FAN ENGAGEMENT REPORT

AUGUST 2024 - JULY 2025

INTRODUCTION

In August 2023, in line with the introduction of the Premier Leagues Fan Engagement Standard (FES), AFC Bournemouth launched its first Fan Engagement Plan which outlined its commitment to the FES. This Fan Engagement Report is the partner document to that commitment and has been devised to demonstrate and analyse the clubs progress towards its documented commitments towards Fan Engagement.

CLUB FAN ENGAGEMENT STATEMENT

CLARITY

Continue and develop clear and effective lines of dialogue between our supporters and their club to bring about collaborative change.

ENGAGE

Share ideas, experiences, improvements and plans.

TOGETHER

Representative, diverse supporters and club staff driving improvements and growth.





PREMIER LEAGUE FAN ENGAGEMENT STATEMENT

In addition to overseeing the delivery of the Fan Engagement Standard, the Premier League engages on a range of subjects raised by supporters via regular communication and meetings with Clubs, their Fan Advisory Board representatives and others including the Football Supporters' Association, Level Playing Field and Kick It Out.

Through these channels matters such as fixture scheduling, refereeing including VAR, fan behaviour, tackling discrimination, promoting inclusion, sustainability and community initiatives are raised with the Premier League to ensure it is aware of fan sentiment and can provide clarity, support and guidance where required.

The Premier League also has a research programme which surveys fan opinion including the annual Matchday Fan Experience survey.

The Premier League is currently reviewing all aspects of its engagement and structured dialogue with partners across the game to ensure that it also meets the expectations of the Fan Engagement Standard.

CLUB'S CORE COMMITMENTS AND ACTIVITIES

Throughout our history, connection with our fans and the local community has been an integral part of our club. The Fan Engagement Plan (FEP) has allowed us to build on our historical work within Fan Engagement and will be key as we continue to grow. The FEP provides a platform for structured engagement with supporters from across the clubs' diverse supporter base; it will continue to strengthen dialogue between the club and its fans and increase fan involvement in key decision-making processes. The FEP has enabled up to formally set out our club commitments in respect of Fan Engagement.

Details of club personnel responsible for fan engagement:

Neill Blake – Chief Executive Officer, Nominated Board Level Official (NBLO)

Jim Frevola – President of Business, Nominated Board Level Official (NBLO)

Hannah Powis – Head of EDI & Engagement

John Jennings – Disability and Engagement Officer





SEASON HIGHLIGHTS

- **Total of 20 supporter group meetings held over the course of the season.**
- **Over 100 supporters involved in supporter group meetings.**
- **2 Open Forums – DSA and Fans Forum**
- **15 Club staff engaged in meetings, 10 staff from the club's management team.**
- **Owner, CEO and President of Business all involved in supporter engagement.**
- **3 new fan engagement opportunities.**

