

MINUTES OF GENERAL MEETING OF
LANCASHIRE COUNTY RUGBY FOOTBALL UNION LTD
HELD AT LIVERPOOL ST HELENS ON 21ST MARCH 2018

President Steve Blackburn welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1. **Apologies:**

Paul Deakin, Tommy Hughes, Roly Heptonstall, Rich Culver, David Todd, Ernie Neely, John Huyton, John Morgan, Andy Kerboas, Tim Harper, John Jeskins, Mel Whittle, Trevor Hulmes.

2. **Minutes:**

These are on the County Website.

http://www.lancshirerugby.co.uk/images/17-11-22_General_Meeting_Agenda_Minutes.pdf

3. **Matters Arising:**

There were no matters arising.

4. **RFU Representatives Report:**

http://www.lancshirerugby.co.uk/images/RFU_Rep_Report_March_2018.pdf

KA and RB have put the report together to inform the County what they do on Council.

The report is on the website but KA wished to draw attention to the following items;

- Pg 2 of the report regarding payment of players. There is an appendix which has not been added but this will be sent out to clubs.
- Tyrells Women's Games. Firwood/Waterloo have had a difficult season against established teams although there have been some close games. As a County we are firmly behind the team and will continue to support them.
- Rugby Museum. This has now moved from the East to the South stand at Twickenham Well worth a visit and there is a lot of Lancashire memorabilia on view.
- Age Grade Review. Out of season activity. This was very specific and did not allow rugby from 7th May until 1st September. RFU wants to encourage rugby eg Schools Programme in place. From this season they want to extend this out of season but remaining within the rules. Eg U11 Non contact but will allow competitions in the Summer but within the rules of the Age Grade Review. This has been accelerated to start from this May. More information is in Appendix 2 which will be sent out to clubs.
- Rugby Development Restructure. The Women's game has now been integrated into the Men's game. The role of Women's RDO has gone and this will be taken up by the current RDO. The Player Development workers will now become Player Pathway Development Officers and the system will revert to four divisions. HD commented that it should be noted the amount of work that Claire Antcliffe, the Women's RDO had done and how she had influenced the development of Women's rugby in the County. PH asked KA to expand on the restructure. KA replied that we are going to lose our RDO who covered Area 5 – this will be picked up by the CRC for now. There are a lot of people not happy that the dedicated

Women's RDO has been lost but the work will still be covered. There are several RDOs and CRC and the work is divided amongst more people.

- Student Situation. DH there had been no change in the head count and link to the above restructure there would now be Cluster Officers in place. Chris Loudon had resigned. Manchester/Liverpool and one more area. Everyone will be in post by the beginning of the next season. Lancs CB did not make the decision as it was an RFU decision. The posts were jointly funded by the Universities and the RFU.
- New Laws regarding Data Protection. From 25th October 2018 new Laws will come in that all clubs should be aware of. All clubs should have received a toolkit that will signpost them to other resources.
- There are two roadshows that are being run in April.

The Health of the Game Roadshow at Preston Grasshoppers on 25th April 2018. 6.30pm - 9.30pm.

The Future of the Women and Girls Pathway at Broughton Pk 9th April .6.30pm -9.30pm

- The Volunteer Awards are currently being looked at:

The Mitsubishi Evenings will take place at Brown's Mitsubishi in Preston on 18th May 2018 and at Sedgeley Pk on 25th May 2018.

- U19 Commission is currently being circulated and will come into play next season (2019/2020). The final version has not yet been received by the County. Alan James asked the question about the impact this would have on the current Colts/Schools/Clubs set up but this question was unable to be answered as stated above the final 'version' had not yet been seen. There was some discussion around the fact that U17/U18 could play various age groups at the moment so unsure of purpose. The purpose is to try and organise the transition from Age Grade to Adult rugby. However it is not coming in this coming season so will be more information when the County receives the final version.

