indigo governance

from sanction to prevention

An analysis of how governance failure has impacted the game since the formation of the Premier League in 1992/93

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Contents

1 Foreword

Bernadette Young
Chief Executive
Indigo Governance

"English football's governance failures are too often treated as isolated controversies, resolved once a sanction is handed down or a crisis passes. This report shows why that view is too narrow. Our analysis of points deductions for governance failures since the Premier League's formation reveals a more troubling pattern: sanctions are frequently an additional kick once the visible consequence of governance failure is obvious and the damage has already been done.

At the heart of this report is a simple proposition: if the Independent Football Regulator (IFR) is to succeed, it must do more than react to failure. It must create a governance framework capable of surfacing risk earlier, strengthening board challenge, improving accountability and protecting clubs before poor decision-making turns into financial distress or sporting harm.

Our recommendations on the type of potential financial distress early warning indicators that the IFR should be looking for, and on its draft football governance code, are intended to help make the regime more effective in practice: proportionate, clear, and robust enough to drive real behavioural change.

That is where Indigo believes it can add value. Better governance will not remove all risk from football. But without it, clubs, communities and supporters will continue to bear the cost of failures they did not create."

2 Executive summary

Our report examines the relationship between governance failures and the consequences for clubs across the top five tiers of English football since the formation of the Premier League in 1992 until the end of the 2025/26 season. We also make some practical suggestions for the IFR's new regime.

Our analysis shows that points deductions are rarely isolated disciplinary events. More often, they are the visible endpoint of deeper governance failures that have already damaged clubs, supporters and communities.

The most common drivers of governance-related points deductions are insolvency events, entering administration, breaches of financial rules, late payments, unpaid wages and failures to meet creditor obligations.

This pattern raises an important question for the IFR: how can regulation help to identify risk before it becomes crisis? Points deductions may punish failure, but they do not necessarily prevent recurrence. Repeat cases for certain clubs suggest that sanction alone is not enough to produce lasting change.

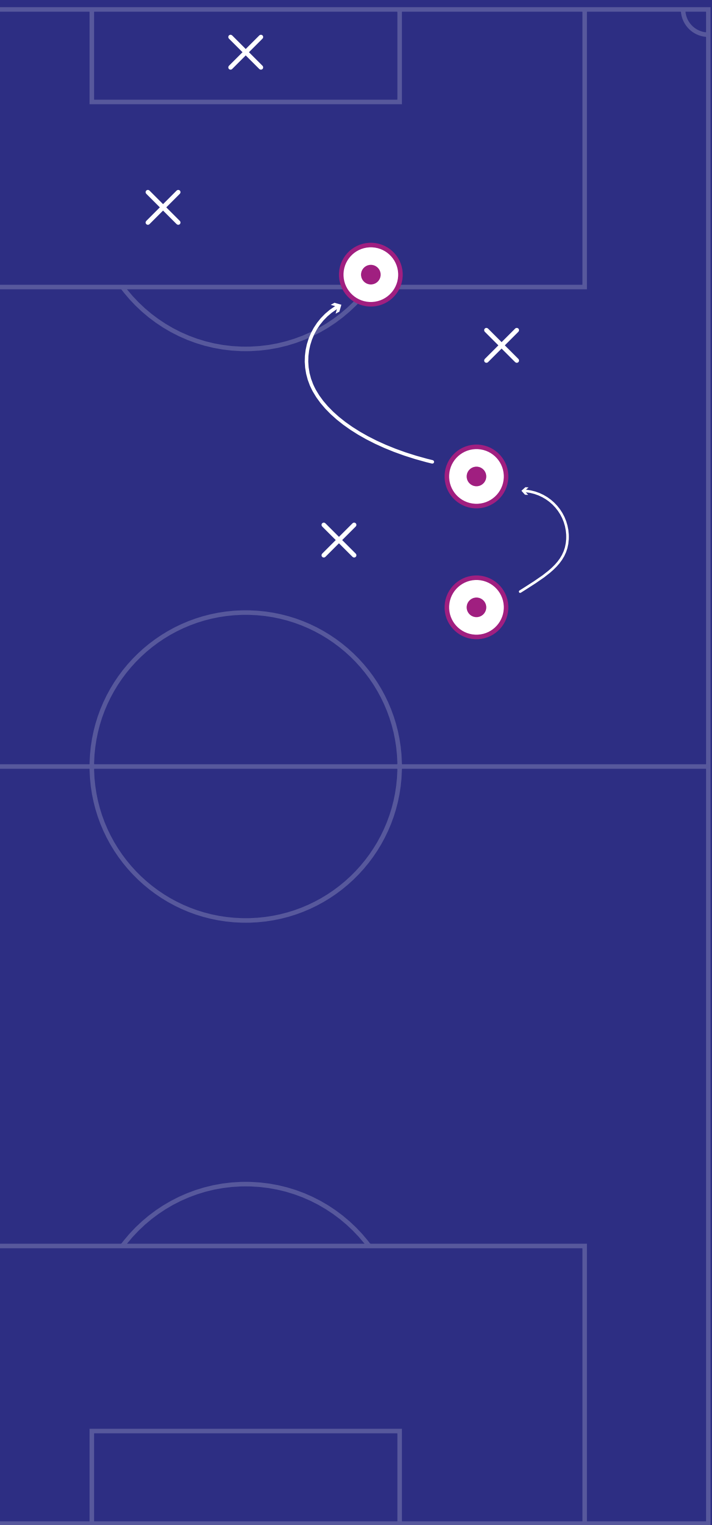
The IFR's success will depend on its ability to address legacy issues already embedded within football clubs, and financial monitoring will be a central part of the IFR's preventative role.

