

**Tottenham Hotspur Supporters' Trust  
Tottenham Hotspur Football Club  
Board to Board Meeting**

Tuesday 1 December 2020. 6pm  
Via Zoom video conference



**THST Board:**

Martin Cloake, Co-chair (MC)  
Katrina Law, Co-chair (KL)  
Pete Haine, Secretary (PH)  
Adam Bailey, Treasurer (AB)  
Michael Green (MG)  
Kevin Fitzgerald (KF)  
Rachel Martin (RM)  
Rob White (RW)

**THFC Board:**

Daniel Levy, Chairman (DL)  
Donna-Maria Cullen, Executive Director (DMC)  
Simon Bamber, Director (SB)  
Levi Harris, Supporter Liaison Officer (LH)  
Ian Murphy, Head of Ticketing (IM)  
Jon Babbs, Stadium Director (JB)  
Dean Smith, Safety Officer (DS)  
Eileen Williams, Senior Safety Officer (EW)  
Simon Felstein, Head of Communications (SF)

**Apologies:**

Martin Buhagiar, THST  
Anthoulla Achilleos, THST  
Tiggy Thompson, Head of Supporter Experience , THFC

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**REPORT**

This meeting was held via Zoom video conferencing on the evening of 1 December 2020.

MC opened up by observing what a pleasant change it made to be holding a Board-to-Board meeting with Spurs sitting on top of the Premier League!

- **Outstanding action points**

Outstanding action points from the last meeting on 2 March had been either overtaken by COVID-19 or were in hand and being advanced outside this meeting.

**ACTIONS:**

1. KL/ MC to follow up with EW to arrange shadowing of the match day safety operation when games are back at full capacity.

2. LH arranging a meeting with KL, MC and TT around fan experience for January 2021.
3. LH and IM providing figures for ticketing bans and behavioural bans for the 2019/20 season.

- **Impact of COVID-19 on THFC**

The Club had published its annual financial accounts on 23 November, considerably earlier than usual, for the accounting period ending 30 June 2020. Referring to the accounts, THST wanted to better understand the impact of COVID-19 on Club finances, and how that might manifest itself moving forwards.

MG asked DL where the COVID impact has been felt most. DL responded that with the highest grossing stadium in the country, THFC has been affected more than any other club. There are some fixed costs and some flexible costs. There is the cash burden of stadium financing. Everything is related to match day and stadium income. Ticketing, hospitality, food and beverage, tours, conferencing etc. all closed down as a result of COVID. Costs are essentially fixed with only a small number of savings achieved (e.g. policing) due to matches being played behind closed doors.

DL clarified that sponsorship hadn't been affected as the Club had provided the rights holders with alternative rights, such as increased player access, so there'd been no loss on sponsorship monies.

Sales of merchandise (a relatively modest element of income streams) have been sustained through a focus on other sales platforms following the closure of physical stores.

There had been a rebate paid to the broadcasters for finishing the 2019/20 season late.

DL stressed that the cash balance in the accounts was as of 30 June and that things moved very quickly without any match day income. He is on record as projecting a loss of in excess of £150m should that situation continue for the rest of the 2020/21 season.

AB felt that THFC would be in a strong position post COVID, looking at the Club's financial output. However, it wasn't certain when the pandemic would end. Is there a critical point if full stadia don't return soon? What mitigating actions are in place? DL explained that no club or business was immune and that it wasn't possible to give any undertakings. He hoped there would be an end to the pandemic quickly. THFC has significant fixed costs on the football side and it's not possible to mitigate to that degree.

MG asked if the Club had any plans to raise more debt and/or restructure existing debt. DL said there were no plans. The Club is in compliance with all its debt covenants.

AB asked whether DL was concerned about Brexit's effect on the Club. DL wasn't.

AB asked if any staff had lost their jobs as a result of the furlough reversal in the spring. DL confirmed there had been no job losses as a direct consequence of the pandemic. DL confirmed that all Executive Board members are still taking reduced salaries and, responding to a member question, clarified that all THFC staff receive the London Living Wage.

