

England Men's Futsal Team's Summary of Correspondence with FA CEO Mark Bullingham

- ❑ Consistent lack of transparency & accountability within The FA
- ❑ Futsal partnership revenues not being allocated to futsal
- ❑ Actions conflict with key strategic pillar of inclusion
- ❑ Alarming failures in their duty of care to athletes in regard to mental health
- ❑ Justification for withdrawal from UEFA Competition inconsistent with actions

On the 23rd September 2020, The FA released a statement that was consistent with a Guardian news report that revealed nearly all funding for futsal would be wiped out, one consequence being the termination of the national team programme.

We, the England Men's Futsal Team, felt we must use our position to challenge this hugely detrimental decision in the interests of everyone within the futsal community as the sport appears to be under attack from The FA.

Since the 24th September we've repeatedly requested a video conference call with the FA CEO, Mark Bullingham, to allow him to defend these decisions but he has continually failed to accept our invitation. He did, eventually, concede to accepting questions by email.

Despite sustained efforts to get answers, we feel many questions remain left unanswered as, in general, the responses have been evasive and vague. We understand this lack of genuine engagement is shared by MPs and national media who have also put questions to the FA on the issue.

The lack of transparency and accountability throughout is an appalling indictment for the governing body of the national game. We fully support the push for significant reform of the organisation so it can better serve all its communities and effectively fulfill the role of a governing body.

Below we highlight some of Mr Bullingham responses alongside the context of what happened. This is supported by the release of the full questions and answers between us as transparency must always be non-negotiable.

Major Sponsorship For Futsal

The severe budget reduction to futsal has been imposed after The FA one year earlier promoted a *"record investment"* from a 3-year partnership with Pokemon *"to support our National Futsal strategy and help grow participation in England"* and would work with Pokemon in *"supporting the England men's national Futsal team"*.

When asked about this Mr Bullingham replied *"our commitment and partnership with Pokémon is focused on the FA Pokémon Youth Cup"*. This altered purpose of the partnership has costs of around £70,000 per year, yet, a well-placed source has informed us the 3-year agreement was worth millions of pounds. We are unaware where the rest of the money has been allocated.

A Thriving & Diverse Community Being Neglected

The underlying message we received during the correspondence was futsal's insignificance to The FA as they do not consider it a core function, key priority or important to their strategic goals. Mr Bullingham identified these reasons as to why they enforced such severe funding cuts on futsal, despite the overall reductions needed across the organisation being far lower.

Whilst we recognise futsal does not represent one of The FA's largest communities, it is, as their own data highlights, thriving and diverse.

Over 13,000 people have earned futsal coaching qualifications in less than a decade and the number of affiliated players virtually doubled in the year to 2019. The FA Director of Women's football said "*futsal can play a key part in our strategy to grow the women's and girls' game.*"

As well as rapidly growing participation, it plays an important role in player development for football with it receiving glowing references from Gareth Southgate and former FA Technical Director Dan Ashworth. Many less established futsal nations such as France and Germany are currently increasing their investments into the sport.

The FA's position on futsal presents a serious threat to its progress in England by inhibiting the growing participation numbers and risks damaging the competitiveness of the England football teams.

Further, it fails to align with their "*For All*" guiding philosophy and the key strategic pillar of inclusion. The FA's own research suggested futsal was more popular with female & BAME participants than any type of football. Therefore, it can be presumed that The FA took these decisions understanding they will disproportionately impact traditionally underrepresented demographic groups. It seems The FA are, once again, failing these communities.

A Lack of Impact Assessment

We understand the only person with direct responsibility for futsal consulted before the decision was David Faulkner, the then Head of Performance for Women's Professional Game, Para and Futsal, who told us he was "*uncomfortable*" with the funding decision.

On a call where we were informed of the decision, we wished to assess his understanding and interest in futsal. We asked him 3 simple questions about the fundamental futsal laws of the game. He acknowledged he only knew the answer to one of them and it was right for him to be criticised for that.

From this we conclude the person they relied on for an informed presentation on futsal was unqualified for this responsibility. Mr Faulkner agreed it was a "*fair assessment*" to say the decisions were a simple case of looking at numbers on a spreadsheet. We were left in disbelief that the relevant factors and likely impacts were not part of the decision-making process.

