

IN THE MATTER OF A REGULATORY COMMISSION

BETWEEN

THE FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION

And

MR HARRY MAGUIRE

WRITTEN REASONS OF THE REGULATORY COMMISSION

Regulatory Commission: John Finlay (Chair) – Independent Legal Panel Member
 Bradley Pritchard – Independent Football Panel Member
 Mick Kearns – Independent Football Panel Member

Secretary: Paddy McCormack – Judicial Services Manager

Date: 13 April 2026

Venue: Held remotely via Microsoft Teams

Introduction

1. These are the written reasons of the Regulatory Commission that considered the charge against Harry Maguire (“HM”).
2. HM is a player for Manchester United FC (“MUFC”). MUFC played AFC Bournemouth in a Premier League match on 20 March 2026 (“the Match”). HM was sent off in the 78th minute of the Match.
3. On 21 March 2026 the FA received an Extraordinary Incident Report Form from the Match Referee, Mr S Attwell (“SA”) which stated as follows:

In the 78th minute, I dismissed Manchester United player Harry Maguire for denial of an obvious goalscoring opportunity. Following confirmation of the decision by the Video Assistant Referee, Mr Maguire left the field of play. As he left, he approached the 4th Official, Matthew Donohue, to protest the decision. These actions will be the subject of a separate report by Mr Donohue, and may warrant further review by The Football Association.

4. The FA also received an Extraordinary Incident Report Form from the Fourth Official Mr M Donohue (“MD”), also dated 21 March 2026 which stated as follows:

In the 78th minute of the game, referee Stuart Attwell sent off Manchester United #5 Harry Maguire. After the VAR check was complete, Maguire, as he was leaving the field of play, approached me and shouted, "You're a joke. You're all a fucking joke." I am reporting the matter to the Football Association for further review.

The Charge

5. By a letter dated 25 March 2026 (“the Charge Letter”), The FA charged HM with a breach of FA Rule E3.1 (“the Charge”). It was alleged that following his dismissal in or around the 78th minute of the Match HM acted in an improper manner and/or used abusive and/or insulting words and/or behaviour towards the Fourth Official. The FA designated the case as a non-standard case due to the incident occurring outside the jurisdiction of the Match Officials.
6. Together with the Charge Letter, The FA provided the following evidence in support of the Charge.
 - a. Extraordinary Incident Report Form from the Match Referee, SA dated 21 March 2026.
 - b. Extraordinary Incident Report Form from the Fourth Official MD, dated 21 March 2026.
 - c. Video clips of the incident.

The Response

7. On 2 April 2026 HM submitted a completed Disciplinary Proceedings Reply Form to the FA, admitting the Charge but not requesting an opportunity to attend a Commission for a

personal hearing and agreeing that the Charge be dealt with at a paper hearing on the content of the documents served by both parties.

8. In addition to the Disciplinary Proceedings Reply Form HM provided the following documents:
 - a. Statement of HM – Undated.
 - b. Witness Statement of Joshua Zirkzee (“JZ”) – Undated.
 - c. MUFC Submissions on Sanction – dated 2 April 2026.
 - d. Two video clips.

The Relevant Rule

9. FA Rule E3.1 states:

“A Participant shall at all times act in the best interests of the game and shall not act in any manner which is improper or brings the game into disrepute or use any one, or a combination of, violent conduct, serious foul play, threatening, abuse, indecent or insulting words or behaviour.”

The Hearing

10. In advance of the hearing the Commission considered in detail all the documents provided and referred to above. It also watched the video clips provided to it.
11. The following paragraphs summarise the evidence and submissions provided to the Commission. They do not purport to cover all the points made. The absence of a point or submission in these reasons should not imply that the Commission did not take that point or submission into account when determining the case. For the avoidance of doubt, the Commission carefully considered all the material before it.

Evidence and Submissions

12. In his statement, HM confirmed that he admitted the charge but stated that he wished “to clarify that I did not use abusive and/or insulting words towards the Fourth Official or any other Match Official.” His submission was that he did not say the words as alleged by MD in his Extraordinary Incident Report Form but rather HM submitted that “as I left the field of play following my dismissal I said something along the lines of “it is a fucking joke”. I am certain that I did not call the Fourth Official or any Match Official, a joke or use any other form of insult.”
13. HM went on to set out that he was “extremely frustrated” that a penalty had been awarded against him and he had been dismissed, but that a penalty had not been awarded to MUFC earlier in the game. He stated that as he was passing the Fourth Official after he was leaving the pitch he was comparing the two incidents. He made clear in his submissions that he did not seek out the Fourth Official but was simply on his way down the tunnel.
14. HM acknowledged that acting as he did was inappropriate and apologised for saying what he did.