5. **Nominations for Representatives to the RFU Council**

- Nominations are Ken Andrews , nominated by Aldwinians and seconded by Leigh.
- Rob Briers nominated by Wigan and Seconded by Widnes.

Both were unopposed and so elected. Ken will serve a period of three years and Rob a period of two years under new RFU regulations.

MD noted that under the new regulations Council members now serve a term of three years. There is an option by the RFU to stagger the start terms and if appointed to a Senior position then there is an option to carry on. TS stated that there were turnover concerns eg of all 18 council members finished their term of office at the same time and all left !

6. **Committee Reports:**

a) Management Board.

All Board minutes are on the County Website.

<http://www.lancashirerugby.co.uk/admin/about/management-board/minutes-2017-2018>

b) Finance and Funding Committee.

No Report.

c) Disciplinary Committee

There have been 6 cases of Racial Abuse so far this season involving U18. This is not acceptable and the message needs to be reinforced to clubs. There have been yet more incidences of abuse towards Match Officials and this is a growing concern. There are no new referees this season and many referees are 'packing in'. The situation is in the hands of the clubs. There are concerns that the abuse does not involve 'young folk' but older members of the clubs.

There has been a decision made to add 2 extra weeks in the case of Referee abuse. RB stated that a rugby survey had shown that Referee Abuse was the 'top of the list' for concern, alongside touchline abuse. ISB noted that players needed to be told about the seriousness of the matter. BS replied that abuse from the Coach/Players/Home supporters were all the responsibility of the club. Clubs are responsible for policing the behaviour of their supporters and if they do not then they will be held accountable. PH said that this should be large fines and/or deduction of League points.

d) Governance Committee.

Carol Baker , Director of Governance informed the meeting that there would be a Rugby Safe Conference that would be held at LSH on the 16th April starting at 6.30pm. All welcome and the information had been sent out to clubs.

With regard to Safeguarding she reiterated what the Disciplinary Secretary had referred to with regards to Racial Abuse. All club Safeguarding Officers had been informed about the seriousness of Racial Abuse and the consequences.

Regulation 15

Some matches may now take place outside the season as stated earlier in KA report. However the rules of playing up still applied and clubs are advised to seek clarification from CB if they have any doubts or queries. Any club playing up players with out the appropriate dispensation may receive sanctions which could be applied to the 1st XV.

It was noted that girls play in age bands. U13/U15.

IS raised the question of registration and wanted it noted that clubs should ask for to see registration cards.

KA stated that he would send out the Appendix relating to Regulation 15 again.

e) Rugby Development Committee:

The full Rugby Development report is on the website and can be seen by following the link below and would encourage people to read the report.

http://www.lancashirerugby.co.uk/images/RDC_Report.pdf

The report covers all aspects of the Rugby including Coaching Development, Player Development, Player Development, Medical Information, Referee Development, Scholarship Funding and Future plans. There is a wealth of information on there for clubs.

f) Marketing and Communications:

The County's Twitter account continues to gather more followers and retweets. The County's top tweet has gone from 2,094 to 11,000 this year, a rise of 88%. The weekly fixtures tweet now has 7,500 views and other Counties are now following our idea. The county website continues to provide information for the County and has an average of 4,000 views per month.

g) Club and Community Rugby Committee:

It has been a busy year but fragmented as various members of the Committee have been involved in other projects. Four members of the Committee have been Mentors for the RFU Leadership Academy, a member of the committee has helped to produce a brochure to promote the County and interest in some sponsorship has started already, Helen Duggan produced a survey for Lancashire last year, Jayne Dolloway continues to provide information for Rugby Mums blog and Kate Benatta continues to work with her team to work with the DPP.

There will be a cluster meeting at PGH on Wednesday 18th April. 7 pm start. This will follow the format of the Merseyside cluster meeting that was held at LSH earlier this season.

h) Competitions Committee:

There is one outstanding semi final because of League games taking precedence. The Finals are at Wigan RUFC on the 6th May. There will be Liverpool Referees appointed. There is a possible dispute as one of the Finalists are on tour.