We pursued this with Mr Bullingham and he continually failed to provide any information, either financial or non-financial, that was considered to be able to make informed decisions on the futsal budget, other than the need to make funding cuts across the organisation. He cited confidentiality but we don't see why this would prevent us being informed of any general topics discussed.

It appears The FA fails to follow its own advice included in their governance guide for clubs which recommends that, before making decisions, an executive board has "*adequately informed itself and is basing its decision on a range of data and information that provides sound understanding of*

all relevant factors.” That an organisation with the responsibility and resources of The FA, not to mention one in receipt of taxpayer’s money, is not doing this on major funding decisions to ensure the right choices are being taken is hugely concerning.

When we probed further with our questioning, Mr Bullingham replied “*there is little value in rehashing the debate that was had at the time*”. We believe he is referring to our previous questioning as we are not aware of any other discussion that has been had on these matters, another of our major concerns.

It is astonishing that the figurehead of the governing body for the national game, as these comments demonstrate, has such reluctance towards major decisions receiving even mild scrutiny by key stakeholders.

Unacceptable Treatment of National Team Players

The England futsal players were informed the national team programme would be abolished on the same video conference call mentioned earlier after first learning about it from the Guardian newspaper. This included the men’s seniors, U21s and U19s and reneging on a commitment made to the women’s game to finally form an international side for female participants.

On that call we had the difficult experience of hearing youth players appeal for support for their mental well-being and, later, realising that these pleas for help would not be satisfactorily answered by The FA. Whilst being promised that they would have the “*utmost support*” and “*best help we can*”, all the players received were emails with website links to charities.

Mr Bullingham said this was in line with their normal procedures which seriously questions whether the organisation has a genuine commitment to mental health issues despite their public position.

We view it as a serious failure of The FA’s duty of care to its athletes as a governing body, especially considering some players were minors, and these policies must be urgently reviewed in the interests of athlete welfare. Athletes must be provided proper support for their exit transition rather than being quickly discarded when they are no longer considered of use.

As the senior team we still had a UEFA Futsal Euro 2022 qualifying playoff to fulfill. The FA was neither going to provide an FA doctor or physiotherapist to accompany us or would guarantee we would continue our qualifying campaign if we won. All support for our preparations was removed by the FA, including being denied access to our own futsal arena at St George’s Park. It was available to the men’s England football team who used it for in-house content on the organisation’s social media and YouTube channels.

Over many years we have demonstrated the utmost dedication and commitment to representing our country and, despite the distressing circumstances we faced, continued to prepare together under our own accord including traveling across the country to meet up around our full-time jobs.

However, all this was in vain when, just one week before we were due to travel, the FA took the unprecedented action of withdrawing us from a UEFA competition based on an apparent “*full & thorough risk assessment*” which, despite multiple requests, we have been refused to see evidence of its existence or any justification for the confidentiality.

The FA was alone across the whole of Europe in the action of withdrawing as every other participating country fulfilled their fixture, supported by UEFA implementing strict safety protocols, with one fixture utilising the option of postponement.

Around the same time, the England football team played in Belgium, a global hotspot for Covid-19 at the time, and against Iceland at home. For the latter game to be played The FA successfully lobbied the UK government for an exemption on the travel ban, implemented because of the emergence of a new virus strain, to allow Iceland to enter the country.

There was no material change in our situation that we are aware of leading up to our withdrawal and we have never had an explanation of why the decision was taken so late. If they were waiting to see if circumstances became acceptable to them then they would have asked UEFA for a postponement.

After evading numerous requests to say whether the FA had pursued a postponement, Mr Bullingham belatedly confirmed they had not. The FA's decision to withdraw was referred to UEFA's Disciplinary Committee, which found The FA's actions breached the competition's disciplinary regulations and imposed a fine.

Our public criticism of The FA's decisions on futsal funding had been gaining attention as the games approached and we strongly feel our withdrawal by The FA was a callous attempt to punish and silence us after speaking out.