The proposed IFR football governance code has the potential to become a key tool for early intervention. Its apply-and-explain model could drive better board behaviour, accountability and stakeholder engagement, but only if explanations are tested and weak governance arrangements have consequences.

We strongly recommend that clubs do not wait for the IFR regime to expose their weaknesses. Boards should act now by undertaking governance and resilience reviews that assess board composition, role clarity, financial oversight, risk management, delegated authorities, related-party exposure, record-keeping, scenario planning and supporter engagement.

The central message is clear: governance failure in football is not a soft issue, and it is not a future problem. It already affects league tables, club finances and supporter experience. A more resilient football system will require a shift from reacting to failure through sanctions to identifying and managing governance risk early enough to prevent avoidable harm.

3 End of season analysis



Points deductions for governance failings relegate over 40% of clubs receiving a sanction.

- Rounding off the 2025/26 season, **Leicester City** became the 23rd club to be relegated after having points deducted for governance failings
- Since the Premier League was founded in 1992, there were **55** cases of points deductions for governance-related failures, totalling **541 points** across the top five tiers of English football, meaning more than **1.8 cases** every season at an average of **9.8 points**
- Breach of insolvency rules and entering administration are the biggest drivers of points deductions

Poor governance across the top five tiers of English football since the founding of the Premier League has had devastating consequences for a large number of the clubs involved.

Barely a decade since lifting the Premier League title, **Leicester City** became the 23rd club to be relegated after being docked points, slipping down to the third tier of the English Football League, just six points from safety. Had it not been for the club's six-point deduction for breach of profit and sustainability rules (PSR) by **£20.8 million** in 2023/24, the Foxes would have stayed in the Championship for another season.

Fellow Championship strugglers **West Bromwich Albion** were luckier, narrowly avoiding relegation by four points, despite a two-point deduction for breach of EFL financial rules. Since the start of the inaugural Premier League season in 1992, the average points deduction suffered by football clubs for similar breaches was five. Had the Baggies been penalised by this historic average, they too would have been relegated this season, keeping **Oxford United** in the Championship.

3 End of season analysis

Since the start of the 1992/93 season, there have been 64 points-deduction cases across English football. Of these, 55 were linked to governance-related failures, with clubs losing a combined 541 points from these 55 cases.

More than **40%** of those governance-related deductions (**23 cases**) resulted in the club being relegated in the same season.

Administration, insolvency or defaulting on liabilities are the biggest drivers of points deductions, accounting for almost three-quarters (**73%**) of all governance-related failings (see table 3 in appendix for the remainder).

Points deductions are also hitting the clubs with the least resources hardest. While the Premier League has recorded five cases with an average deduction of **4.6** points, the average sanction is higher in every other major division.

Average points deductions per case:

1.	**Premier League**	**-4.6**
2.	**Championship**	**-8.1**
3.	**League One**	**-9.8**
4.	**League Two**	**-12.8**
5.	**National League**	**-11.4**

Repeat cases raise questions about whether points deductions alone are enough to force lasting reform. **Rotherham United** appear four times in the dataset, while **Portsmouth**, **Wigan Athletic** and **Reading** each appear three times, with points deductions over successive seasons creating a particularly challenging scenario.

The data on points deductions shows the consequences of governance failure once a crisis has already reached the disciplinary stage. The wider question for English football is whether the IFR can identify risk earlier, before weak oversight becomes financial distress, supporter harm or sporting damage. The following sections consider where those risks are most likely to arise, how the IFR's current proposals may need to develop, and what practical readiness looks like for clubs preparing for a more regulated era.