BH has written to the Senior clubs to enquire about re instating the Lancashire Cup Competition but has had no response.

i) Coaching Committee:

Information is posted on the website and a lot of the information is covered in the previous report, again on the website. The RDO did want a conference but this had not happened. There will be a Conference at the end of the season.

j) Rugby Development Officer:

Did not attend and consequently no report.

k) Lancashire Survey:

The results of the survey can be seen by following the link below:

http://www.lancashirerugby.co.uk/images/Survey_Results_Small_March_2018.pdf

Helen Duggan provided detail about the Lancashire Survey and the results/conclusions that it had provided.

The number of usable responses was 445 and the responses to the questions were variable eg the Universities and Referees had provided lower numbers of responses. The high scores showed a positive results with 0/1 showing negative results , this could have been coloured by personal experiences.

There appeared to be a great amount of pride in Lancashire as a County and the reports showed what the County does.

Felt there was a need to widen people's awareness of what the County does and to look at the constructive criticism.

TF asked for clarification about some of the answers and the negative aspects of the survey eg people attend Lancashire Coaching Courses and from comments to him and his team there appears to be a positive response which is perhaps not reflected in the survey.

There followed a discussion on the perception of some of the answers and how human nature sometimes altered the response that they gave. HD felt there was a need to look at things in context and although there were some negatives as mentioned earlier it may have been due to one person having a negative experience which may have coloured their response.

HD felt that there was still a need to ensure that communication was maintained with the clubs, as there may be a disconnect between the clubs and the County. She felt there was a need to let people know more of what we as a County are doing eg Lancashire President to put info on Lancashire Face book ? , encourage the use of Social media more to engage with the youth/girls who tended to use Social media. , not use the website purely as a library for minutes etc and inform more people on the periphery of the County.

There followed a discussion around how this could be done eg all clubs get information directly to their club contact/ Secretary but if GMS is not up to date then this information may not arrive at the right person.

An action plan had been produced at the end of the survey and this would be looked at in the future.

The Lancashire President thanked HD for her work and presentation.

7. **Playing:**

a) Senior Rugby.

JSG gave an update on where the Senior side were up to with regard to playing/training. Invitations had been sent out to clubs with regard to selecting players. Because of the recent weather there were still a lot of League games to be played which may have an impact on availability. Invitations had been sent out to Fylde, Preston Grasshoppers and Sedgeley Pk but their League games may only finish at the end of April. This year Sale had more players eligible to play for Lancashire rather than Cheshire.

Training would start on April 18th.

The games to be played are :

5 th May	Northumberland v Lancashire	Percy Park RUFC
12 th May	Lancashire v Eastern Counties	Sedgeley Pk RUFC
19 th May	Lancashire v Cheshire	Fylde RUFC

The Lancashire Royals continue to develop and these players are chosen from Level 5 and below. They had now been playing for two seasons. This year they had played the Anti Assassins and Cheshire. Other games had been planned but these had not come to fruition. It was expected that the Anti Assassins game would become an annual event with other fixtures added when possible.

b) U20

This season 33 players had been identified. They had played a warm up game against Liverpool University which they had won 33 – 17 and then played Stafford away at where they had won 69 – 0. They are currently the top point scorers. The game which had been lost to the weather against Northumberland had been rearranged and would be played at Wigan RUFC KO 2.00pm 25th March.

Anything but a loss would ensure a return to the top tier. If a loss then would have aa Away QF.

Jason Leonard Shield QF 1st April

Jason Leonard Shield SF 15th April

Jason Leonard Shield Final 6th May

c) U18

JTH did not attend so TF spoke briefly.

There had been a successful season with high numbers of players. The U17 were doing well and had a good set of coaches who would rotate to the U18.

d) U15/U16

BN reported that the U16 had been unlucky with results but were outstanding as an age group. The game against Yorkshire had been an excellent game but they had lost. The U15 had had a difficult season which had been disrupted by the weather. They had been beaten by Yorkshire and were due to play Cheshire the following Sunday.

