

Members' Forum

Time: Thursday 20 August, lunch break (12.30pm)

Location: The Point

Attendance: Mike Watkinson, Mark Chilton, Gaz Morris, Danny Din (Two Circles consultant) and Christian Mullarkey. Approximately 50 Members in the room.

Introduction:

Mike Watkinson welcomed Members and thanked them for their attendance. He also expressed his gratitude for their support in his election to the Board. He noted that it had been 12 years since he last stood up in front of Members and that it was good to be back. He explained that the reason that he had put himself forward for election on the Board was to make a positive difference. He stated his desire to strengthen the link between Members and the Board and, whilst acknowledging that his expertise lay primarily in cricket, expressed his hope that he could make things happen and work on behalf of Members and in their interests.

He introduced the main theme of the Forum, the Members' Engagement Review and noted that a representative from Two Circles was present as well as Simon Walker from the Members' Representative Group (MRG). He apologised for the delay of the publication of the Members' Engagement Review but confirmed that it was now a live document and that the Club were working through the action points outlined in the report. He discussed the four main themes identified as part of the review: communicating the Lancashire Cricket strategy, building trust and transparency, strengthening Member voice and governance, and continuing to improve the Member experience.

Then he invited questions from Members. He acknowledged that there may be some questions that he could not answer but that he would seek a suitable response, if required.

Member (Richard Annandale) firstly congratulated Mike on his election. He expressed excitement at the new cricket strategy. He asked Mike what he saw his role in implementing the cricket strategy was.

Mike Watkinson referenced the first Board meeting since the Annual General Meeting and the appointment of its new members. He highlighted that the cricket strategy was discussed and unanimously agreed as part of the meeting. He confirmed that the content of this had been shared as part of the Member Engagement Review publication. He stated that County Championship cricket remained the Club's primary focus, with all efforts geared towards developing players capable of succeeding in the four-day game. He suggested that, as a result, there would also be good T20 and One Day Cup players. He confirmed that the priority would be to develop programmes, from grassroots and development groups upwards, that foster skills transferable to the four-day game. Developing homegrown players that are robust and resilient was described as a priority so that they can play successful four-day cricket. Supplementing the squad with targeted overseas recruitment was also referenced. He suggested that the 50 over competition would primarily provide younger players within the Club's pathway with an opportunity. He acknowledged the disappointing end to the Metro Bank One Day cup tournament for the team this year but suggested that there were some promising signs.

A Member also congratulated Mike. He expressed disappointment that the Club did not have a Test Match for two years. He asked if there was anything else that could be done to secure regular Test matches and an Ashes Test Match in 2031, especially with the Prime Minister being a Manchester man too.

Mike Watkinson acknowledged that it was not ideal for the Club to be missing out on a Test Match, not only from the perspective of the occasion itself but also financially. He suggested that the only

course of action available to the Club was to continue putting its case forward. He noted that there was a focus on upgrading the Club's facilities to support this ambition. He highlighted plans to create a new, state-of-the-art training facility on the B&Q land recently acquired by the Club, although he acknowledged that this was a long-term project. He described the site as being larger than the Nursery Ground at Lord's. He suggested that enhanced player facilities would encourage international teams to play at Lancashire Cricket, given that Emirates Old Trafford is already a fantastic stadium with excellent facilities. He argued that this was a positive way of moving forward and would give the Club the best possible chance of securing Test Match fixtures in the future. He acknowledged that if the Prime Minister could help in any way, then the Club would welcome his support.

A Member argued that the stewarding at the Club was a disgrace and spoilt the experience at the ground. He suggested that stewarding at other grounds was better. He questioned whether this had contributed to the Club not securing a Test Match.

Mike Watkinson stated that he had not been in the position long enough to assess or measure the effectiveness of stewarding at the Club. However, he noted that the incoming Chief Executive had experience leading at a Test Match venue and that securing Test Match fixtures would be high on his agenda. He suggested that the incoming Chief Executive was Member-focused in his approach and that stewarding may be an area he would review in due course, if he considered it appropriate.