AB made the point that, whilst fans appreciated the challenging financial climate, they would like reassurances that they would not be expected to pick up the costs. Many fans are also experiencing financial difficulties.

RM asked if the match-day food and beverage prices were increasing. SB responded that the Club is currently reviewing and that some of the prices would be increasing. SB pointed out that there hadn't been an increase last season, supplier costs had increased, however, and operating at low capacity also had a cost implication.

DMC confirmed there would be some nominal increases across food and drink but pricing would remain competitive to local bars.

RM stressed THST's view that if there had to be price rises, they should be kept in line with inflation. In current circumstances, given the staggered arrival and departure times for fans attending limited capacity games, pricing attractively would also help relieve pressure on the transport system.

SB explained that it wasn't possible to solely link prices to inflation. The link was with supplier prices. SB reiterated the general desire to keep costs competitive with the local market.

MC said many supporters recognised the economic impact of the pandemic on the Club but stressed that individual fans are feeling the impact too. SB said the Club understood that.

MG had some technical questions on the Club's accounts and it was agreed to follow up outside this meeting.

#### **ACTIONS:**

4. MG to submit technical questions on Club accounts to Matthew Collecott, THFC's Finance Director.

- **THFC Board changes**

Over the summer break, THFC had created a Football Board comprising Steve Hitchen, Rebecca Caplehorn, Trevor Birch and Daniel Levy. PH wanted to better understand how the new Football Board and the Business Board worked in practice and what differences that made to the running of the Club.

DL said the changes were to simplify the corporate structure, so Board meetings were more productive. The Football Directors didn't have to deal with commercial sections of Board meetings and vice versa. The two Boards spoke regularly, communicated well and, when it was appropriate, met formally. DL found the new structure far more constructive.

KF asked if the creation of the Football Board had resulted in many changes relating to football strategy and recruitment. DL responded it was mainly the same with SH coordinating with the manager, with input from TB and RC. DL may have some involvement, depending on the scenario.

KF congratulated the Club's Board on the highly successful transfer window just gone. It was very different from a number of windows in the past. How was this possible with COVID-19, the new stadium to pay for etc.? DL cautioned against judging past performance on future strategy. He felt this had been a window where the Club had acted decisively. The Club had been fortunate to achieve what it set out to achieve but there would be other times when this wasn't possible.

KF asked how it was possible to complete the signings earlier than usual. DL said that José Mourinho had been very clear and very decisive in terms of targets and they entered the window with a clear idea of what they wanted to achieve.

KF referenced the large squad at Spurs and the number of players out on loan. Would there be an objective in January to move players on? DL felt it was unfair to talk about transfers out and was keen to manage expectations for January in terms of incomings and outgoings, it would be similar for other clubs too.

MC asked how the Board changes and structure affected THWFC. DL explained that there is someone in charge of the Women's Team (Heather Cowan) who reports directly into Rebecca Caplehorn. The Club takes the Women's team seriously but it is a difficult part of the football pyramid. The TV contract value is

low at present, attendances are small – albeit growing. This is a loss-making area for the Club at the moment. DL felt it was important to be cautious, but he saw it as an area of growth and felt that it was important for the Club to be involved in the Women's game.

- **Fallout from Project Big Picture**

Noting ongoing discussions about reform of governance, the football pyramid, and a proposed European Super League, MC asked where the Club stood on those issues.

DL referred to the strategic review currently being undertaken by the Premier League with an external partner. Everything is up for debate. The Premier League is talking with individual clubs and, as such, it wouldn't be appropriate for DL to share the detail at this stage. The PL would produce recommendations at the end of the review for the shareholders to vote on. That doesn't mean they'll be accepted but they will be tabled. DL thinks change is definitely needed as many clubs outside the PL are loss making. DL said he didn't have a fixed view on the particular changes that needed to happen, but he believed change is needed.