For A Better FA

Our experience has shown repeated failures in transparency, assessment and accountability that suggest these are not isolated incidents but are reflective of systematic deficiencies within The FA. These have led to a dereliction of their duty as a governing body to futsal but should be equally a cause of concern for the football community. We fully support calls for significant reform of the organisation in order to achieve a satisfactory level of governance.

Our appalling treatment by The FA and that of futsal remains distressing and the futsal community feels completely let down. Our deep passion for futsal will drive us to continue to develop and promote the sport, and campaign to persuade The FA to do the same and reinstate the England futsal teams to inspire the next generation.



**Note: FA CEO Mark Bullingham strongly disagreed with our summary and did not want its publication. His opinion was it “doesn't reflect an accurate view of the correspondence or conversations you've had with us and as such you don't have our permission to publish them.” He added in a later email that “If you decide to publish it then we reserve our position on any action we might take”.*

We have full confidence that it provides a fair and balanced representation of our correspondence and the surrounding context. Below is the full question and answer so our interpretation can be verified. We are publishing it for the benefit of the futsal community to partly address the lack of communication on the decisions from The FA. Finally, Mr Bullingham's response is indicative of their approach to accountability and how we've been treated throughout this process.

England Men's Futsal Team's Full Correspondence with FA CEO Mark Bullingham

QUESTION 1

England Men's Senior Futsal Team (England Futsal): While we understand that there is a need to reduce costs of 20% across the organisation as per The FA's announcement, there have been drastic cuts of more than 85% to the futsal budget.

Even if futsal is not considered a core priority, how are such disproportionate cuts not in conflict with the FA's "For All" philosophy of "Football's not just about the professionals. It's for everyone"? In the interests of transparency and accountability, what percentage and actual costs have been cut from other departments?

FA CEO Mark Bullingham (MB): As you will be aware, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the organisation and the game as a whole. Unfortunately, this has led to difficult decisions being made across the organisation, including redundancies.

These decisions, including the one to no longer provide funding for elite England Futsal teams, have not been taken lightly and budget cuts have included a 20%+ reduction across the technical directorate. We are not able to share financial information relating to the wider organisation.

England Futsal: Whilst you have not answered whether these cuts are in conflict with the For All philosophy or not, your Head of Performance David Faulkner, on the 23rd September call, acknowledged it was. After Mr Greg Clarke's departure last week you released a statement about a vision for "an inclusive game that we can all be proud of" and The FA has the inclusion slogan "For All, Football's not just about the professionals. It's for everyone".

How can we believe in the sincerity of these words when as soon as The FA faces temporary financial issues, you neglect your smaller, less visible communities in favour of focusing, as you stated in your later answers, on elite England senior men's and women's football teams winning trophies?*

MB: As stated in our previous correspondence, The FA is suffering from the severe financial consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, and as we previously disclosed, we have had to plan for potential losses of approximately £300m over the next four years.

Also, as stated previously, Futsal is not one of the key enablers within The FA's strategic goals and as a result, this decision will not be reversed.

England Futsal: The FA is the governing body for the sport of futsal in England but these decisions to cut almost all its funding have been made as, to quote you, "futsal is not one of the key enablers within The FA's strategic goals" and "we have to prioritise our core functions that regulate and serve English football"?

(MB replied in email with "Your questions below have already been answered.")

England Futsal: From your previous responses, our understanding is that The FA as the governing body for the sport of futsal does not consider futsal a core function or key to The FA's

Strategic Goals. Has this position changed since the 2018-2024 Fast Forward with Futsal Strategy was launched?

MB: To reiterate, with £300m of savings needing to be made across The FA, very difficult decisions had to be made. The two sources of funding for futsal were from our Technical team and the National Game Board both of whom concluded that Futsal, amongst other areas, should take a significant cut as it wasn't a priority to achieve their strategic goals. That decision was endorsed by me, our senior management team and the FA Board.

QUESTION 2

England Futsal: There are over 100,000 people who participate in futsal each year (this estimate can be evidenced if required) and, according to the FA's data, the number of affiliated players doubled in the year to September 2019. In 2018 there were nearly 13,000 coaches with FA Futsal coaching qualifications and over 2000 futsal courses taking place for the year to September 2019.