15. MUFC also provided a witness statement from JZ who was warming up as a substitute and was in close proximity when the incident took place. His submission was that he did “*not recall exactly what Harry said, but I recall that it was something along the lines of “it is a joke” or “what a joke”.*” He did though state that he was “*confident that Harry did not call the Fourth Official or any other Match Official a joke.*”
16. In their submission on sanction MUFC supported HM’s submission that he did not use abusive or insulting words towards the Fourth Official. Their submission was that the distinction is important when it comes to the issue of sanction and they invited the Commission, on the balance of probabilities, to find that the FA has not discharged the burden of proof for that particular point and as such any sanction imposed should take that into account and be lower.
17. Further to the submissions from HM and MUFC, the FA emailed MD to provide him with details of HM’s submissions. In an email of 7 April 2026 MD replied to the FA and stated as follows:

In response to the words recorded in my report. In respect of the first line "You're a joke," there is a possibility that the words were either misheard or mis-recollected. Whilst I think Mr Maguire said "You're a joke" I wouldn't be able to respond to this with certainty.

However, the second sentence "You're all a fucking joke," I do remember hearing with clarity and remember thinking that the comment was aimed collectively at the group of officials. I would be prepared to say with certainty that these words were said.
18. The FA submitted that HM should be sanctioned by way of an immediate 1-match suspension and fine commensurate with his disclosed football income. Their position was that this would be the appropriate penalty irrespective of the Commission’s determination of the exact words used by HM. This was due to the fact that in each case, HM’s actions were plainly confrontational and involved abusive and/or insulting language.
19. The FA invited the Commission to prefer the account of the Fourth Official.

The Commission’s Decision

20. In light of HM admitting the Charge, it fell to the Commission to consider the appropriate sanction to be applied.
21. The Commission noted that as this was a non-standard case, the applicable penalty was at its discretion.
22. The Commission considered the submissions on sanction put forward by MUFC and in particular their submission that the FA had failed to discharge the burden of proof when it came to establishing that HM used abusive and/or insulting words or behaviour towards the Fourth Official. The Commission considered all the evidence presented and preferred the evidence presented by MD, the Fourth Official. The Commission did not agree with MUFC’s submission that “*it is more likely than not that the Fourth Official did not hear*

Harry clearly or misheard what Harry said.” The Commission noted, based on the video evidence, that HM was standing close to MD when he spoke. Further, MD produced his Extraordinary Incident Report Form at 11:18 the morning after the Match, which kicked off at 20:00. In addition, SA’s Extraordinary Match Report, which was produced at 06:52 on the morning after the Match references the incident. These reports were made, in effect, contemporaneously. It is also clear that the matter was raised with SA by MD either during or immediately after the game as a point of concern and, as SA states *“may warrant further review by The Football Association.”* In reviewing HM’s version of events when they were presented to him MD is categorical that he heard HM say *“you’re all a fucking joke.”*

23. The Commission considered the submissions put forward by HM. Although these are undated it is more likely than not that they were written some days after the Match. Despite his certainty that he did not call the Fourth Official or any Match Official a joke or use any other form of insult, even by his own admission HM cannot be certain of the words he did say, stating in his submission *“I said something along the lines of “it is a fucking joke.”* The Commission also considered the witness statement from JZ but by his own admission he *“did not recall exactly what Harry said.”*
24. On the balance of probability, the Commission therefore preferred the evidence of MD.
25. In any event, the Commission was of the view that the language, even when interpreted on the basis presented by HM and by MUFC was abusive in nature and it was said to the Fourth Official and related to the decisions of the Match Officials.
26. The Secretary confirmed that HM’s disciplinary record for the current season and the previous five seasons did not show any proven misconduct charges.
27. The Commission then turned to the possible mitigating factors. It gave credit for the acceptance of the Charge which was done at the earliest opportunity. It also gave credit for HM’s acknowledgement of his wrongdoing and his apology. The Commission also felt it was appropriate to give some credit to HM’s disciplinary record given the length of time that he had been playing at the top level of the game.
28. The Commission considered the submissions by both the FA and MUFC in relation to the imposition of a playing suspension. It noted that where admitted the standard penalty was for a one-match suspension. This case was a non-standard case and based on the evidence the Commission felt it appropriate to take as its starting point a two-match suspension. However, taking all the mitigating factors into account, and having considered the previous decisions to which it had been referred (albeit while noting that each case turns on its own particular facts), the Commission concluded that a one-match suspension would be appropriate. Consequently, HM is immediately suspended from all domestic club football until such time as MUFC have completed one (1) First Team Competitive Match (Category 1) in an approved competition.
29. The Commission then moved on to consider the question of a financial penalty. It believed that it was appropriate to impose a financial penalty and it had consideration of the details of HM’s income from football. The Commission determined that a starting point of £45,000 was appropriate. Having taken into account the mitigating factors set out above it determined that a fine of £30,000 was appropriate.

30. The Commission did not make any order as to costs.

31. This decision is subject to the relevant Appeal Regulations.

John Finlay (Chair)

Bradley Pritchard

Mick Kearns

13 April 2026