- e) There had been good meeting about the schools on the 8th March attended by KA. The U18 Finals had provided a fine showcase for the game, The U14 – U16 Finals that had been due to be played at Fylde had been postponed due to the weather. The U13 Festivals had allowed more schools to be involved.

The National Cup Competition had seen Manchester Grammar U15 become finalists. They has won the Semi Final 22 -21. The U18 s competitions had seen John Fletcher play Kirkham Grammar school at Murrayfield where Kirkham had won 64 -0.

A working group had been set up to look info the Competition Structure system so that everyone will get a game. This will look st approaching a tier system as in other competitions.

A letter had been received from a rugby playing school , this had been circulated to Board members by MD, the letter raised the question of funding issues being a problem in the school system, but also highlighted the problem felt by school re the conflict of exam pressure against time for other activities. It was felt that there was a need to identify the problems felt by schools and the letter had been sent to Twickenham to the Age Grade Committee in order to open up a national debate on the subject.

It was felt that this needed to be addressed in Lancashire, need to look at priorities and the future players. Half of the rugby playing schools pay fees, there are 53 school but only looking at perhaps 30 regular fixtures(this includes all schools). Should there be a clubs/schools programme, children should be playing in the clubs but how do we do this?. Rugby Development Officers do go onto schools but how effective is it ?. Do children associate playing rugby as just in school etc? This would be looked at in the future.

- f) Women and Girls

HD reported that there was a successful Girls Programme in place and as a result the U18s now needed two venues for training. The Inner warrior numbers were looking good and more clubs were now running Women's teams.

In May there would be an Inner Warrior 'market' to display the activities on offer and to bring clubs together and have festival days.

There had been some success at Representative level with two U18 representing England and two representing England U20's with a possible opportunity to tour Canada in the Summer.

There would be a Forum meeting for the Ladies section at Preston Grasshoppers on 26th March at 7.00pm.

8. **League Report:**

- a) Electronic Match Cards. These had been introduced at level 5 and 6. There had been some success but people didn't always press the 'right buttons' but it was work in progress. The North DOC had some reservations about it being rolled out to lower levels but as stated there had been some success. The matter would be discussed again at the Competitions meeting.

- b) League Games. The situation caused by the 'Beast from the East' had led to further disruption. Some clubs had a lot of games to make up with some clubs needing to play midweek and Saturday, however ever the optimist that all games needed to be played would be played.
- c) Cup Competitions. This had been referred back to the RFU for more discussion. The format wanted by the RFU did not allow for the possibility of clubs playing in 14 team Leagues not having enough free Saturdays should the need for rearranged games to be played because of postponements.
- d) League Structure Update: A meeting had been held at Wigan RUFC where clubs voted in favour of Lancashire Leagues 60/40. Cheshire had indicated that subject to their clubs approval they would support Lancashire. However since then they have now decided to support Cumbria. DC would attend the North DOC meeting next week where he expected to lose the vote about the League restructure by 5:1.

There then followed a discussion about what would happen next, and what would happen if nothing happened. There were still concerns about the travel but clubs did not want to opt out of the RFU Leagues.

DC informed all present that all clubs had been informed about the situation 18 months ago. There followed a discussion about clubs currently playing in Cumbria driving past clubs who were nearer and questions were raised about the possibility of spreading the load amongst the Lancashire clubs. It was not felt that Lancashire could make those decisions and any decisions would have to be approved by Twickenham. MD noted that there was a need to follow the Regulations and Lancashire cannot dictate what happens. The fact that Cheshire and Cumbria did not support Lancashire meant that the situation could not change at the moment. The problem was exacerbated by the fact that clubs tended to look after themselves and do what was best for their own club, which is understandable.

