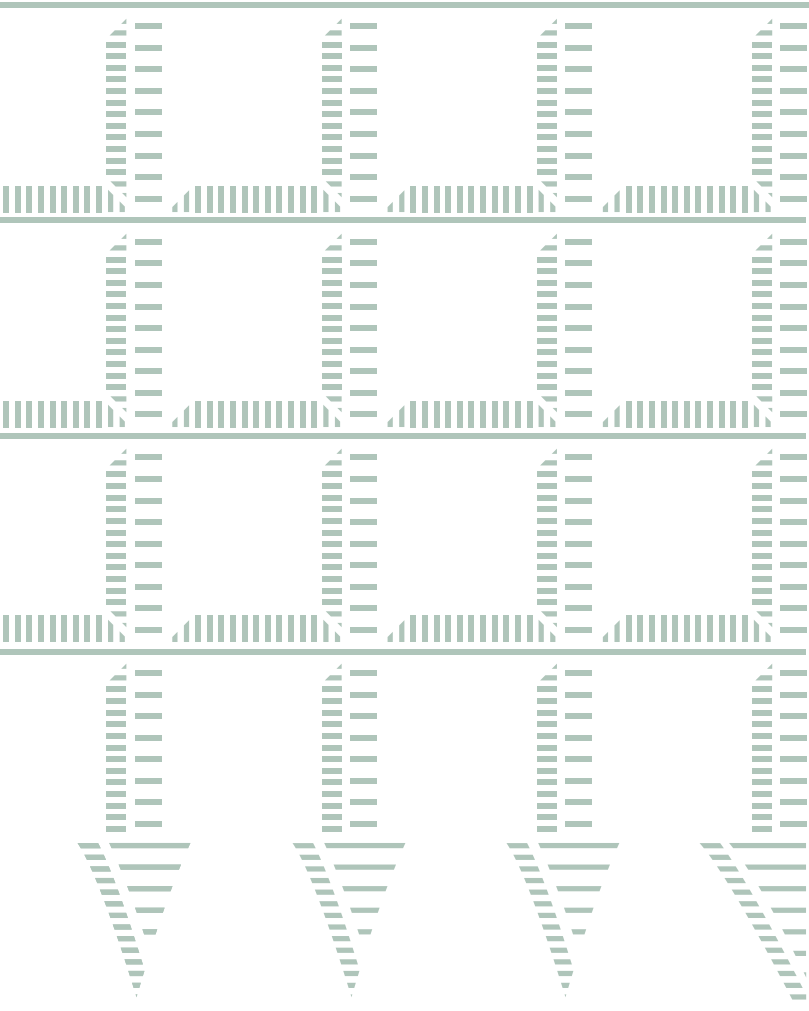


Home Affairs Committee

Maccabi Tel Aviv fan ban: Government Response

Fourth Special Report of Session 2024–26

HC 1859



Home Affairs Committee

The Home Affairs Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the expenditure, administration, and policy of the Home Office and its associated public bodies.

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Fourth Special Report

The Home Affairs Committee published its Fifth Report of Session 2024–26, [Maccabi Tel Aviv fan ban](#) (HC 1553), on 22 February 2026. The Government Response was received on 20 April 2026 and is appended below.

Appendix: Government Response

Introduction

The Government is grateful to the Committee for its careful consideration of the circumstances surrounding the banning of Maccabi Tel Aviv fans from the UEFA Europa League match at Aston Villa in November 2025. We recognise the strength of feeling generated by these events and understand the importance of ensuring that policing decisions, particularly those that affect community confidence and perceptions of fairness, are transparent, proportionate, and grounded in reliable operational evidence.

Everyone should be able to attend football matches safely. The safe delivery of matches relies on close, constructive partnership between the police, local authorities, event organisers, and communities. We take seriously concerns raised about how those responsibilities were exercised in this case, and the impact this had on local and wider communities.

As the Committee notes, the Police and Crime Commissioner for the West Midlands is responsible for holding the Chief Constable to account for the exercise of their functions, including the conduct and performance of the force. In January, the then Chief Constable announced his intention to retire. The Police and Crime Commissioner subsequently scrutinised the circumstances surrounding the policing of the Aston Villa v Maccabi Tel Aviv

match at his Accountability and Governance Board on 27 January, where he examined the force's decision-making and sought assurances from the Acting Chief Constable on lessons identified.

The Government welcomes the steps taken in the West Midlands to reassure the public and rebuild confidence. West Midlands Police have engaged with affected community representatives; reviewed their internal processes for intelligence assessments and operational decision-making; and committed to strengthening transparency for future high-risk matches. The Police and Crime Commissioner has also taken forward further oversight activity to ensure that concerns raised by stakeholders are properly addressed.

These local actions form an important part of restoring confidence, and Government will continue to work with policing partners, the football authorities and across departments to ensure that lessons are embedded.

Recommendation: The Cabinet Office's review of guidance to Safety Advisory Groups should identify whether more guidance is needed on the level of challenge that Safety Advisory Groups should be resourced to provide. The Government should also consider whether an escalation process is required in the rare cases where the decisions of Safety Advisory Groups may have broader community and political consequences.

