

10/11

Refer 31/10

Mr Tully

Please b/f for Mr Palmer on Monday.

Refer 31/10

Mr McKee

To note + b/f for  
next week so that I  
can check with Mr Jordan  
on the way forward

JP  
21/10

cc PS/Sir John Wheeler (B&L)  
PS/Michael Ancram (DENI, B&L)  
PS/Sir David Fell  
Mr Carvill  
Mr Steele  
Mr Holmes  
Mr Leach  
Mr Watkins  
Mr Canavan  
Mrs Collins, POB  
Mr Jordan  
Mr Maccabe, PAB  
Mr Clarke, SPOB  
Mr Palmer

Mr Moran  
Refer 7/11  
Mr McKee

A meeting has  
been arranged  
at SCNI to be on 13/11  
to take this forward  
Could you dig out  
earlier papers including  
briefing for the  
meeting with  
the Minister

JP  
7/11

#### MEETING BETWEEN MICHAEL ANCRAM AND MR DON ALLEN

1. Michael Ancram met Mr Don Allen, Chairman of the Sports Council for Northern Ireland, at Rathgael House on 24 October 1996. Mr Jordan, Mr Canavan and Mr Jack were also in attendance.
2. The meeting took place at Mr Allen's request to discuss possible means of addressing sectarian tension associated with Irish League Football following an attack by loyalist protesters on buses carrying supporters of Cliftonville FC to a match at Portadown the previous Saturday and an earlier incident in September when Cliftonville supporters had been prevented from entering Glentoran's Oval ground for a match. Mr Allen said that there was a widespread view in sporting circles that these incidents had been politically-motivated and expressed concern that, unless appropriate action was taken, the situation would deteriorate further.
3. Mr Allen reported that he had recently participated in a meeting with residents of the area adjacent to the Oval, chaired by Peter Robinson MP and at which the RUC had also been represented. Mr Robinson had also met Sir John Wheeler to discuss the residents' concerns. It had become clear to Mr Allen that these were in fact not purely about Cliftonville supporters but about those of every club visiting the ground. The residents had suggested the erection of a footbridge across the Sydenham By-pass in order to keep visiting supporters away from residential areas adjacent to the Oval; however, Mr Allen had reservations from a sporting point of view about the resulting segregation.

Mildred  
Pl. dig  
our back  
papers  
Refer  
7/11



4. **Mr Allen** went on to say that Mr Jim Boyce, Chairman of Cliftonville FC and also currently of the Irish Football Association, favoured more widespread provision of trained stewards both inside and outside football grounds: Mr Allen considered this a constructive proposal, given what he saw as a traditional reluctance on the part of the football authorities to view their responsibilities as extending beyond the grounds themselves. He believed that such stewards could assist in identifying trouble-makers and liaising between supporters and the RUC.

5. **Mr Allen** said he believed that, in order to work out solutions to the problem of soccer violence, it would be necessary for the Minister to convene a meeting including representatives of the IFA and other interested parties as, left to themselves, the football authorities would not take the necessary action. While Mr Boyce had publicly committed himself to stamping out sectarianism in soccer, Mr Allen understood that he was not necessarily receiving full support from other IFA members and officials. Mr Allen referred to the precedent set for such an approach by a meeting which Mr Hanley had convened aimed at encouraging Linfield FC to address its community relations record.

6. **The Minister** said that he was willing to be involved in and associated with efforts to address the problem of sectarianism in soccer; however, he believed that the most constructive way forward initially was for his officials in DENI and CCRU, together with Sports Council officials, to explore various options with the IFA, aimed at developing workable proposals and ruling out unworkable or unacceptable options. He would be happy to convene a meeting when these firmer proposals were ready for consideration; however, to do so in advance of this preparatory work risked raising expectations of an early conclusion which might not be realised.

7. **Mr Allen** expressed some reservations about involving the Community Relations Council in the proposed discussions: some members of the Sports Council and others involved in sports administration had objected to Sports Council involvement in community relations initiatives in the past. **The Minister** said that he envisaged making it clear that the proposed work had been commissioned by him as Minister for both Sport and Community Relations; however, it was CCRU officials rather than CRC staff who would be involved. He would also wish to seek approval from Sir John Wheeler for RUC involvement.

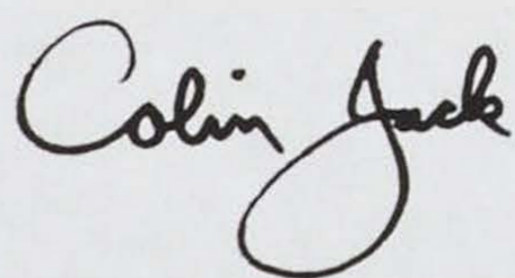


8. **Mr Allen** said that, in the immediate aftermath of the violence at Portadown, he had felt that an early meeting chaired by the Minister was desirable; however, the urgency had been lessened somewhat by a statement on the morning of the meeting by the organisers of the Portadown demonstration that they had been reassured by Mr Boyce's statements during the week and were lifting their objections to Cliftonville playing at Portadown. Mr Allen was therefore now content to accept the Minister's proposed way forward and was satisfied that CCRU officials would be acceptable to those in the sporting community who might object to CRC involvement.

9. **The Minister** said that he hoped that it would be possible for work to be taken forward as quickly as possible; however, it was important to establish clearly what courses of action were feasible. Both he and **Mr Allen** recognised that there were both short- and long-term issues to be addressed.

10. **Mr Allen** said that any solution should follow best practice: a delegation involving representatives of the Sports Council, the IFA and the RUC planned to visit Glasgow in the near future to establish whether initiatives being taken to address sectarianism at Celtic and Rangers Football Clubs could be replicated in Northern Ireland. There might also be lessons to be learned from measures being taken by various English football clubs aimed at countering racism.

11. **Mr Allen** concluded the meeting by informing the Minister that the Sports Council would shortly announce that it was awarding £126,000 of National Lottery funding to Cliftonville FC.



C D JACK