The FA futsal budget was 900k a year as revealed in leaked FA documents in the Guardian and the new budget is 75k for the Pokemon Youth Cup and 50k for all adult participation and other grassroots elements. Considering futsal's popularity and growth trajectory, how can either of these be proportionate amounts ring fenced for futsal from the entire FA operating expenses budget, which still remains in the hundreds of millions of pounds?

MB: We have to prioritise our core functions that regulate and serve English football and also have a duty to support our men's and women's senior football teams in their efforts to win major tournaments. This has led to difficult financial choices, but ultimately has forced us to focus more than ever on our key priorities.

We have been clear that players will still be able to play locally and nationally through the leagues including the National Futsal Series, National Futsal League, BUCS, AoC and local Futsal leagues.

Additionally, grassroots coaches will still be able to access learning opportunities to support their understanding of Futsal and enable them to progress into UEFA Futsal courses if they choose.

We have communicated this to ensure these opportunities remain to those wanting to progress and develop in this area of the game.

England Futsal: The impact of the Covid-19 has been felt across Europe yet no other UEFA member has reduced futsal funding to such an extent that they have terminated their national futsal team programme. In fact, the Spanish FA announced increased funding for futsal during the pandemic.

Why is the English FA unable, unlike their European counterparts, to provide sufficient funding to futsal to avoid such drastic measures?

I can't comment on what other Federations have done. Clearly each of us has different financial situations, for example we own Wembley which accounts for a significant proportion of our losses.

As stated above, futsal is not one of the key enablers within The FA's strategic goals and as a result, this decision will not be reversed.

QUESTION 3

England Futsal: In 2019, The FA announced a 3-year partnership with Pokemon “to support our National Futsal strategy and help grow participation in England” and would work with Pokemon in “supporting the England men’s national Futsal team”.

The FA later described the partnership as a “record investment over 3 years”. The England futsal players carried out promotional marketing activities as part of this partnership. So, regardless of the impact of Covid-19, why is only a negligible amount of the money received from this partnership going to be allocated to the agreement’s purpose?

MB: We have been clear that Futsal continues to be a game for developing football players and improving young players' footballing abilities. Our commitment and partnership with Pokémon is focused on the FA Pokémon Youth Cup and this will continue to be an opportunity for us to help younger players develop their football skills.

England Futsal: So the Pokemon partnership will not support the wider national futsal programme or England Futsal Team as claimed in the FA’s announcement of the partnership but only focus on The FA Pokemon Youth Cup?

MB: As stated, our commitment and partnership with Pokémon is focused on the FA Pokémon Youth Cup and this will continue to be an opportunity for us to help younger players develop their football skills.

QUESTION 4

England Futsal: Why did The FA choose not to canvass the opinions of their own Futsal Performance Director, as the person who formulated the futsal strategy and is the only person within the FA whose sole responsibility is futsal, before making these decisions when he would be one of the most relevant people to providing evidence of their likely impact?

MB: Futsal does not have a Performance Director and we believe you are referring to the national head coach and technical lead. All individuals impacted were involved in divisional and individual consultation following the proposal to remove funding for the England national Futsal teams.

England Futsal: The FA’s Technical Lead for Futsal and the Chairman of the FA Futsal Committee were informed only once the decision had already been made. We are not aware of any other key futsal stakeholder (e.g. National Futsal Series, BUCS...) were involved in consultation before the decision. Which key futsal stakeholders were consulted through being informed before the decision was made and how?

The FA’s overall restructure process was agreed with the FA Board. No external stakeholders were consulted.

QUESTION 5

England Futsal: In the interests of transparency and accountability, it is requested that The FA provide the Final Report and the information/documents that these decisions were based on to demonstrate there was appropriate consideration of their likely impact. Please consider this a formal request to receive these documents.

MB: The FA’s articles of association provide that The FA Board has responsibility for all financial matters. All decisions relating to the budget reductions arising from the COVID-19 pandemic have been taken by the Board in line with this constitutional power and are confidential.