MC said that, in terms of the fan position, there is significant support for the pyramid, the principles of meritocracy and against closed competitions. There was a view, one the Trust agreed with, that no individual Club Board had the sole right to decide which competitions the Club was to play in without properly consulting fans.

DL said he has always acted in the best interest of the Club. It would have been impossible to reach a consolidated view from the fan base, for example, on the introduction of the Premier League 30 years ago. If there is major change ahead, DL is confident he is very aware of the many fan views that exist. He is a fan, as are other board members, has lots of friends who are Tottenham fans and is aware of all their points of view.

MC reiterated that THST wasn't asking for governance by committee but recognition that there is a significant body of opinion unhappy with moving away from open competition and the principle of meritocracy.

DL said there were smart people who understood the variety of views that exist among supporters and the economic view and would distil that information. It would be down to the Club Board to make the right decision and they should be trusted to do so.

MC replied that the game should recognise there are also some very smart fans, and that their views should be properly considered. This was about balance and proper consultation. The Club noted THST 's position.

- **Pay per view and future broadcast deals**

One of the biggest stories of the season so far was the decision by both the Clubs and the Broadcasters to charge £14.95 for fans to watch excess games not selected for broadcast whilst locked out of stadiums during a global pandemic. KL asked what the Club's stance on broadcast and the subsequent PPV deal was.

DL explained the price is what was agreed following the discussions between the Premier League and broadcasters as part of the variation to broadcast contracts and that the Club would have preferred to see a deal that gave season ticket holders access to games they would normally have been at. Once the possibility of all fans being able to see games they might not have seen anyway was raised, it brought up a number of other issues that could have a detrimental impact.

MC said we seemed to be in agreement on the season ticket holders' issue and, on that basis, it would have been mutually beneficial for the Trust and Club to take that position forward jointly.

MC emphasised the work the Trust has done on broadcast, building relationships and trying to understand the issues. He referenced the PR disaster of the PPV deal, and how bad the constant buck-passing looked. MC also said the surprise at the fan reaction from the football authorities and the broadcasters was no surprise, because they hadn't asked the fans what they thought. MC said that it would be beneficial for Clubs, the PL and broadcasters to use the expertise and willingness to help that exists in the fan movement alongside expertise elsewhere to improve the situation going forward.

DMC invited THST's view on broadcast access after the New Year. KL underlined THST's view that, while any match-going fan was unable to return to the stadium for capacity or medical reasons, matches must be made available for them to view. KL urged the Club to back that position.

KL asked if the Club supported the current formula for distributing TV money: part merit payment, part equal share, part facility fee. DL said this was one of the issues being discussed around the reform of the game.

KL said that one of the questions THST is asked frequently is "why doesn't the Club broadcast its own matches on its own channel?". What are the barriers to this and is this something the Club would like to take in house in the future?

DL said that under the current broadcast deal, the Club doesn't have the right to broadcast its own games. There are restrictions around what can be shown and shared. KL asked if this might change with the next broadcast deal. DL and DMC both felt that the value of the collective deal was such that it would be difficult to make anywhere near as much from a direct offering from the Club to fans. It was unlikely individual subs to club channels would match the value of the collective deal.

KL asked about broadcasting games outside of the current TV deal, such as development squad and academy games. DMC confirmed the Club is upping video content across the board and is exploring an OTT platform on a subscription-based model with dedicated content and more academy streams.

#### **ACTIONS:**

5. KL to send THST position on broadcast access onto DMC.

- **Safe return of fans to stadia**

With the news that 2,000 fans are to return to the Tottenham Hotspur stadium for the North London Derby this weekend, THST wanted to clarify the role THFC had played in securing government support for a return and what fans could expect were they lucky enough to be allocated a ticket.

MC asked what the Club has been doing to influence the DCMS.