A Member asked why there couldn't be a sixth Test Match to resolve the issue.

Mike Watkinson stated that this was not a question he was able to answer. Reflecting on how the game had changed over the years, he referred to press cuttings from his career, which illustrated that the first game of the season was played in May, with the season ending in early September. He highlighted how significantly the schedule had since been extended and expressed little confidence that a sixth Test Match would be introduced, particularly given the increasing number of competitions and the resulting challenges in scheduling.

A Member challenged previous criticism of the stewarding at the Club. He commented on the speed at which the stewarding team had found his lost child during an international and described them as fantastic.

Mike Watkinson thanked the Member for sharing his story and praised the stewards involved.

A Member asked if concerts may resume at the Club in the near future.

Mike Watkinson admitted that he didn't have the background information to be able to answer the question but expressed hope that it would be an option for the Club moving forward.

A Member stated that there were only five County Championship fixtures at Emirates Old Trafford and two at out grounds. He expressed his preference for County Championship games to be played at Emirates Old Trafford and asked how the allocation of games at certain grounds was decided.

Mike Watkinson explained that Mark Chilton faced a great challenge when expressing the Club's preference in the domestic scheduling and striking the right balance, especially due to the increased demands on Emirates Old Trafford. Nevertheless, he also highlighted the qualities of out grounds and the opportunity they present for Members and supporters to be closer to the players. He suggested that the relationship between Members and players being a bit lost over recent years. Yet, he described his recent visit to Farington for a Metro Bank One Day Cup game as providing a more intimate experience; for instance, with players walking a lap of the ground. He expressed hope that Farington would host County Championship cricket in the future. He described the sharing of fixtures with out grounds as inevitable due to the demand on Emirates Old Trafford but suggested that these compliment playing at international stadium.

A Member commented that the last time Lancashire won the County Championship, in 2011, the team played a significant number of matches at out grounds. He suggested that, from a strategic perspective, consideration could be given to playing more matches at out grounds, particularly with the cricketing vision focused on winning the County Championship.

Mike Watkinson explained that, in 2011, the Club had been operating on its tightest budget but had used this to its advantage, built momentum and ultimately gone on to win the County Championship. He clarified that it was not realistic to expect to win the County Championship every year but reiterated that the cricket vision was centred around four-day cricket and ensuring that the team remained competitive. He referenced the 1990s, when the team regularly finished as runners-up in the County Championship, and noted that this was a long-term cricket strategy that would require time to deliver. He also highlighted the delicate balance between success and failure.

A Member requested clarification on the camera and the policy. He explained that he would be happy to sign a form to declare that any photographs taken would be for personal use only.

A Member added that there were restrictions on the use of tablets too.

Mike Watkinson explained that he would need to seek further information before addressing the question.

A Member highlighted a recent campaign run by Surrey encouraging people to 'work from the Oval' as opposed to working from home. He stated that the Club are installing extra power sockets in their Pavilion and were actively encouraging Members to bring laptops and tablets in. He questioned why the Club were actively discouraging this.

Simon Walker (MRG) noted that the MRG had received correspondence from Members on the subject and confirmed that they were engaging with the Club to clarify the policy.

Mike Watkinson assured Members that further information would be issued in due course and a policy provided.

A Member asked Mike for his opinion on the Farington pitch.

Mike Watkinson described the first couple of games at Farington as positive. He stated that teams must compete and find a way to win on the surface, suggesting that it can involve digging in and at other times being aggressive. He praised the Lancashire team for succeeding in this twice as they were pivotal games in qualifying for the Quarter Finals. He commented that the wicket will continue to get better and reiterated that Farington had a good atmosphere.

Mike Watkinson concluded by thanking everyone in attendance for their support. He committed to being as honest as possible and to striving to make a positive difference across all areas of the Club. He stated that his priority was cricket and delivering the on-field performances that Members deserve to see. He also confirmed that meetings with the MRG were scheduled to take place.