England Futsal: If these decisions have not been taken lightly as you said earlier, then it would be expected a thorough analysis on the impact from drastically cutting the futsal budget would be carried out as expected of a national governing body. However, on the 23rd September call, your Head of Performance David Faulkner said no work was done on impact and that it was a “Covid financial decision”.

He further agreed it would be a “fair assessment” to say it was a simple case of looking at numbers on a spreadsheet rather than looking at a sport in its own right and assessing how that would impact through the entire structure.

Despite our requests, you have not countered this by revealing any non-financial considerations that were taken into account. Is the reason we have not been provided information (even redacted) on any assessment because your Head of Performance is correct in it being a purely financial decision? How can you justify making such a significant decision without doing this basic due diligence?

MB: As stated, all decisions relating to the budget reductions arising from the COVID-19 pandemic have been taken by the Board in line with this constitutional power and are confidential.

England Futsal: The FA's position is they choose not to reveal any information or assessment that was considered in making these decisions nor provide any reason to justify why this is necessary, allowing the inference that no non-financial information or assessment was considered. Is this correct?

MB: These decisions have now been made and we have explained them to you and other representatives from futsal. Clearly the landscape has fundamentally changed since the futsal strategy was written and there is little value in rehashing the debate that was had at the time around the different areas for budget cuts, or the decisions that were made around the Euros. We need to look forwards and with the futsal committee we will determine what can be done to support futsal with the heavily reduced budget and human resources.

QUESTION 6

England Futsal: The FA's Director of Women's Football said "*Futsal can play a key part in our strategy to grow the women's and girls' game*" but The FA will make huge cuts to a highly inclusive game and renege on their previous commitment to form a women's England futsal team. What long-term impact assessment from taking these actions has been made on the FA's priorities of increasing inclusion and female participation in terms of players, coaches, administrators and supporters?

MB: As stated, we have to prioritise our core functions that regulate and serve English football and also have a duty to support our men's and women's senior football teams in their efforts to win major tournaments. This has led to difficult financial choices, but ultimately has forced us to focus more than ever on our key priorities.

England Futsal: Another of your stated key enablers is growth of the girls' and womens' game and inclusion both of which will inevitably be negatively impacted by the funding cut to futsal. How can you make decisions to achieve these aims if you don't assess the impact those decisions will have on them which is suggested by your failure to answer the question?

MB: We have prioritised our core strategic priorities, including the Women's & Girls game. Each division indicated their priorities in their revised budget submissions.

QUESTION 7

England Futsal: In the FA's Strategy For Women's and Girls' Football: 2017-2020 it says in relation to the England women's football team that "*The history of sport – any sport – shows that players at the elite level are uniquely positioned to positively influence the game at every level below them*".

Further, UEFA recently announced they contribute funding to cover the costs of competing across all their futsal competitions. Given those points, would you consider granting futsal a minimal budget to maintain the national team programme until the organisation's finances recover after the impact of Covid-19?

(Mr Bullingham chose to answer questions 7 & 8 together)

QUESTION 8

England Futsal: Futsal has had a glowing reference from Gareth Southgate and last year the FA said "*futsal is integral to the progression of football standards across the country, with a number of current England players throughout the age groups having experienced Futsal while growing up*".

Has the futsal budget, surely one of the smallest in the organisation, therefore, not been delivering an excellent return on investment through contributing to the England football teams' success, even if we ignore all the additional benefits it brings as an inclusive grassroots game?

MB: Football, like many other sectors, has been hit hard by effectively closing its business for a long period of time due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The FA is suffering from the severe financial consequences of this, and as we previously disclosed, we have had to plan for potential losses of approximately £300m over the next four years.

Futsal is not one of the key enablers within The FA's strategic goals and as a result, this decision will not be reversed.

England Futsal: If the decision to end the national team programme was solely based on the financial impact of Covid-19 then it would be expected there is an intention to restore funding and the national teams once the pandemic passes. Please can you clearly state if this is the intention? If so, what is the plan and process for this once the organisation's finances have recovered?

MB: The additional borrowing and revised financial plan to cover the losses are spread over a four year period. When our finances have recovered, we will consider our key strategic priorities and the budget we have available to implement them.