Government response:

Safety Advisory Groups are multi-agency forums that provide expert advice to local authorities and event organisers on public safety matters. Safety Advisory Groups are non-statutory bodies and do not take binding decisions; responsibility for licensing and enforcing safety at sports grounds rests with local authorities under the existing legislative framework. Within this context, Safety Advisory Groups play an important role in assessing risk and supporting the safe delivery of events.

A review of Safety Advisory Group guidance is being undertaken by the Cabinet Office-owned UK Resilience Academy and will result in the publication of new guidance. This new guidance aims to provide consistent expectations for event organisers while supporting Safety Advisory Group members to offer clear, evidence-based, and operationally credible advisory guidance. Ensuring Safety Advisory Group members are equipped to challenge effectively is key, and that ability to challenge can be strengthened by enhancing guidance to Safety Advisory Groups on good practice.

The new guidance considers where escalation routes may be required. At present, Safety Advisory Groups provide non-binding advice and there is no mechanism or expectation for formal escalation to central government, reflecting their locally-led role and the operational independence of policing and local authorities. The Government recognises the Committee's concern that, in rare cases, Safety Advisory Group decisions may have wider community or political implications.

Through the UK Resilience Academy review, consideration is being given to whether a clear and proportionate mechanism is needed for Government to engage with Safety Advisory Group recommendations in such circumstances.

Establishing any escalation process would require agreement across government on key issues, including thresholds for escalation, decision-making responsibilities, and how any intervention would operate in practice. These considerations are closely linked to the question of whether, and how, certain events might be designated as nationally significant.

At this stage, we do not recommend introducing a formal escalation mechanism until these issues have been fully explored by cross-government partners and stakeholders, including the appropriate balance between local referral and central oversight. Ongoing work, including the UK Resilience Academy's review of Safety Advisory Group guidance and His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services' inspection of police contributions to Safety Advisory Groups, will inform this consideration.

Recommendation: We recommend that the Government takes the necessary steps to ensure that elected politicians cannot sit on Safety Advisory Groups.

Government response:

Safety Advisory Groups are long-established, multi-agency forums that provide expert advice to local authorities and event organisers on public safety matters. Their effectiveness relies on preserving the integrity of professional judgement and maintaining confidence that advice is provided free from political influence. There are very few instances of elected politicians sitting on Safety Advisory Groups.

Safety Advisory Groups are not statutory bodies and do not have decision-making powers. Responsibility for licensing and enforcing safety at sports grounds remains with local authorities under the existing legislative framework. Nonetheless, we recognise the Committee's concern that the involvement of elected politicians risks creating a perception of undue influence.

The Government agrees that the membership of Safety Advisory Groups should continue to be grounded in operational, regulatory and technical expertise. Local authorities already have the discretion to determine Safety Advisory Group composition.

This recommendation aligns with work already underway. The UK Resilience Academy review of Safety Advisory Group guidance is examining Safety Advisory Groups' remit, governance and decision-making processes. The new Guidance will set out its position on political involvement given the expectation of impartiality of SAG members.

Recommendation: The Government should give serious consideration to the proposal to introduce a new category for football matches of national significance, with a process for designation, to provide a stronger basis for intervention in the future.

Government response:

The Government's recognises the Committee's interest in whether a formal designation mechanism could strengthen cross-government coordination for events that may present exceptional public safety, security or public order challenges, or be particularly sensitive. The safe delivery of major football fixtures is currently primarily a matter for local authorities, policing and event organisers, and, as was the situation for the Aston Villa v Maccabi Tel Aviv match, it is essential to respect the operational independence of the police and the statutory responsibilities of local safety regulators.

However, recent events have highlighted the need to examine whether national-level support and coordination could be improved in cases where risks extend beyond the local footprint or where wider community impacts or sensitivities require a more joined-up response. As the Committee notes, Baroness Casey's independent review following the Euro 2020 Final recommended that the Government consider whether a clearer framework is required for identifying and managing events of national significance, including whether central government should have a more defined role in such cases. As you know, His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, Fire and Rescue Services is currently inspecting how police forces contribute to Safety Advisory Groups and is expected to provide further insight into whether existing arrangements adequately support decision-making for events that are particularly sensitive or high-risk, but it has not made any recommendations at this stage.

Officials are working across departments, drawing together expertise from the Home Office, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, the Cabinet Office, the Ministry of Housing, Communities, and Local Government and policing partners, to consider whether there should be a role for central government in particular circumstances and what those circumstances should be. This includes assessing whether a clear designation process could:

- improve early identification of high-risk matches or other events;
- enable more consistent cross-government coordination; and
- provide a firmer basis for national-level advice, assurance or intervention where appropriate.
- confirm that any necessary engagement with all relevant community and interest groups has taken place.

This work is actively being progressed with officials developing options to test with policing, local authorities and event organisers to ensure any proposals are proportionate, workable, and grounded in existing statutory responsibilities.

However, given HMICFRS is expected to report shortly, we will take account of its findings before finalising proposals or setting out next steps.

The UK Resilience Academy's review of Safety Advisory Group guidance is an important related workstream, aimed at strengthening the clarity, governance and consistency of Safety Advisory Group processes. While it does not address the Committee's specific recommendation on designating events of national significance, its outputs will support a more robust foundation for any future cross-government deliberations in this area.