



THE OFFICE OF HM GOVERNMENT'S
INDEPENDENT ADVISER
ON ANTISEMITISM

Dame Caroline Dinenage MP
Culture, Media and Sport Committee Chair
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

Wednesday 1st May 2024

Dear Dame Caroline,

I write to correct the record, having read the rather extraordinary transcript of the evidence given to the committee by Harry Chathli, Chair of Yorkshire County Cricket Club, on 20th February 2024.

Mr Chathli had no connection with the cricket club at the time of the events he provides evidence on, and therefore has no firsthand knowledge. His fundamental premise, also provided to the ECB, is that Yorkshire County Cricket Club had no viable options in refinancing when it agreed its current and existing deal with the former chair. This is categorically untrue. Mr Chadli has never met nor spoken to the potential funders.

I was asked by Lord Patel to attempt to find potential funders for the club. I engaged the assistance of two individuals, both successful brokers of finances for major sporting investments including takeovers and the finances for huge commercial developments and sports entities. Both had direct contact with a wide range of financial interests across the club, and one was in fact at the time reached out to by Colin Graves' team in an attempt to bring in finance. Their expertise included the Premier League, the EFL, the Bundesliga and County cricket. Each had different clients, all very interested in re-financing Yorkshire cricket.

The first, a woman, was told by the Chief Executive of Yorkshire County Cricket that the club had sorted a deal 'with the Saudis', and that this was their preferred option. Her proposal to meet, which included a short period of exclusivity whilst negotiations took place, was left unanswered, and the club chose not to meet her. The second, a man, offered his assistance in dealings with Mike Ashley, whom he was told was the preferred partner, and highlighted his previous knowledge and experience from negotiating such deals with Mr Ashley. He also offered to bring other funders to the table. His offer was not followed through by Yorkshire. Indeed, when he attended a match at Headingley, organised in advance, nobody from the club approached him during his entire eight hours in the director's suite.

A third option was to explore the possibility of a partnership with the Saudi Cricket Board. This may not have been politically acceptable to the County, but was a tentative proposal that would have refinanced the club, leaving it as a member's club, and was a partnership rather than an ownership proposal.

I met with the Chief Executive of the club, and arranged for a very senior Saudi representative to visit the T20 Roses cricket match and meet senior Yorkshire representatives (explicitly Stephen Vaughan and Darren Gough) in advance, to see whether this proposal was viable. Having driven from London to Headingley, I arrived to find neither Stephen Vaughan nor Darren Gough to be present. I learnt two days later that Mr Gough was never made aware of the meeting. To add insult to injury, two representatives of Grey Nicholls, the cricket bat manufacturer, regaled the senior Saudi guest with how they had just had an excellent meeting with Darren Gough. I provided dietary requirements in writing in advance, along with security details. Yorkshire provided security and parking assistance, but no representatives were present, and the food consisted of hot pulled pork followed at the interval by cold pork pie.

I think it accurate and reasonable to say that neither the Saudis nor myself saw the club as being prepared to have any kind of discussion about a partnership (which I had proposed should include the training of the first Saudi women's team as well as a ten year cricket development partnership). I think that the message given was unambiguous.

These three alternative ways of refinancing Yorkshire County Cricket Club might not have been the best options available (this is a purely subjective opinion), but it is categorically untrue that other financing was not available. It was, only Yorkshire calculatedly chose not to explore these options.

It is important to correct the record, as you have been somewhat misled in your hearing.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Mann". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Lord Mann of Holbeck Moor
HM Government's Independent Adviser on Antisemitism