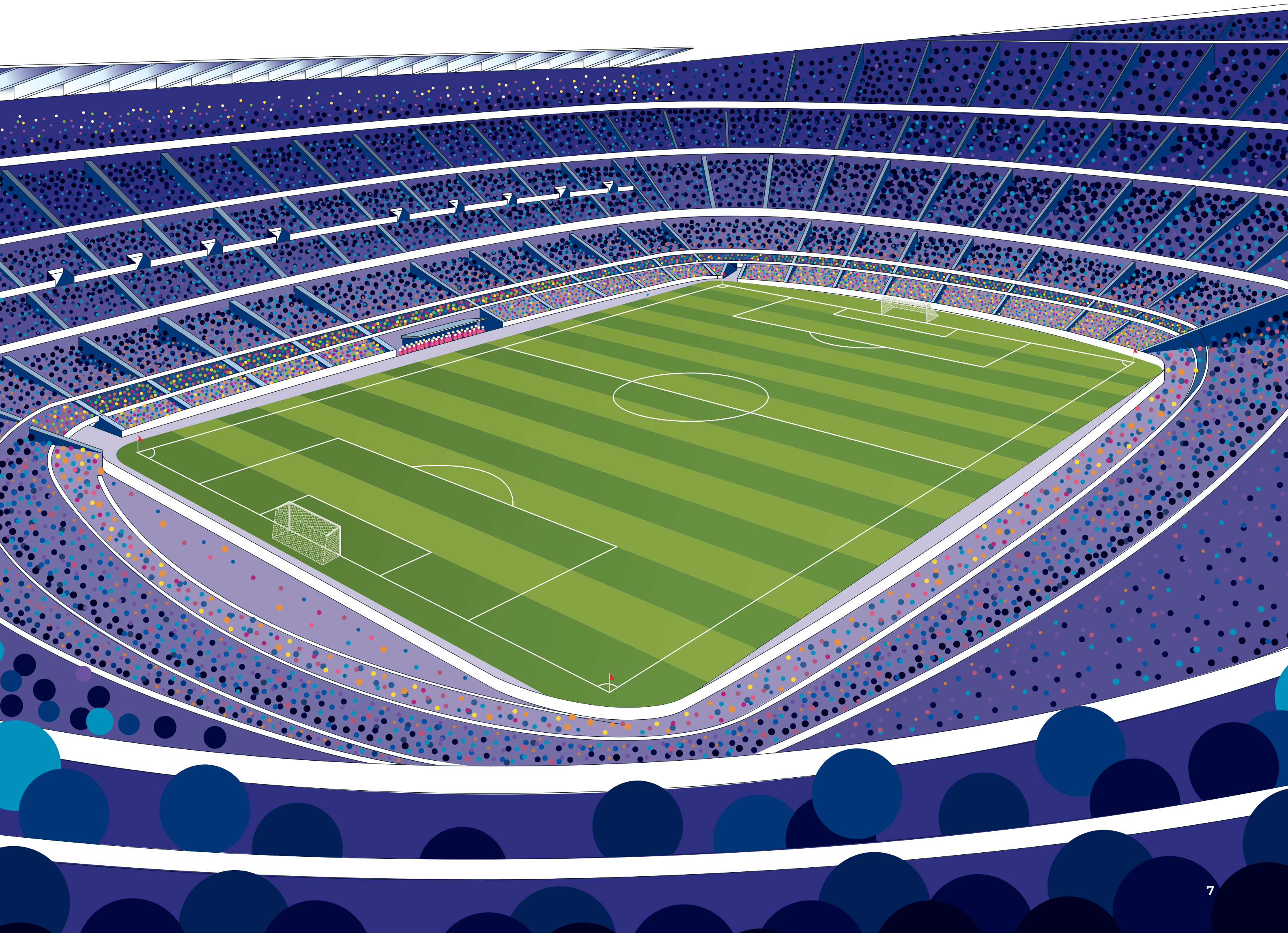
3 End of season analysis

Bernadette Young, CEO of Indigo Governance commented:

"Our analysis makes clear that governance failures often lead to the ultimate footballing penalty that is relegation. More often than not, points deductions are the result of governance failure, and it's no surprise the picture gets worse down through the divisions as clubs with less resources struggle to find the support they need.

For supporters and communities, the cost is not only measured in points lost, but in relegations, which in turn lead to greater financial uncertainty and the erosion of historic local institutions.

We welcome the formation of the IFR and hope that it has the resource and the will to effectively challenge the perennial problem of poor corporate governance in football so that clubs, communities and fans' fortunes will no longer be hostage in the hands of mismanagement."



4 The scale of the IFR's challenge

Governance decisions are at the heart of everything that happens in football. They shape financial strategy, influence recruitment and infrastructure choices, affect supporter confidence and can ultimately decide whether clubs thrive or decline.

Our research shows what happens when governance failure becomes visible, the next question is how the IFR can prevent the next crisis from emerging.

One of the regulator's biggest challenges will be that many of the most serious risks in football are not new. They are legacy issues: ownership structures already in place, historic misconduct only uncovered years later, poor internal controls that have been tolerated for too long, and governance cultures where challenge has been weak or absent. In that sense, the IFR's hardest task may not be screening future entrants, but dealing with problems already embedded inside clubs.

