose
- A tiered approach was suggested, based on people's time and capacity. Some council members would have a more active role whilst others a more passive, advisory role
- Consideration should be given to hosting Council meetings at local club venues, to get closer to grassroots clubs and teams
- It was proposed Council members should be out visiting clubs and leagues and at cup games and speaking with these stakeholders regularly and then feeding back
- The importance of more experienced members supporting and mentoring newer members and imparting their knowledge was seen as key
- Thematic groups should be formed in a more flexible manner, based on the requirements of the strategy. These groups could be task-and-finish, not necessarily permanent
- Additional training could be provided to Council members, so that they can get more involved in specific work areas

6. Regions

Nothing to report

7. Written Reports

JM outlined the written report circulated prior to the meeting.

No questions were raised on these written reports

8. Dates & Format for remaining London FA Council Meetings & AGM

- Monday 10th July 2023 (*AGM, in-person*)
- Monday 9th October 2023 (*Virtual*)
- Monday 4th December 2023 (*in-person*)

9. AOB

David Wolff enquired as to when the Standard Code of Rules / Standard Code of Rules for Youth would be released by the FA for the 2023-24 season.

ACTION: Priti Trivedi (PT) to raise this with the FA and come back to David

Tony Sharples enquired as to whether we could find a more suitable venue to London South Bank University and could we consider the Guildhall.

ACTION: PB to consider most appropriate venues for the AGM and report back