

CHI ONWURAH MP
Newcastle upon Tyne Central

24, 7-15 Pink Lane
Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 5DW
Tel: (0191) 232 5838
Email: chi.onwurah.mp@parliament.uk
Twitter: ChiOnwurah

Richard Masters
The Premier League
57 North Wharf Road
London
W2 1HQ.

BY EMAIL

05/07/2021

Dear Richard Masters,

Newcastle United Football Club – Arbitration

I am writing to you as the Member of Parliament for Newcastle Central and therefore for St James Park. We corresponded last year regarding the failed takeover of Newcastle United, a subject which raises passionate emotions amongst Newcastle United fans. I said then that "I am not an advocate for the Saudis, or for Mr Ashley, or for any billionaire, I advocate for the people of Newcastle Central".

And it is in that spirit which I am again writing to you to express my, and my constituents', grave concerns regarding the arbitration process in the dispute between yourselves and the club's current owner, Mike Ashley. My understanding is that you are arguing the arbitration process should be secret, both for your own internal arbitration process or through the separate case Mike Ashley is pursuing through CAT. I urge you, in the strongest possible terms, not to do that. There is already a lack of confidence in the process amongst fans, and more generally the perception that the Premier League serves a narrow elite within a narrow elite – six super clubs who almost formed the Super League. Rumours are circulating in the press that those same big six clubs are intervening in the takeover arbitration.

The breakaway attempt was stopped not by the Premier League, nor by politicians but by football fans as a whole. For the Premier League to hide from Newcastle fans the process by which decisions are made would be a betrayal of trust and I cannot conceive what possible legitimate commercial interest would be served. It only makes it possible for rumours and misinformation to circulate, whilst obscuring governance and decision making from the people who make football the vibrant cultural activity it is.

In your response to me last August, you said that you were reviewing the Owners and Directors test and that you would be meeting with supporters as part of the Structured Dialogue Process. I would appreciate an update on that. In your response you also said "Our approach is to be as transparent as we reasonably can be". I hope you will keep to that, and set out your reasons as to why transparency is not possible for Newcastle United fans through whatever means the takeover appeal is resolved.

I am copying this letter also to Tracey Crouch, as evidence for her 'fan led' review of football.

Your sincerely,



Chi Onwurah
Labour MP for Newcastle upon Tyne Central
Shadow Minister for Digital, Science and Technology