The end of the 2025/26 Championship season has been mired in controversy as **Southampton FC** was revealed to have spied on rival clubs, in breach of EFL rules. A four-point deduction has been passed down, but perhaps most galling for the board is the fact that the club was also kicked out of the Championship play-off final – a game which could have boosted the club's finances by **£200 million**. For fans of the club, the loss of opportunity to return to top-flight football will sting, and questions will be asked about how a rule-breaking culture was allowed to exist at the club.

Competition rules are outside the remit of the IFR, but we can still expect events like these to be of interest to the regulator. New owners and directors authorisation rules require individuals holding senior management functions to have 'requisite honesty and integrity', which includes a test of whether they, or a club they hold responsibility in, have been subject to disciplinary action by a competition organiser. More broadly, the IFR's draft governance code expects boards to define and lead their club's culture and values to ensure long-term success. **Southampton FC's** board will now need to look at how a stronger culture of integrity, fair-play and compliance can be created, with clear expectations of behavioural standards and a zero-tolerance approach to rule-breaking.

Recent developments at **Cardiff City** further illustrate how governance failures can have long and unexpected consequences. In March 2026, the club lost a claim against French football club FC Nantes for more than **£100 million** in damages, being the sum the club believed it had lost following the death of Emiliano Sala in a plane crash in 2019. Alongside the tragic loss of footballer and pilot, the episode is revealing in quantifying the financial cliff edge faced by clubs under the existing distribution model.

A priority of the IFR in the coming seasons will be to improve financial soundness and resilience across the pyramid. But Cardiff also shows that governance failure is not limited to obvious misconduct or insolvency. Weak oversight, poor handling of contracts and insurance, and operational failures can all undermine a club's resilience and contribute to sporting decline.

4 The scale of the IFR's challenge

At **Newcastle United** and **Sheffield Wednesday**, a different pattern emerges: the gap between accounting compliance and underlying reality.

Newcastle's 2025 financial accounts revealed that the club had sold St James' Park to another company ultimately still owned by the club owners, the Saudi Arabia Public Investment Fund, shortly before the year end. The transaction allowed Newcastle to report a pre-tax profit of **£34.7 million**; without it, the club would have recorded a **£98.4 million loss**. Despite there still being common owners for the club and its stadium, the club itself no longer owns its own home ground. The sale has drawn attention to financial soundness principles because, without sale of the ground, Newcastle could have breached Premier League profitability and sustainability rules.

Sheffield Wednesday's earlier stadium sale in 2018 raised similar concerns. The club sold Hillsborough Stadium to its owner for **£60 million**, allowing it to record a pre-tax profit of **£2.5 million** and avoid breaching spending rules, even though the profit was effectively only on paper. Supporter groups were quick to point out that the club had played at the stadium since 1899, while the sale only guaranteed a further 30 years' residence. The EFL later investigated the directors for misconduct in relation to the transaction resulting in a six-point deduction for breach of financial fair play and profitability and sustainability rules.

In both cases, the question is not only whether the transactions were technically permissible, but whether they generated genuine financial strength. These are precisely the kinds of issues the IFR will need to grapple with. If clubs can appear compliant while relying on transactions that obscure fragility or transfer control over heritage assets, regulation risks encouraging presentation more than resilience.

That link between financial treatment and heritage is important. A stadium is not simply an asset on a balance sheet. It is part of a club's identity, history and relationship with its community. Under the IFR's new powers, clubs will have to consult supporters on significant heritage issues, including stadium sales, changes to club colours or crests, and relocation. At the very least, that should make it harder for clubs to keep such transactions quiet until they are revealed in the accounts. More importantly, it should mean supporters' views are taken into account before those decisions are made.

Sheffield Wednesday also demonstrates another risk for the IFR: legacy issues. When the club entered administration in October 2025, the news did not come as a surprise to many supporters, who had protested against the owner for several seasons. The club's executive function had been reduced until only one director remained in 2019. Financial mismanagement had led to unpaid wages, the closure of one of the stands over health and safety concerns, and transfer embargoes that affected football performance and supporter morale in successive seasons. By the time the club's collapse became inevitable, the damage had been accumulating for years.

Taken together, these cases show that the IFR's annual risk picture is likely to be shaped by legacy problems, not just new rule-breaking or governance issues. Related-party transactions, weak oversight, hidden liabilities, heritage decisions and concentrated ownership are all areas where prevention may prove harder than punishment. If the IFR is to change outcomes meaningfully, it will need to identify those risks before failure becomes visible in the table, the accounts or the stands.