FAN ENGAGEMENT PLATFORMS AND STRUCTURE

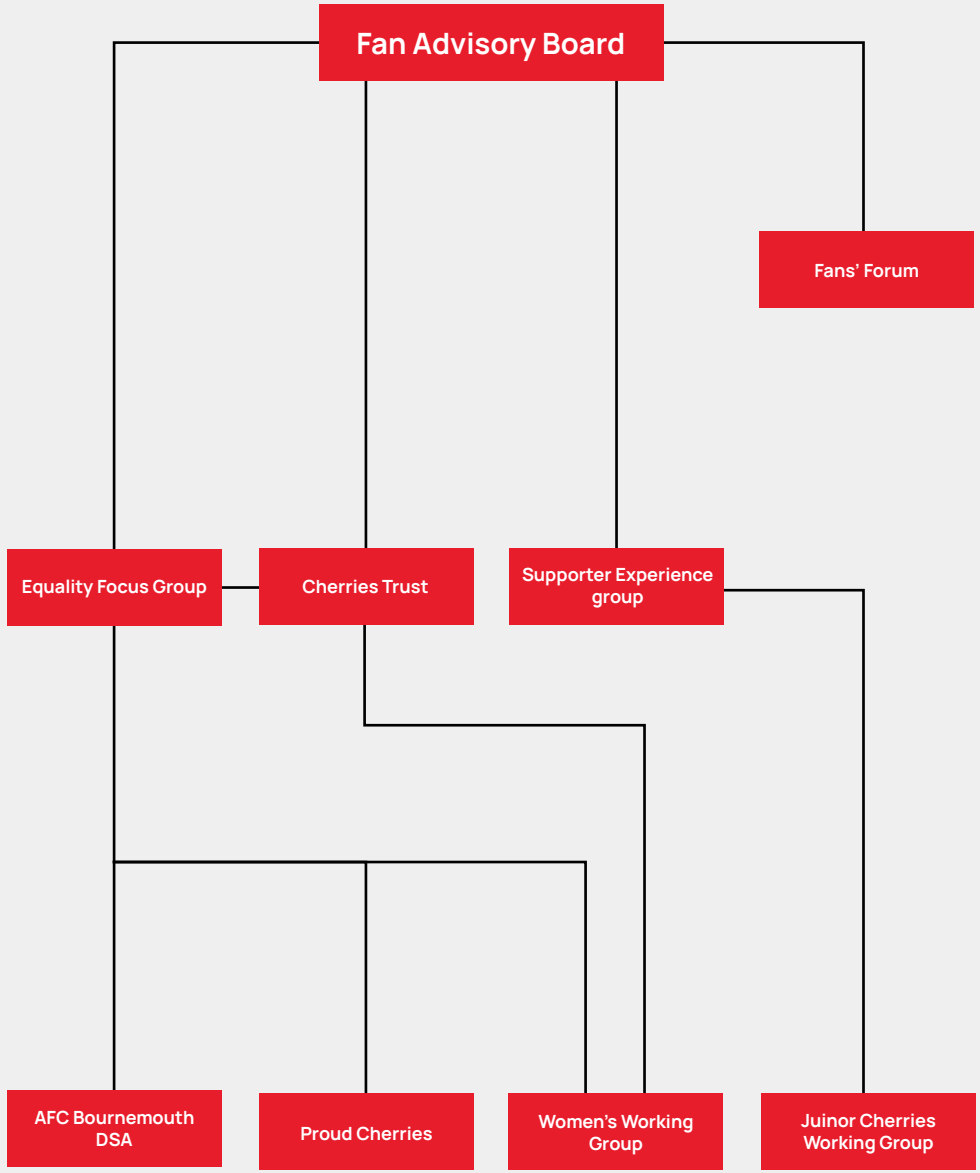
The club utilises a number of different fan engagement platforms to ensure that as many fans as possible are able to provide structured feedback to the club;

- **Working Groups**
- **Independent Trusts and Associations**
- **Forums**
- **Surveys**

The clubs Fan Engagement Structure has been designed in a way that information can be cascaded through the pyramid, ultimately this ensures that conversations which take place at the FAB are reflective and representative of the wider fanbase.

All groups are currently overseen by the Head of EDI & Engagement, staff are invited to groups as determined by the agenda however the following staff attend the majority of supporter group meetings:

- **President of Business**
- **Operations Director**
- **Chief Ticketing Officer**
- **VP, Business and Hospitality**
- **VP, Brand and Design**
- **VP, Media and Communication**
- **Head of Community**



FAN ADVISORY BOARD

PURPOSE

The purpose of AFC Bournemouth's Fan Advisory Board (FAB) is to provide a forum for representatives from the club's supporter groups and fanbase to meet with senior club representatives.

THE FAB'S CO-CHAIRS ARE:

Hannah Powis – Club Representative

Chris Ashton-Hollis – Supporter Representative





MEMBERSHIP

Membership of the FAB comprises of a representative from The Cherries Trust and Equality Focus Group who sit alongside 8 supporter representatives. They are joined by club staff; Chief Executive and/or President of Business, Head of Community and Head of EDI & Engagement. Other staff and outside representatives are invited to the meeting based on the agenda set out by the FAB.

FREQUENCY

Members of the FAB are representative of the clubs' diverse supporter base with representation of supporters from different protected characteristics, length of time supporting the club, season ticket holders and match point holders as well as area of the stadium they most frequently sit in. The FAB bring a wealth of experience and knowledge from across a variety of sectors.

Meetings of the FAB shall be held twice per season and at any other times as shall be necessary or appropriate, as determined by the club in association with the FAB.