QUESTION 9

England Futsal: There is now a committee reviewing the '*Fast Forward with Futsal Strategy*' and how to use any funding. Does this review include the national team programme which forms part of the strategy? If not, why not?

MB: This strategy is currently under review. As stated, Futsal is not one of the key enablers within The FA's strategic goals and as a result, the decision to no longer provide funding for elite England Futsal teams will not be reversed.

England Futsal: As you are adamant that no budget can be allocated to the national team programme and David Faulkner (FA Head of Performance - Women's Professional Game, Para

and Futsal) told us that The FA would look favourably if we found our own external funding, could you confirm you would support the continuation of the national team programme if we found a source of financial funding that meant it was ran at zero cost to The FA?

MB: As you will be aware, The FA and its relevant committee are currently reviewing the current 'Fast Forward with Futsal' strategy, along with the future governance model in light of the significant reduction in funding.

England Futsal: As the CEO or/and senior management would you accept a national futsal team programme if it was the case that external funding was sourced to cover all costs and the futsal committee recommended this as part of its strategy review?

MB: We will consider this if it is recommended as part of the review. We have been clear that unfortunately we have no budget or headcount resource that could be provided to support.

QUESTION 10

England Futsal: In 2018 the FA announced the ambitious target of becoming a Top 20 Global Futsal Nation by 2024. Players, therefore, understood that The FA's aim was to only enhance the England pathway and took important life decisions such as choosing academic or career paths accordingly.

Two years later they find out the England pathway will be completely removed with almost immediate effect. Even with the impact of Covid-19 and the FA not considering futsal a core priority, how can it be acceptable to completely remove the national team programme with no notice after setting this previous target?

MB: We are facing an unprecedented threat to the stability and viability of football as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and the focus during these times is the survival of the game.

Tough decisions have had to be made in order to secure the future of football in this country. Decisions were made by the National Game Board and FA Board on the limited areas that could be continued to be funded from its reduced budget.

England Futsal: We accept the impact of Covid-19 on the organisation and these will lead to tough decisions but the excessive cut to futsal is almost 90% which is completely disproportionate to the situation. Are you not concerned that The FA's focus on the England football teams has led to decisions that are causing a real danger to the stability, viability and survival of futsal in England?

As we've already stated publicly, we recognise that Futsal still provides important alternative opportunities for youth and adults to participate through the National Futsal Series, National Futsal League, BUCS, AoC and local Futsal leagues and do not anticipate this changing.

QUESTION 11

England Futsal: The England national programme's players, which includes minors from the U19s, were told of the sudden ending of the national programme through a video conferencing call arranged the same day with no prior indication of any review of the futsal budget or national teams. Understandably, many were very stressed to hear the shocking and devastating news delivered by the FA on the call and made this known.

The FA signed the Mental Health Charter for Sport & Recreation which included the commitment to *“Lead from the top within our own organisations to help create a ‘mentally healthy’ culture across the whole game”*.

Why is the FA not providing any mental health support for their senior or youth players to deal with the impact of this decision or even checking on how they are coping, and, therefore, breaching a commitment they signed up for?

MB: As you will be aware, we have provided mental health and wellbeing sign posting for players including access to Switch The Play charity that offer person centred training, wellbeing support and transitional support to hundreds of professional athletes both current and retired across the country.

England Futsal: When we were informed of the end of the national programme The FA told us we would get the “utmost support” as well as “best help we can”. Do you think no funding and only signposting to free organisations is providing the utmost support and best help a national governing body like The FA can to help athletes transition from an elite programme?

What we have provided is in line with our normal referral pathway programme and signposting to the relevant experts in the field.

England Futsal: The FA regards the “utmost support” and “best help we can” for its athletes when they appeal for mental health support as signposting to experts and doesn't include providing anything that is at a cost to the organisation?

MB: (Replied to email with “Your questions below have already been answered.”)

England Futsal: Are we correct in understanding the “best help” and “utmost support” The FA provide for its athletes that have appealed for mental health support after a sudden termination of a national team programme is signposting to external organisations rather than The FA ensuring direct access to mental health professionals?

MB: If you or any of the other players are unclear on the counselling support available, or require additional support then of course we would like to help. Please do get in touch with David to understand the referral pathway.