5 Predictors of financial distress

Many of the governance failures that later result in transfer embargos, deductions or insolvency begin with financial warning signs. The challenge for the IFR will be distinguishing between clubs that are ambitious but manageable, and clubs whose financial model is fundamentally fragile.

2024 club debt: Premier League

£3.5 billion

2024 club debt: Championship

£1.5 billion

The headline figures are stark. According to Deloitte, in 2024, Premier League clubs carried net debt of **£3.5 billion** and Championship clubs **£1.5 billion**.

For example, **Tottenham Hotspur's** net debt exceeded revenue, primarily driven by investment in the new stadium (**£518 million** revenue versus **£791 million** net debt). These figures are before other net liabilities payable on player trading, which reached **£1.9 billion** in the Premier League in 2023/24.

On paper, some clubs look deeply stretched. The IFR's State of the Game report, to be published before May 2027, will no doubt focus heavily on the equitable distribution of broadcasting revenue, which has long been seen as unfair. But simply redistributing revenue further down the pyramid will not, by itself, solve the issues facing the system. It could even do the opposite if additional money simply inflates wages.

Debt alone also does not tell the regulator which clubs are most at risk. The more important question is how a club meets its obligations, and how resilient it is if conditions worsen.

Some clubs can sustain high debt because they have predictable revenues, robust ownership structures and mature finance functions. Others are more exposed because they rely on regular shareholder funding which can be withdrawn, optimistic trading assumptions or continued divisional status to remain viable. Those clubs are often the ones most vulnerable to the cash-flow issues that trigger late wage and creditor payments, missed transfer instalments, transfer bans and points deductions.

It is for those reasons that the IFR's proposed annual financial viability plans will be so important. Clubs will be required to submit plans reflecting their financial position over two seasons, prepared in accordance with accounting principles and based on an honest expectation of which league they will compete in. But the value of the regime will depend on how rigorously those plans are tested. A formally compliant submission may still rest on weak assumptions: that owners will continue to inject capital, that commercial growth will continue uninterrupted, that player trading will deliver expected gains, or that relegation will not occur.

Our analysis has shown that financial distress is the number one reason resulting in the points deductions that so often lead to relegation.

Financial statistics on this page, taken from:
www.deloitte.com/content/dam/assets-zone2/uk/en/docs/services/consulting/2025/deloitte-annual-review-of-football-finance-2025.pdf

5 Predictors of financial distress

In Indigo's view, there are three predictors of financial distress that deserve particular attention.

Dependence on shareholder or owner funding for ordinary operating costs

Clubs that need repeated injections simply to meet wages, tax liabilities or football creditors are more vulnerable than clubs whose core obligations can be covered by recurring income. Reliance on external support does not automatically mean a club is in danger, but it should prompt scrutiny of the certainty, terms and timing of that funding.

Weak downside planning, especially around relegation

Under the IFR's plans, clubs will need to stress-test the impact of relegation on revenue, expenses and the availability and cost of funding. That is sensible, but will only be effective if the assumptions are realistic. Clubs that are structurally reliant on a particular division, or that carry wage and transfer commitments that would be difficult to unwind, should be expected to model that risk honestly.

Paper resilience masking real strain

Exceptional transactions, accounting profits and deferred obligations may improve the appearance of a financial position without increasing liquidity or reducing exposure. Where formal compliance is secured through mechanisms that do not strengthen the club's day-to-day resilience, the regulator should ask harder questions.

This matters because many of the penalties that distort competition most severely are linked not to abstract accounting theory, but to straightforward cash stress. Unpaid wages, missed instalments, insolvency events and unworkable business plans often have immediate sporting consequences. By the time those cases reach sanction, the underlying weakness has usually been building for some time.

For the IFR, then, the central task will be to look beyond headline debt and revenue and ask a more difficult question: *could this club absorb a financial shock without governance failure turning into sporting damage*?

6 Understanding the IFR football governance code

If financial monitoring is one side of the IFR's preventative role, governance standards are the other. The proposed football governance code is therefore one of the most important elements of the new regime.

It sets out principles and recommended practices across board purpose, strategy, risk oversight, accountability, equality, diversity and inclusion, and stakeholder engagement, and links governance reporting to licensing. That alone marks a significant shift in expectations across the football pyramid.

The key question, however, is whether the code will change behaviour or mainly improve disclosure. An apply-and-explain model can be effective, but only if the quality of explanations matters. If clubs can simply describe weak structures without consequence, the risk is that reporting becomes an exercise in transparency without consequence rather than a driver of better governance.

In our response to the IFR's recent consultation on its draft governance code, we made a number of suggestions.

Board independence

The current draft says clubs should consider appointing non-executive directors, preferably independent ones. That is a useful starting point, but it may be too soft for a sector in which concentrated ownership and limited internal challenge are recurring causes of failure. Independent non-executive directors are not a cosmetic enhancement; they are one of the few practical safeguards against boards becoming extensions of ownership rather than stewards of the club.