DL sits on the Premier League committee liaising with the DCMS and had asked for a consistent approach. His view is that football venues are well equipped to host outdoor events for spectators safely during the pandemic. DL didn't think that competitive integrity was in question with such small numbers of fans. He referred to the discussion around neutral venues ahead of Project Restart and how there had been many more away wins this season. Home advantage without fans was not necessarily true. Very small crowds wouldn't have an impact on integrity. Across the league, there was an imperative to host fans from this weekend for the greater good of football. It wasn't a sustainable position to say "no fans until we can all have fans back". If the numbers were to increase sharply, then competition integrity and competitive advantage might become an issue.

MC asked for the Club's position on away fans. There was an assumption that home fans lived nearer the ground and that wasn't always the case. DL felt there wasn't a right or wrong answer. Why could THFC have fans back on Sunday when they couldn't 3 months ago, when the rate is much higher now? The Government has taken the view that away fans travel longer distances.

DL also felt there were more important things to argue about, such as why Spurs can only host 2,000 fans in a 63,000 seater stadium when other clubs could host 2,000 in much smaller stadia.

MC asked for a brief explanation of the measures the Club had put in place to achieve COVID secure status.

JB explained how the Club had led the SGSA in the majority of instances by showing them "the art of the possible" with their COVID overlay. The Club has taken on board lots of measures such as temperature checks to demonstrate willingness to cooperate. There's a new digital ticketing system, search arches and wands for hands-free security checks, digital technology conveying COVID messaging throughout the stadium, contactless payments etc. The Club has taken touchless technology to a new level. In terms of space, there's 7 square metres per person on the GA concourses and 10 square metres per person in Premium.

JB said the Club had planned for every eventuality in a very fast-moving situation. For fans attending this weekend, everything they'd expect to be in place will be in place.

The health questionnaire that attendees will receive is good practice and introduced on government advice. The Club has been operating a health questionnaire for all visitors to the stadium over recent months and it's worked well.

The NHS is still on site, hosting COVID testing since before Easter. This also helps with testing for staff.

IM gave an overview of the ticketing strategy for limited capacity games. Everyone entering the ballot ticks a box to say they accept the revised T&C's. This includes abiding by the Code of Conduct and acknowledging no tickets will be issued to anyone who's not completed the ID validation process.

IM reported that 27,000 Season Ticket holders have successfully completed their ID verification, with no real issues encountered.

The seating is then decided. Digital links to tickets are then sent for download into Apple wallets or Google wallets. There is a cap on the number of downloads permitted in an attempt to reduce touting.

The health questionnaire is triggered after a successful application. This is emailed to the fan. Failure to submit or submission with a response causing concern will result in the ticket being suspended. The Club will contact the fan and attempt to resolve the issue.

IM stressed the great deal of work undertaken with Ticketmaster to reach an integrated solution, all of which has been tested and is streets ahead of any other club in the country.

KL then asked for commitment from the Club around certain areas of the ballot. THST would like THFC to:

Confirm the breakdown of GA and Premium and Others in figures or % as soon as possible. This should be fully transparent, along with rationale for the calculations for each pot;

Explain what is meant by the Principle of Proportionality when calculating how many tickets went into each pot;

Commit to transparency around the ballots – how many applied, how many are successful etc.;

Commit that any more tickets for future games go into the GA pot. The ratio for Arsenal should be a starting position and THST would want any additional tickets to go straight to GA.

The Club noted THST's requests.

RW asked for a brief explanation of a few of the key aspects of how the ballot is being run, looking for particular reassurance that there are no secret algorithms running to steer the ballot to certain postcodes, ages, demographics etc.

IM confirmed that the ballot is a computerised random ballot operated via Ticketmaster software. The only filter in place is to exclude those who haven't completed the ID validation process. Otherwise it's totally random.

Fans living in Tier 3 are asked not to enter ballots. It was felt putting the onus on fans to be honest and civic minded was preferable to automatically blocking any Tier 3 postcodes on the ticketing database considering not every ST holder uses their residential address on their THFC account and there may be a few who would hurry to change their address out of Tier 3 if that was an automatic exclusion. Successful ballot applicants will be asked if they reside in Tier 3 on the health questionnaire.