REPORTING

Minutes from FAB meetings are posted the clubs website.

www.afcb.co.uk/for-fans/supporter-liaison-updates

HERITAGE ASSETS

The Football Associations ruling with regard to consultation of Heritage Assets states:

No club shall make any material changes to its club crest and/or change its home shirt colours without first undertaking a thorough and extensive consultation with its supporters.

In line with the FA ruling, AFC Bournemouth is committed to ensure that in depth and meaningful fan consultation where changes to the club's crest and home shirt colours are proposed.

This commitment is shared on the clubs' website;

www.afcb.co.uk/for-fans

FAN SUPPORT AND ACCESSIBILITY

The club's commitment to fan support and accessibility is outlined within its Supporter Charter and Access Statement, these documents are published on the club website and updated annually or where information has changed. Both documents include details of relevant staff including, the SLO and DAO and outline how these members of staff can be contacted. The Supporter Charter provides a detailed breakdown of how communications with supporters' is managed by the club.

www.afcb.co.uk/for-fans/disabled-access-guide

Supporters within the club's Fan Engagement structure are given a point of contact at the club for Mental Health support, related to their involvement within the structure.

Additionally, members of the FAB are given access to the club Employee Assistance Programme.

The club details a wide variety of supporter services for supporters on the club website.

https://www.afcb.co.uk/for-fans/local-and-national-support-services/

CONSULTATION FROM SUPPORTER GROUPS TO THE WIDER FAN BASE

Both the DSA and the Cherries Trust have this season, undertaken independent supporter surveys which have consulted the wider fan base. Topics raised through these surveys have been used to guide discussions in meetings with senior club officials.

Minutes from all supporter group meetings are posted on the club website:

www.afcb.co.uk/for-fans



OVERVIEW OF 2023/24 ACTIVITIES

	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL
Fan Advisory Board				9th					15th		6th	
Equality Focus Group		13th				18th				9th		
Cherries Trust			31st - Informal						15th - B2B			
Supporter Experience Group		19th						27th				
Disabled Supporters Association	30th			22nd - Open Forum					10th & 30th			17th - Open Forum
Proud Cherries		21st		22nd		18th						
Womens Working Group							8th					
Junior Cherries Working Group												
Fans Forum									4th			

COMPARISON OF ACTIVITIES COMPLETED V COMMITMENTS PROVIDED WITHIN THE FEP

A Women's Working Group was established in February, involving supporters from across the men's and women's game to review the AFC Bournemouth experience from this perspective.

The Fan Advisory Board was appointed in September 2023 with the first, introductory meeting, held in November 2023. Initially, it was decided with the FAB that meetings would take place twice per season however, it became apparent that more frequent meetings will allow the FAB to be more productive and more closely aligned with the club. Next season the FAB will meet every 6 weeks.

Two Supporter Liaison Officer updates have been published on the website, as a direct communication with supporters this season. The updates have taken on a different timeline to that outlined within the FEP with the first update coming in November rather than the outlined September.

In April we reintroduced a Fans Forum to our Fan Engagement Structure, the first of its kind within the club's recent history, under the ownership of Bill Foley. Invitations to the event were sent to all season ticket holders and match point holders and 40 supporters, representative of our supporter base were selected to attend the event. Minutes from the Forum were posted on the club website.

FEEDBACK FROM FANS FORUM

"Just wanted to say thank you for having me at the fans' forum tonight. It was very informative and it was great to see Bill Foley there too. The panel were great too and it's so nice to see at last that our football club is in such capable, progressive and caring hands. The future appears very bright indeed."

"Just a quick – and huge – "thanks" for being included in yesterday evening's Fans' Forum. My first time inside AFCB offices, and such an eye-opener of an experience it was. Organised well, friendly & welcoming, good use of time. But most of all, meeting such a group of the AFCB management and team, and hearing their informed answers and clear background & logic to fans' concerns, was a joy."

I am so encouraged by all the AFCB people "behind the tables." Bill and his team were so impressive. Huge thanks to you and your colleagues for arranging this impressive event. It is so appreciated."



KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

- Fan Advisory Board Launched - November 2023
- First DSA Open Forum meeting held – November 2023
- Women's Working Group Launched – February 2024
- New Her Game Too Ambassador announced – March 2024
- Fans Forum reintroduced – April 2024
- Supporter Liaison Officer Updates – November 2023 and April 2024
- Global Cherries Membership Launched – April 2024
- Cherries, Together launched – May 2024
- Shirts Off Our Backs Launched – May 2024
- Junior Cherries working group to be introduced – Summer 2024



WORK COMPLETED WITHIN WIDER FAN GROUPS

This season we have joined forces with supporter groups to bring a number of events, trials and campaigns to Vitality Stadium. Working in partnership with fans has ensured that these initiatives have been meaningful, connected with our local community and engaging for our fanbase.

GIVEVISION TRIAL

Working closely with the DSA, the club bought an innovative assistive technology to Vitality Stadium for supporters with visual impairments.

www.afcb.co.uk/news/2023/December/20/givevision-trial-a-huge-success-a-vitality-stadium

RAINBOW LACES EVENT WITH PROUD CHERRIES AND BOURNEFREE

To celebrate Rainbow Laces, the club joined forces with Proud Cherries and Bourne Free to welcome pupils from local schools to a one-off event at the stadium. At the event, the young people worked with AFC Bournemouth players to learn about stereotyping and allyship.

www.afcb.co.uk/news/2023/December/19/local-schools-take-part-in-rainbow-laces-workshop



CHERRIES, TOGETHER

Cherries, Together is a new project, developed as part of the Fans Fund. The project was developed in collaboration with several supporter groups, whose feedback has helped to shape the direction of the project.

Cherries, Together launched on the 28th May and saw over 60 people, not currently engaged with the club, attend an event at Vitality Stadium. The event was attended by supporter representatives from 5 groups who worked with those attending to better understand how the club can have a more positive impact on its local community.

Cherries, Together participants “We very much enjoyed the stadium tour, as well. Just as enjoyable (maybe more) was the round table discussions. It was fascinating and informative to talk with and listen to people from other protected characteristics. We feel there is so much we can all learn from each other, education that deepens our knowledge and understanding of each other. Then before long we’re not all different groups of people but different people in one group, all Cherries supporters.”

www.afcb.co.uk/news/2024/June/10/club-proud-to-launch-cherries-together-initiative

FAN ENGAGEMENT CASE STUDIES

Following the abandoned game at Vitality Stadium against Luton Town FC, where Tom Lockyer experienced a cardiac arrest, the club joined forces with Talking Cherries, Cherries Trust and Luton Town Supporters Trust to provide support resources and information on cardiac health at the rearranged fixture.

On the day the club, Cherries Trust and Talking Cherries formed a united front with Bournemouth Heart Club and British Heart Foundation to provide a plethora of resources around the stadium:

- CPR training was delivered to staff in the week building up to the fixture.
- CPR training was offered to supporters from the South West Ambulance Service at the game.
- Bournemouth Heart Club and Talking Cherries had stations around the ground for supporters to access Mental Health First Aiders.
- Cherries Trust organised a fundraising mission to cover the costs of transport for Luton fans.
- Both Luton and AFC Bournemouth supporter trusts and the clubs raised funds which were presented to the British Heart Foundation on the pitch at half time.

www.bournemouthecho.co.uk/news/24179385.cardiac-health-awareness-afc-bournemouth-vs-luton/

www.bhf.org.uk/what-we-do/news-from-the-bhf/news-archive/2024/march/tom-lockyer-returns-to-watch-luton-v-bournemouth-at-stadium-where-his-life-was-saved





BOURNEMOUTH HEART CLUB

Following the events of the abandoned game in December, we've teamed up with the Bournemouth Heart Club for tonight's match.

The BHC is an independent charity founded in 1991 and since 1996 has operated from a purpose-built centre within the grounds of the Royal Bournemouth Hospital.

The charity has a unique collaboration with the NHS, providing the initial rehabilitation of cardiac patients treated at the Dorset Cardiac Centre based at the Royal Bournemouth Hospital.

There is then the opportunity for subsequent care on a self-funding basis, for both the patients and their partners in the same facility. Continuation is thus ensured with the common aim of trying to prevent subsequent cardiac events.

The charity's activities now include referrals from other hospital specialties and self-referral from people in the community with a low level of fitness and at higher risk of a cardiovascular event, such as a heart attack or stroke. For all referrals, partners are also encouraged to attend.