Indigo's view is that expectations should be more explicit and proportionate. The largest and most complex clubs should be expected to have a meaningful independent presence on the board, and ideally a chair who was independent on appointment. Smaller clubs may not have the same resources, but the principle of independent challenge should still apply. Where a chair is not independent, the code should make clearer how power is balanced, including whether that person should hold a casting vote.

Clarity of definition

The draft code says an independent director should not represent a significant shareholder, but it does not define what "significant" means. That ambiguity risks inconsistency and weakens enforcement. If the IFR wants a common standard across the top five tiers, it should define thresholds or criteria for significant ownership influence. It should also make clear that directors with special voting rights, enhanced control protections or equivalent decision-making privileges cannot be treated as independent, even if their legal shareholding is limited.

6 Understanding the IFR football governance code

Board effectiveness and continuous improvement

The draft code supports periodic reviews of board effectiveness, and Indigo agrees this is good practice. But football is a sector where clubs change shape quickly: ownership turns over, league status shifts, and financial circumstances can deteriorate rapidly. In that context, annual board evaluations should be the norm rather than an optional extra. Just as importantly, the process should consider whether previous findings have been acted upon. A board that identifies weaknesses but repeatedly fails to address them may be applying the recommendation to conduct a review of their effectiveness, but is not demonstrating effective oversight or a commitment to strengthening their governance.

Governance infrastructure

Good governance is not just about values and principles; it depends on process. Directors need structured meetings, timely papers, clear reporting lines, accurate minutes and access to expert advice. In many clubs, especially where executive functions are lean or heavily concentrated, these disciplines can be underdeveloped. Indigo therefore believes the code should place greater emphasis on the role of an effective club secretary or governance lead. For the largest and most complex clubs, there is a strong case for requiring a company secretary who meets the qualification requirements of section 273 of the Companies Act 2006 that currently apply to public companies.

Final thoughts

The regulator will also need to apply the code without overstepping into sporting merit. That line matters. The IFR should not be deciding transfer targets, team selection or tactics. But it should be entirely legitimate for the regulator to ask whether key decisions are taken through credible processes, with sufficient challenge, proper records and clear accountability. The distinction is not between regulating football and leaving it alone; it is between regulating how institutions are governed and avoiding interference in the competitive decisions that belong on the pitch.

Ultimately, the effectiveness of the code will depend on whether it is treated as a meaningful standard or a disclosure exercise. If strengthened and enforced proportionately, it could become one of the IFR's most important tools for early intervention. If left too permissive, it may improve visibility without changing the behaviours that create risk in the first place.

7 Next steps for clubs

The data on points deductions makes one thing clear: by the time governance failures become visible through sanctions, the underlying damage has often already been done. That is why clubs should not wait for the IFR to tell them where their weaknesses are. The most resilient organisations will be those that act now.

The immediate step for clubs should be a governance and resilience review to assess board composition, role clarity, financial and risk oversight, delegated authorities, related-party exposure, record-keeping, scenario planning and supporter engagement. It should not simply ask whether structures exist, but whether they are robust enough for a more regulated environment.

What is proportionate will differ across the pyramid. The largest clubs should be expected to operate with formal committees, independent challenge, sophisticated risk oversight and appropriately qualified governance support. A small club cannot be expected to replicate that model, but it can still demonstrate regular minuted board meetings supported by appropriate reporting, clear responsibilities, sensible controls, conflict management and realistic financial planning. Proportionality should shape governance expectations, but it should not excuse informality where basic disciplines are absent.

Different tiers may also need to prioritise different risks:

Premier League clubs may focus on board independence, related-party governance, the cost of capital and sources of funding, heritage decisions and ensuring that technical compliance reflects real resilience.

Championship clubs may focus on funding certainty, relegation stress testing, wage and transfer commitments, and the credibility of viability assumptions.

League One, **League Two and National League** clubs may prioritise cash-flow discipline, creditor management, board capability and practical controls that reduce the risk of avoidable sanctions.

Indigo stands ready with the expertise to help clubs of all sizes bridge the gap between broad regulatory expectations and practical implementation. That means helping boards understand where they are exposed, what good governance looks like at their level, and how to put proportionate but credible arrangements in place before regulation becomes more intrusive.

The central message of this report is simple. Governance failure in football is not a soft issue, and it is not a future problem. It already shapes league tables, club finances and supporter experience. The challenge now is to move from reacting to failure towards identifying and managing risk early enough to prevent avoidable harm. Clubs that begin that work now will be better placed not only to satisfy the IFR, but to protect their own long-term stability, credibility and heritage.

8 About Indigo

Founded in 2005 by CEO Bernadette Young, Indigo Governance has grown into an established, award-winning governance advisory firm. Today, our experienced team provides bespoke and innovative governance services to the boards of numerous companies – both listed and private – from across a variety of sectors including Southend United, where we act as the club's good governance partner in a first for English football.