QUESTION 12

England Futsal: We were told one of your core priorities is winning England teams. How does this align with the fact that an England team is about to play in a crucial UEFA qualifier and, due to no FA support for preparations including not being offered use of the futsal arena at our national training centre, unpaid England players have been forced to self-fund training sessions in far from ideal conditions?

MB: To clarify, our core priorities are around the senior men's and women's football teams. We have already communicated that any costs that have been incurred for any training sessions will be covered. We also need to follow current Government guidelines relating to use of indoor facilities.

England Futsal: England was the only nation to pull out of the UEFA Futsal Euro 2022 qualifying campaign with all being played and one postponed beforehand. Subsequently, UEFA has taken disciplinary measures against The FA for their refusal to play.

Why did the FA not ask for a postponement so The FA could reevaluate the situation when the circumstances might have changed?

The decision not to participate was made after careful consideration and was solely based on the safety and wellbeing of all those involved. As stated, we looked closely at the UK Government's advice around non-essential international travel at the time, as well as recognising the potential changes to COVID alert levels in the UK.

England Futsal: You are refusing to answer the question of whether a postponement was asked for regarding the UEFA Futsal Euro 2022 qualifiers?

MB: (Replied to email with "Your questions below have already been answered.")

England Futsal: So we, as players that have represented The FA over a number of years, can get some closure on this distressing episode that has negatively impacted our mental health, are we right to believe, an inference taken from your refusal so far to deny it, that you did NOT request a postponement with UEFA for our Futsal Euro 2022 qualifier?

(Mark Bullingham chose not to acknowledge or answer this question, asked for the third time, providing confirmation that The FA did not ask for a postponement.)

QUESTION 13

England Futsal: There has been a huge reaction, including in the national media, to the announcements to these cuts which has highlighted how much futsal means to so many people's lives. Considering this plus the details provided here, would The FA, as a minimum, reconsider these decisions with this new information and see if some compromise can be reached?

MB: Whilst I appreciate this is difficult news for you to accept this is a final decision that has been ratified by the FA Board.

England Futsal: What has made this decision very difficult for us to accept is that the fact that there has been no transparency on what basis these decisions were taken or who is accountable for them. This is despite questions made to The FA from ourselves, Members of Parliament and the national media.

If we made a proposal to you of operating futsal on a significantly reduced to the pre-pandemic situation and why this would be an effective investment for The FA, would you agree to consider it?

MB: As I've said, The FA and its relevant committee are currently reviewing the current 'Fast Forward with Futsal' strategy, along with the future governance model in light of the significant reduction in funding.

QUESTION 14

England Futsal: On our call with The FA, the Head of Performance David Faulkner informed us that you were the person we needed to speak to in order to discuss our questions. A promptly arranged meeting with you would be the most efficient and effective way to gain clarity and try to put an end to this ongoing distraction as we prepare for a UEFA qualifier and the damage being done to the well-being of all the national team players.

We have put in years of sacrifice to represent our country and service to developing the game of futsal so we believe this is the least we deserve. Please let us know your availability for an online meeting by video at which we can discuss the topics of these questions and any answers you may have provided by that date.

(This question was removed on Mr Bullingham's reply but we were given the answer below after we followed up on this omission.)

MB: I agreed that I would answer your questions by email. I'm not close to all of the details so need to look into them in order to provide answers. If you do have any additional questions then please send them through and I will answer them again

England Futsal: We were told on the call by The FA representatives David Faulkner and Jeff Davis that the funding decisions were made by the senior management team, which is led by yourself as CEO, before being ratified by the board.

If you are not close to the details of a decision you ultimately put forward, who was the executive on the senior management that was close to the details and, thus, had the required knowledge to make a considered decision as no information was provided by any futsal stakeholders as they weren't informed before before it was made?

MB: Each member of the SMT allocated their revised budget against their objectives. The final plan was then signed off by the FA Board. The FA's articles of association provide that The FA Board has responsibility for all financial matters. All decisions relating to the budget reductions arising from the COVID-19 pandemic have been taken by the Board in line with this constitutional power and are confidential.

[END]