There are two fully equipped gymnasiums, a members' lounge with tea bar, and changing rooms with showers. Also, a large car park adjacent to the club open to exercising members six days a week.

Unlike a normal gym or sports centre, all the instructors at the Bournemouth Heart Club are specially trained to support people at cardiovascular risk and hold the BACPR Level 4 qualification.

The club is a centre of excellence and is one of the largest providers of its kind in the United Kingdom. Located on the Royal Bournemouth Hospital site, the club also has direct access to medical advice and assistance.

They recognise that those wishing to be involved vary from the young with a high level of cardiovascular fitness, to the elderly with poor fitness and problems with mobility or balance. Accordingly, The BHC has classes for all ages of adults, and these are tailored to individual ability and preference, including remote classes delivered by live streaming to a person's home.

Face-to-face classes are held in one of their two full-sized gyms and take the form of circuit classes, group exercise, open gym and seated classes. Members also have the opportunity to socialise, make friends and receive health advice.









Cherries Trust Board Member commented; "The Cherries Trust were delighted to be involved in a joint project with the club and Talking Cherries. Projects like this provide an opportunity for club staff and fans representatives to work alongside each other in a more relaxed and informal way. They allow for relationships to be built upon, trust earned and respect gained, not only with club staff but other supporter groups as we come together to achieve a common goal."

"As information about the project became public, so many people wanted to participate, fans of not only both clubs but other clubs raising the money to fund coaches for the Luton fans travel, helping to spread the word about cardiac health awareness, how and where to get CPR training and tackling the silence in relation to mental health. Along with the educational side of things, perhaps the biggest thing to come out of the night was the strength of community, a bond so strong created between 2 clubs and their respective sets of fans and a message to the football world at large, we can come together, regardless of our team colours and make the world just a little bit better for each other even just for a short while."

Disabled Supporters Association – addressing disparity in ticket prices between w/c users and ambulant disabled supporters.

AFC Bournemouth Disabled Supporters Association was formed in 2023 since this point the club has had a number of meetings both with the committee and its wider members. This season, the club were aware of a disparity in concession pricing with two different price types within the disabled supporter concession. The club had concerns that this could result in discrimination within the protected characteristic of disability.

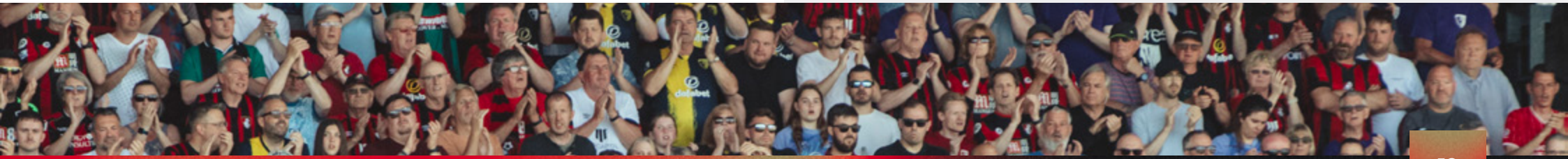
The club undertook an extensive supporter engagement project around the disparity starting with a meeting with the DSA where the disparity was discussed. This initial meeting highlighted that more consultation was needed on how the disparity could be addressed. Following on from this, the club held meetings with the FAB and Equality Focus Group (EFG) and then a further in-depth meeting with the DSA. During this time club also initiated a conversation with Level Playing Fields who provided feedback on the topic from a broader perspective.

Feedback from these meetings was taken into consideration and resulted in a staggered approach, over a 5-year period being introduced, an agreement to regularly review the wheelchair user experience with the DSA and an in-depth communication plan. The communication plan, on the advice and guidance of the DSA, included a verbal conversation to every affected supporter with the clubs Supporter Liaison Officer (SLO) or Disability Liaison Officer (DLO). This was undertaken prior to the announcement to address concerns from affected supporters.

Chair of the DSA: "The DSA was consulted by way of meeting with our committee, and several follow up communications. We were able to provide ideas and time to discuss with other organisations such as Level Playing Field. It was a club decision, but we felt consulted and able to give feedback to help change timings, structure of increases and reviews. We knew it was impossible to gauge everyone's view immediately, but reviews were put in place to gather ongoing feedback, year on year if required.