Indigo Governance has consistently been recognised for the quality and innovation of its work – most recently ranked in the Chambers Guide for Company Secretaries, as well as winning the **CGI Governance Project of the Year**.

At Indigo Governance, our mission is to apply our expertise with integrity to empower leaders to build resilient and compliant organisations where better decision making delivers lasting success.

We offer a unique combination of independence, adaptability and expertise to businesses looking for support with their corporate governance and company secretarial needs.

In 2026, for the second year in a row, Indigo Governance was ranked as one of Europe's fastest growing companies by the Financial Times, and within the top ten fastest growing UK companies in the Professional, Scientific and Technical Services category.

www.indigogovernance.com
linkedin.com/company/indigogov
cosec@indigogovernance.com

The data

Table 1: Clubs relegated in the same season as receiving points deductions:

Season	Club	Division (relegated from)
2004/5	Cambridge United	League Two
2006/7	Leeds United	Championship
2006/7	Rotherham United	League One
2006/7	Boston United	League Two
2007/8	Luton Town	League One
2007/8	Bournemouth	League One
2008/9	Darlington	League Two
2008/9	Luton Town	League Two
2009/10	Salisbury City	Conference National
2010/11	Portsmouth	Championship
2010/11	Plymouth Argyle	League One
2011/12	Portsmouth	Championship
2012/13	Aldershot Town	League Two
2012/13	Portsmouth	League One
2019/20	Bolton Wanderers	League One
2019/20	Macclesfield Town	League Two
2019/20	Wigan Athletic	Championship
2020/21	Sheffield Wednesday	Championship
2021/22	Dover Athletic	National League
2021/22	Derby County	Championship
2022/23	Reading	Championship
2022/23	Wigan Athletic	Championship
2025/26	Leicester City	Championship

The data

Table 2: Top 10 clubs by total points deducted:

Rank	Club	Cases	Total points deducted	Seasons
1	Rotherham United	4	40	2006/07, 2007/08, 2008/09, 2014/15
1	Luton Town	2	40	2007/08, 2008/09
3	Portsmouth	3	29	2009/10, 2011/12, 2012/13
4	Bournemouth	2	27	2007/08, 2008/09
5	Leeds United	2	25	2006/07, 2007/08
5	Chester City	1	25	2009/10
7	Wigan Athletic	3	23	2019/20, 2022/23, 2023/24
8	Derby County	1	21	2021/22
9	Coventry City	2	20	2012/13, 2013/14
10	Reading	3	18	2021/22, 2022/23, 2023/24

The data

Table 3: Complete dataset for governance related points deductions:

Season	Club	Division	Points / Sanction	Type	Reason / Note
2000/01	Chesterfield	Division 3	9	Deduction	Financial irregularities
2002/03	Boston United	Division 3	4	Deduction	Financial irregularities
2004/05	Cambridge United	League Two	10	Deduction	Entering administration
2004/05	Wrexham	League One	10	Deduction	Entering administration
2006/07	Crawley Town	Conference National	6	Deduction	Bringing the Conference into disrepute - failing to confirm payment of previous season CVA
2006/07	Leeds United	Championship	10	Deduction	Entering administration
2006/07	Rotherham United	League One	10	Deduction	Entering administration
2006/07	Boston United	League Two	10	Deduction	Entering administration
2007/08	Halifax Town	Conference National	10	Deduction	Entering administration (later wound up and reformed as FC Halifax Town in 2008)
2007/08	Rotherham United	League Two	10	Deduction	Entering administration
2007/08	Luton Town	League One	10	Deduction	Entering administration
2007/08	Bournemouth	League One	10	Deduction	Entering administration
2007/08	Leeds United	League One	15	Deduction	Leaving administration without a CVA
2008/09	Stockport County	League One	10	Deduction	Entering administration
2008/09	Bournemouth	League Two	17	Deduction	Breach of insolvency rules
2008/09	Darlington	League Two	10	Deduction	Entering administration
2008/09	Luton Town	League Two	30	Deduction	Breach of insolvency rules and misconduct

Table 3: Complete dataset for governance related points deductions (continued):