DC noted that any decision to have a Lancashire only leagues would have to come from the clubs. It was not up to the Lancashire CB to dictate to the clubs. PH noted that the Lancashire proposal had come from his club but when the time to make a decision came then his club did act in their own interests. The sticking point amongst the decision seem to be the lack of promotion. Members there felt that a stand needed to be made.

There then came another question 'So what are Lancashire going to do about the situation?' Could the RFU not solve the problem. DC reported that the RFU see it as a local problem and it is up to the DOC to sort but as stated earlier because of the lack of support from Cheshire then DC would lose the vote for change at the next DOC meeting.

BH then proposed that people there had a vote on what to decide , however MD interjected to say that any vote would not be binding as would have to check the Regulations to see what could and could not be decided at a General Meeting.

TF then suggested that as we seemed to be going round and round in circles then was it possible to have a decision as to the next steps forward.

SB suggested a meeting at Wigan to discuss the matter further and to discuss who would possibly run the League. It was suggested that that meeting should produce a binding vote. It was felt that another meeting would not be needed and the clubs could be written to.

MD would write to all clubs to ask them for a decision before DC attended the next Competitions at Twickenham. That meeting was due to take place on Tuesday 10th April.

9. **North Division:**

The next Competitions Meeting was due to take place on April 10th. The subject of Lancashire only Leagues would be discussed and as can be seen above there was a lot of discussion about the matter. DC would await the results of the questions that were being sent out to clubs and report back accordingly.

10. **ERCA**

DNH had attended the meeting on a very snowy day !. The refurbishment of the CB bar at Twickenham had been discussed. The SW had had a discussion about the Adult Competition Review and were staying with 10 team leagues. There had also been some discussion around where the County Championship Finals would be held.

The full minutes of the meeting held in January can be found by following the link below:

http://www.lancashirerugby.co.uk/images/ERCA_MINUTES_21_1_18.pdf

11. **Correspondence:**

There was no correspondence appertaining to this meeting.

12. **New Members:**

No new members to report.

13. **Date and time of the next meeting:**

Annual General Meeting

Wednesday 20th June 2018 Tyldesley RUFC at 6.30pm

14. **AOB:**

There had been a request from the RDO to inform the meeting that they would be running a carousel meeting for clubs to attend. The first would be at Trafford MV on the 19th April and would run from 2.00pm until 7.00pm.

KA reported that he had attended the funeral of Geoffrey Pimblett. Ray French MBE had spoken at the funeral which had been very well attended.

Attendees:

Steve Blackburn	President
Dave Clarke	Senior Vice President
Gill Burns	Vice President
Peter Hughes	Past President
Dave Herriman	Past President
Ken Andrews	Past President/RFU Representative

Dave Hodgson	Past President
David Matthews	Past President
Tim Stirk	Past President
Tom Fitzgerald	Past President
Mark Downs	Hon. Secretary
Malcolm Worsley	Club and Community Director
John Greenwood	Director
E Wiles	Birchfield RUFC
	Burnley RUFC
A Ingham	Chorley RUFC
S Doherty	Fleetwood RUFC
B Hurst	Littleboro RUFC
D Woodcock	Liverpool St Helens FC
B Jubb	Lostock RUFC
M Bailey	Preston Grasshoppers RFC
S Blackburn	Rochdale RUFC
P Merriman	Sefton RUFC
P Andrews	Southport RUFC
G Hawkins?	pp Trafford MV RUFC
B Belcher	Tyldesley RUFC
D Litch?	pp Vale of Lune RUFC
J Bradbury	West Pk RUFC
D Clarke	Wigan RUFC
H Duggan	Women and Girls
B.Nichols	U16
H Hughes	U20
C Baker	Safeguarding Director
K Potter	League
J Greenwood	Seniors
K Bennatta	CEO Littleborough
I Spivey	Aldwinians
W Bolton	Eccles
I S Brown	NLC
N Middleton	Chair Playing/Sec Oldham
S Fox	Oldham
Anne Clarke	Minutes.