The consultation allowed us to provide some feedback on the changes, including the staggered approach and regular reviews. Being independent we can collect views and experience the club may have missed. Whilst we felt the club was along the right lines, this enabled us to explain some of the concerns. The general outcome gives us confidence we can be sure there will be a constructive dialogue on pricing."

www.afcb.co.uk/news/2024/may/21/renew-your-season-ticket-for-2024-25/







HOW FANS CAN GET INVOLVED IN FAN ENGAGEMENT

WORKING GROUPS

Each working group has an associated Terms of Reference which dictates the terms its members will serve. When the term is reached, the club will advertise opportunities for all fans to apply to sit on its working groups.

FANS FORUMS

Forums have an open invitation to the wider fan base including season ticket holders and those with match point history. All fans will be able to apply to be part of club led forums and supporters will be selected based on being representative of the fan base.

DISABLED SUPPORTERS ASSOCIATION

The DSA is open to members from across the AFC Bournemouth fanbase who have a disability or are a family member or personal assistant to a supporter with a disability.

THE CHERRIES TRUST

An independent Supporters Trust for followers of AFC Bournemouth any supporter can become a member of the Trust with memberships costing £10.

FAB ASSESSMENT

This seasons FAB Assessment has been undertaken in two formats; a survey was distributed to all FAB members to analyse the effectiveness of the FAB. The survey had a response rate of 85%.

In addition, a meeting took place between the NBLO, Jim Frevola and FAB Co-Chairs, Chris Ashton-Hollis (Supporter Representative) and Hannah Powis (Club representative). The conversation covered themes relating to the effectiveness of the FAB, as detailed below.

Joint Statement on conclusion of the meeting;

The Club and Fan Advisory Board are looking forward to working together over future seasons to focus on the work set out in the Fan Engagement Plan. After a solid first season ensuring the right structure and operating rhythm was introduced, it was mutually beneficial to have a meeting to analyse the effectiveness of the FAB. The meeting allowed us to consider and agree the outline of our plan for the next 3 years.

The Fan Advisory Board is keen to support the clubs focus of open dialogue and engagement with people from across its fanbase to help AFCB grow and be the best version of itself.





SUMMARY OF FAB PERFORMANCE

AREAS OF STRENGTH

Being able to listen to and share ideas with senior staff who represent the club at meetings was the highest recorded area of strength for the FAB. 71% of respondents commented that the number of senior staff who have been present at meetings. The Fan Engagement survey demonstrated the following areas of strength:

- 100% of the FAB felt the size and diversity of the group were appropriate.
- The majority of the FAB felt that the meetings are long enough to cover agenda items (100%), the information received in advance of the meetings is clear and concise (86%) and the minutes are of high quality (86%).
- Generally, the FAB scored positively when asked about communication to and from the FAB, with 100% agreeing that the meetings encourage open and honest discussion and that, as members, they have a representative voice.
- When asked about contribution, 100% agreed that the club responds in a timely manner and there are enough club staff in attendance, whilst 86% agreed that they are provided enough resources by the club.
- In relation to the Fan Engagement Standard, 86% of the FAB felt that the club has been effective in adopting the commitments.

AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT

The FAB provided feedback on areas for development; an increase in the frequency of meetings, having time together independent of staff representatives and creating season long objectives. The Fan Engagement survey demonstrated the following areas for development:

- In line with the qualitative feedback, frequency of meetings scored lower that others within this category at 71%.
- When looking at contribution, 71% of the FAB felt that the group is effective in advising the club's decision-making process.
- The Fan Engagement section was the lowest scoring category, under 50% of the FAB felt the FES has had a positive impact with the supporter base and 56% felt the club has effectively communicated its fan engagement activities and that the materials are accessible to all fans.

PROPOSED ACTIONS FOR NEXT SEASON

- More frequent FAB meetings
- FAB representation at all supporter group meetings to allow for communicated
- Change in minute taking to allow for more information to be communicated to the fan base.
- Objectives will be created the FAB staff and supporter representatives which will give the FAB a streamlined focus for the 24/25 season.
- Head of EDI & Engagement to circulate the Fan Engagement Report and Fan Engagement Plan with all groups to ensure that supporters across all groups are aware of the FES and how their group fits into the Fan Engagement structure.




AFC BOURNEMOUTH