Season	Club	Division	Points / Sanction	Type	Reason / Note
2008/09	Rotherham United	League Two	17	Deduction	Breach of insolvency rules
2009/10	Chester City	Conference National	25	Deduction	10 points for administration + 15 points for failure to agree CVA and financial irregularities (club later wound up March 2010)
2009/10	Portsmouth	Premier League	9	Deduction	Entering administration
2009/10	Southampton	League One	10	Deduction	Entering administration
2009/10	Northwich Victoria	Conference National	10	Deduction	Entering administration
2009/10	Salisbury City	Conference National	10	Deduction	Entering administration
2009/10	Farsley Celtic	Conference North	10	Deduction	Entering administration
2009/10	Crystal Palace	Championship	10	Deduction	Entering administration
2010/11	Plymouth Argyle	League One	10	Deduction	Entering administration
2011/12	Portsmouth	Championship	10	Deduction	Entering administration
2011/12	Port Vale	League Two	10	Deduction	Entering administration
2012/13	Aldershot Town	League Two	10	Deduction	Entering administration
2012/13	Coventry City	League One	10	Deduction	Entering administration
2012/13	Portsmouth	League One	10	Deduction	Leaving administration with CVA not fully compliant with Football League insolvency policy
2013/14	Coventry City	League One	10	Deduction	Failure to agree CVA / liquidation-related insolvency penalty
2018/19	Birmingham City	Championship	9	Deduction	Breach of financial rules
2019/20	Bolton Wanderers	League One	12	Deduction	Entering administration

The data

Table 3: Complete dataset for governance related points deductions (continued):

Season	Club	Division	Points / Sanction	Type	Reason / Note
2019/20	Bury	League One	12	Deduction	CVA treated as insolvency event
2019/20	Macclesfield Town	League Two	17	Deduction	Various breaches of rules, including non-payment issues and postponements
2019/20	Wigan Athletic	Championship	12	Deduction	Entering administration
2019/20	Bury	League One	Expelled	Expulsion	Removed from the Football League
2020/21	Sheffield Wednesday	Championship	6	Deduction	Breach of financial fair play / profitability & sustainability rules
2021/22	Reading	Championship	6	Deduction	Breaching financial rules
2021/22	Dover Athletic	National League	12	Deduction	Failing to fulfill fixture obligations during COVID-19 pandemic (also fined £40,000)
2021/22	Derby County	Championship	21	Deduction	12 for entering administration + 9 for breaching financial rules
2022/23	Reading	Championship	6	Deduction	Suspended penalty activated after failing to follow business plan
2022/23	Wigan Athletic	Championship	3	Deduction	Late payment of player wages
2023/24	Everton	Premier League	6	Deduction	Breach of PSR (initially 10 points, reduced to 6 on appeal in February 2024)
2023/24	Everton	Premier League	2	Deduction	Second PSR breach (April 2024) - first club in English top-flight history to receive two deductions in one season
2023/24	Nottingham Forest	Premier League	4	Deduction	Breach of PSR by £34.5 million (March 2024, appeal rejected May 2024)
2023/24	Southend United	National League	10	Deduction	Outstanding debts including £275,000 owed to HMRC (August 2023)
2023/24	Torquay United	National League	10	Deduction	Intention to appoint administrators

The data

Table 3: Complete dataset for governance related points deductions (continued):

Season	Club	Division	Points / Sanction	Type	Reason / Note
2023/24	Wigan Athletic	League One	8	Deduction	Late payment to club employers during 2022/23 season (penalty applied before 2023/24 season start)
2023/24	Reading	League One	6	Deduction	Cumulative: 3 points (August 2023) for unpaid wages + 2 points (February 2024) for late HMRC payments
2023/24	Morecambe	League One	3	Deduction	Failure to pay player wages relating to 2022/23 season (April 2024)
2024/25	Sheffield United	Premier League	2	Deduction	Defaulting on payments to other clubs (penalty postponed until transfer to Championship)
2025/26	Leicester City	Championship	6	Deduction	Breach of PSR by £20.8 million (February 5, 2026, appeal dismissed April 8, 2026)
2025/26	West Bromwich Albion	Championship	2	Deduction	Breach of EFL financial rules - exceeded £39 million permitted losses (April 24, 2026)
2025/26	Southampton	Championship	4	Deduction	Spying on other teams training – ejected from end of season Playoff final as a result
TOTAL			**541**		
AVERAGE			**9.8**		

The data

Table 4: Points deductions for non-governance related failures:

Season	Club	Division	Points / Sanction	Type	Reason / Note
1992/93	Maidstone United	Division 3	Resigned	Resignation	Resigned from the Football League
1996/97	Brighton & Hove Albion	Division 3	2	Deduction	Pitch invasions
1996/97	Middlesbrough	Premier League	3	Deduction	Unauthorised postponement of a match
1997/98	Leyton Orient	Division 3	3	Deduction	Fielding suspended players
2009/10	Hartlepool United	League One	3	Deduction	Fielding an ineligible player
2010/11	Torquay United	League Two	1	Deduction	Fielding an ineligible player
2010/11	Hereford United	League Two	3	Deduction	Fielding an ineligible player
2013/14	AFC Wimbledon	League Two	3	Deduction	Fielding an ineligible player
2014/15	Rotherham United	Championship	3	Deduction	Fielding an ineligible player