

NORTH EAST DIVISIONAL COMMITTEE 2020-21

Minutes of the North East Divisional Committee Meeting of the London Football Association held via Microsoft Teams on Thursday 27 August 2020 commencing 7:15 pm

Present, Bobby Bernini, Kevin Wilmot, Ian Yearwood, Aroz Miah, Yasmin Hussain, Neil Twitchett, James Middlehurst, George Dorling, Alf Brown

Apologies for absence: Tony Gilbey, Louise McGing, Yashmin Harun
Louise had requested that the meeting be recorded. Neil checked with the participants that they were happy for a recording to be made. This was agreed by all present.

Not Present: Harry Whipple, Emdad Rahman

The meeting opened with a moment of silent reflection on the loss of Divisional Secretary, Jermaine Wright, to coronavirus. Bobby then paid a personal tribute to Jermaine.

Matters Arising

Ian asked if any further action had been taken regarding the North West Division's assertion that they were the only division following protocol around meeting minutes. Kevin replied he was unsure if Jermaine had got around to raising this but will mention it to Paul Bickerton in due course.

Chairman's Report:

Kevin stated the Divisional Forum on mental health and hidden disabilities is on hold until people feel comfortable enough to attend such events following the pandemic. A provisional list of questions and panel members has been drawn up but no further action has been taken in regard to this to date.

The pandemic has thrown our divisional meeting timetable awry. If we were to hold another meeting in three months time it would be just before the Council Member elections scheduled for early December so, unless anything urgent crops up, this may be the last divisional meeting until after the election.

Election of Officers

Jermaine's passing has left a vacancy for Divisional Secretary. In addition, Tony has indicated that he would like to step down from the Vice Chair's role due to ongoing health issues. No divisional members indicated that they wished to be put forward for either of these roles and, given that the council member elections are due to happen before the end of the year, it was agreed to postpone the election to these roles until the next meeting.

LFA Update:

Neil updated on player pathways:

Male numbers up from 55,000 last year to 71,000 this year - positive growth.

Male numbers in terms of adults about even based on previous season. The 8-10% decline has stopped.

We are showing growth throughout the youth teams and on the recreational side through our small-sided providers.

Really strong growth in female team numbers and Wildcat numbers.

Disability – doubled our numbers from the previous season.

Team numbers holding up really well according to affiliation data. We had 4,400 teams at end of last year. About 900 short at the moment but still working through affiliations so expected to be around

the same by the end of September. Bobby stated that he is now Chair of Barnet Sunday League and they have increased from 5 divisions and 50 clubs last season to 7 divisions and 72 clubs this season. They have had to turn some clubs away in order to manage the numbers.

George noted that everyone is having to be registered on WGS but some leagues don't follow that. Neil replied – 60% of leagues have signed up so far. All main leagues so far with the exception of Tandridge & Selkent. Only three or four leagues haven't shown any interest yet. It was noted that leagues not signing up will drastically effect numbers.

There are a handful of leagues left to start sanctioning.

Charter Standard:

Neil reported that Charter Standard youth teams in London has increased from 41% last year to 70% this year, the biggest jump nationally. Adult Charter Standard teams have gone up as well. Clubs are becoming more sustainable because of this.

Club & league forums:

A number of online forums took place in June and August and the LFA are going to do more. There are likely to be 3 or 4 across the season as we want to engage more clubs and leagues.

The LFA have been promoting the Football Foundation Pitch Preparation Fund. 41 grants worth over £20k have been given to London clubs, helping them to improve their pitches for the new season.

Ian noted that the number of BAME referees has increased but cannot find a breakdown of these by male or female. Neil stated that we do not currently have this information but the LFA is investing in the Power BI system which will allow them to focus on stats more closely.

James informed the meeting that there is a very strong emphasis going forward to ensure a complete intolerance of intolerant behaviour whether gender based, race based, physical discrimination, etc. so no-one ever feels uncomfortable playing football in London.

Alf queried use of the word minority in the term BAME and why we need it. Kevin stated that there was a plan to follow up the forum we held at Leyton Orient last November with a similar event at a Council Meeting. This was postponed due to coronavirus but, when it happens, that will be a good opportunity to discuss Alf's query in more detail. George added there are big moves being made by the FA on discrimination via Paul Elliott and suggested it may be worth waiting for their forthcoming major changes on this.

Correspondence and Acting Secretary's Report

No Secretary's report as covered under Chairman's report.

Two items of correspondence have been received. The minutes of the League Sanction Committee's March meeting and the minutes of the Judicial Committee's June meeting.

Standing Committees

Cups Committee:

Two online meetings took place during lockdown specifically to look at competition rules for the coming season. George is working with the Cups Committee Secretary, Ian Burke, to double check the agreed rules.

A full online meeting was held last week. The 19/20 cups are being seen through to a conclusion. Some matches are permitting spectators, some are behind closed doors. There have been no Covid issues in games played so far.

The Senior Cup outstanding quarter final and semi finals have now been played. The date for the Final has been pencilled in but we are currently looking at moving it to a more convenient location.

Cup entries for the current season, overall, are pretty much the same as last year. The last update received was a couple of weeks ago and clubs are continuing to affiliate so we are looking at a quite healthy number of entries this season. Kent FA are not running their cups in 20/21 so we've approached Charlton Athletic and their U23s have agreed to play in our Senior Cup this season.

The combined Girls and Women's competitions are not happening this season as both Surrey FA and Middlesex FA are doing their own thing. Unfortunately, by the time we were made aware, it was too short notice to run our own competitions in London this season. It was suggested that the Office put out a general statement to explain the situation and clarify that the circumstances were beyond our control.

Ian asked about numbers of substitutes in the cups. Kevin replied it is 5 from 5 to finish off this season and back to 3 from 5 next season. Ian queried about the used of 7 subs. George stated this is in the standard code for league matches and it is up to individual leagues if they want to adopt this.

Any Other Business:

Ian and James had a discussion to clarify the position re Vice Presidents raised at last Monday's full council meeting.

George stated that the non league finals day has been given the go ahead as a test event on September 27 at Wembley, limited to 10,000 people.

Next Meeting: TBC after Council Member elections (subject to any urgent issues in meantime).