RW asked what happens to those who applied for a deferral? Are they able to change their minds and return this season if there's a vaccine available? IM explained that the Club would be as flexible and accommodating as possible regarding the 900 or so fans who'd applied for a deferral on medical grounds or as keyworkers. If their seats are still available and haven't been sold for individual matches at the point of their requesting to be included once more then that would be done. If their seats have been sold for upcoming games, the Club would do their best to offer alternatives until a point when their seats became available once more.

RW asked what happens to those who have recently turned 65 considering the Club is selling tickets for limited capacity matches as one-off, individual games outside of the season ticket package. IM confirmed any fan turning 65 ahead of the ballot would qualify for a concessionary price, regardless of their Season Ticket banding.

In relation to electronic ticketing, RW asked what happens if your phone dies at the turnstile? IM reassured that there would be staff at the gates to assist with any technical issues and that the ticket office would also be open.

KL asked whether the tickets could be screen grabbed or forwarded on. IM explained that the tickets were encrypted and would permit a maximum of 2 downloads only per ticket. The Club had set it at two

rather than one as there would be situations where the Season Ticket holder needs to move onto another handset (personal from work, for example) or would make an error with the first download. The Club is alert to any forwarding and will take a zero-tolerance approach to any ticket transfer, resale or touting.

KL offered further feedback on Club communications around the ballot, asking that the Club clarifies that the £65 for Arsenal in GA areas was the average price of a Category A ticket in the South Stand.

Clarification was also needed that other matches will be categorised as A, B or C games and that the price for those games will be the average price of a Category B or C game in the South Stand (£55 / £45). The Club committed to keep Europa League games outside of categorisation.

KL asked that the Club better explain why the price for the Arsenal game wasn't a pro-rata price and why deposits can't be used to pay for balloted games. IM said most of the information had been included in the Club's FAQ's on Ask Spurs but that the feedback raised valid points and the Club would look to address them.

Regarding the use of ticketing credits and deposits, it isn't technically possible to apply a credit to a ballot purchase as payment is taken from one lead booker per group, like an away game or Cup final.

#### **ACTIONS:**

6. Club to consider THST's requests to commit to greater transparency around the ballot: publishing a breakdown of GA, Premium and Other tickets; publishing the number of applicants for each ballot and the number successful.
7. Club to consider THST's request for any additional tickets as the number of fans permitted increases to be added to the GA pot.
8. Club to address communication gaps around pricing and deposits.

- **Ticketing and membership update**

KL briefly covered off the outstanding ticketing and membership questions submitted by members.

IM confirmed that the overall Season Ticket renewal rate had been in excess of 94% this summer, including 900 fans who'd opted to take a deferral for COVID reasons.

The Club had yet to offer out any new Season Tickets to the waiting list this season as a result of the COVID uncertainties around fans inside stadia. Once the situation returns to normal, the Ticket Office will look to offer out new Season Tickets to those at the top of the waiting list.

DMC confirmed that One Hotspur membership take up was tracking as projected and was at around the same level as it was at this time in the 2019/20 season. Supporter clubs were growing with 15 new ones added last week.

KL referenced the Club review around the One Hotspur offering, including for Overseas Supporters, as being a positive step to improve the value of that overall package, with some members considering the lack of access to tickets as significantly reducing the package for this season.

KL also shared member requests for the return of the Birthday card and for the return of the End of Season DVD.

- **Any other business**

KF shared plans to commemorate Ray Clemence with a cycle ride from Anfield to Tottenham in June. The Cycle On You Spurs riders are in the planning stage at the moment and would appreciate Club support for this PCUK fundraising venture.

DMC committed to support the ride and also to advance a conversation on cycling jerseys with THST.

**ACTIONS:**

9. DMC to pick up with KF on all COYS/ THST cycling related matters.

Meeting ended at 7.35pm.