

LANCASHIRE COUNTY RUGBY FOOTBALL UNION

Minutes of the Board meeting held using Zoom Video Conference on Wednesday 8th July 2020

Present: D. Clarke in the Chair, & Messrs P. Deakin, J.T. Hughes, C.A. Baker, H.H. Hughes, K. Andrews, R.T.J. Briers, M.J. Worsley & M. Downs.

In attendance: Messrs, G. Burns, G. Morgan & B.H. Stott.

Apologies: A.S. Kerboas.

Minutes of the last meeting.

The minutes of the Board meeting held on Tuesday 2nd June 2020, (previously circulated) were accepted and signed pro procurationem by the Honorary Secretary as a correct record.

Matters arising.

There were no matters arising.

Questions & Comments to written reports.

RFU Representative Report – Appendix 1

1. GM – 139 redundancies after a capability review within RFU equated to approximately 24% of the total workforce.
2. MJW – Questioned if the International players wages would be cut. RTJB responded that players and Eddie Jones had taken paycuts.
3. KA – commented that Rugby Development department would be hardest hit were there would be a complete restructure. MD noted there was also less funding coming to the County and that with less staff and less money the results would be less work done.
4. MJW – questioned if the RFU would get rid of the County Championships. RTJB responded that they had been suspended for only 1 season but currently there can be no guarantees on anything.
5. DC – David Barnes had advised that there were 17 clubs payment of players declarations outstanding.
6. HHH – had tweeted his disappointment regarding the cancelling of the aspirational pathway and this had been shared / seen by 15000 users, responses were in agreement with his views.
7. MD – Sought Board approval to investigate the playing of some Senior representative rugby towards the end of the season. Approved. RTJB commented that this would be a sign to the RFU of the importance of County rugby.
8. MD – recent virtual cluster meetings had been a good way to communicate with clubs. KA felt this could be a way forward for future communications.
9. KA – requested update on the request from LSH for grant towards the ladies toilets that had been received pre-covid shutdown. PD had spoken to Kate Poulton but there had been no response from the club.
10. It was felt that due to the closer ties with the professional staff and in light of the redundancies there was no need to bring them into the virtual board meetings.
11. MD suggested the AGM could be done using Zoom in September which had board support.

Correspondence.

There was no correspondence appertaining to this meeting.

New Members.

None.

50:50 Draw

July 20	Value
H. Henderson	£53.40
G. Spenglar	£8.90
K. Andrews	£8.90
J.E. Nixon	£8.90
S. Knowles	£8.90

Date of next meeting.

Next Meeting: To be confirmed.

Any other business.

BHS – See Appendix 2 Disciplinary report.

GB – minimum order for volunteer pin badges was 100. Approval given to purchase 500.


CAB – met with RFU Safeguarding and there would be a change to Reg 21 in August. There would be a precursor registration using GMS for DBS checks.

PD – coming up on financial year end and even though we had been supporting clubs during Covid crisis the financial position was very much the same as last year. Going forwards may be much more difficult and it was expected to put some projects on hold.

HHH – the weekly podcast now has 1200 downloads and 2000 listens.

HHH – The ADM fixture list had been published but there was a technical issue with uploading to GMS. All kick offs would now be 2:15pm to encourage away teams and support to stay for 1 hour after the game.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 7:35pm

 Chairman Date 19/08/2020

Appendix 1
RFU Representatives Report

RFU Council Meeting

The RFU Council met by teleconference on 12th June 2020

CEO Report: Bill Sweeney

Introduction.

This is probably the most challenging period for rugby in modern times for rugby.

The primary objective must be for the Union and the game to emerge from the Covi-19 crisis in a strong a position as possible.

Business planning:

Executive have been working on low, medium and worst-case scenarios. Essential due to uncertainty around social distancing, mass gatherings and when games at all levels can resume.

Three phases of RFU reaction:

- Response- secure the business, keep people safe, assess impact on community game and implement club support programme.
- Recovery- actions to stabilise the Union and the game, develop management strategies.
- Renew- Long terms measures for organisation and sport adapt to new environment.

Project Rise

Union focussed on rebooting the game, co-ordinate and manage the change required.

- Restart- implement plans to restart core business.
- Reshape- focus on next twelve months
- Capitalise- game to emerge in best possible shape to develop and grow

Public Affairs

Executive working closely with Government (DCMS) discussing measure that may help to support the game.

Community game

Support to the Game-

- Community support loans scheme now re-opened
- RFU website for information of support available

Future Competitions Structure-

- Game consultations, webinars, RFU Council consultation on 28th July.
- Final recommendations to be considered by Council at October meeting.

Looking ahead-

- Roadmap to show steps to return to rugby published
- Understand the impact of any delay and plan to provide meaningful competition next season.

People

- Furlough- 65% of RFU Staff on furlough extended to October
- Morale – regular engagement with all employees
- Wellbeing-high priority with programmes to support them.

International matches & Global Calendar

- Six Nations 2020 – suspended- hope to complete in Autumn.
- Summer Tours postponed
- Plans for a Northern Hemisphere tournament in Autumn.
- Regular discussions at World Rugby for an aligned global international calendar. PRL and RPA consulted throughout the process,

Communications Update:

- Regular communications with Council members, the Board, the Game and Commercial Partners
- England coaching team has done many media interviews to support and thank key workers
- Many England players involved in media activities and charity fundraising.
- Bill Sweeney appeared before DCMS Select Committee
- Covid-19 drive through testing facility in the North Car Park
- Umbro announced new technical kit provider.
- Loss of Tyrell's as a partner was managed proactively resulting in some positive sponsorship enquiries

World Rugby

- Bill Beaumont has elected WR Chairman for a second period.
- WR initiated a review into its own Governance

Lord Myners' Premiership Salary Cap Report

- Recommendations for improvement being considered by RFU and PRL

Finance Report- Sue Day

- At the end of March, the Union was performing in line with the budget- the effect of Covid-19 has yet to be fully felt.
- The Union has lost approx. £15m of turnover- loss of games, England v Barbarians, Army v Navy & events etc
- Inevitable that there will be a significant reduction in revenue which will affect 2020-21 and subsequent seasons
- Financial life blood of the RFU is international matches at Twickenham in front of full stadiums.
- Nine different scenarios have been developed- options include normal season, behind closed doors, reduced capacity to no games at all.
- 2020-21 will be loss making with impact on the ability to invest in the game.
- Given the long term effect of Covid-19 not practicable to maintain current levels of spending through increased borrowing. Unions spending must not exceed its income over the medium term. Objective will be in the short term to reduce expenditure and an increase in borrowing over anticipated levels.
- Discussions with the Bank to ensure there is access to sufficient funds.

Community Game Board- Rob Briers and Steve Grainger

As a result of Covid-19 work has been done to support the Community Game with initial focus on supporting clubs. Concern is with player retention and revenue streams.

Club Support

- Initial support loans totalling £650k. Second phase has now opened
- Many clubs received direct government support through local councils of £10k or £25k
- CBs have opened their Support Fund- allocation period extended to December 31st to be used in reboot phase.
- Community Game Update continues to be published twice weekly runs in parallel with the dedicated website: www.englandrugby.com/coronavirus
- Weekly webinars for coaches, match officials and club administrators.

Return to Rugby Activity

Consultation with Government and Sport England as to the necessary protocols and time frames to a return to rugby

A road map has been published showing six stages (A-F) returning to rugby activity.

Along side the road map:

A return to Competitive Rugby: Two working groups looking at a return to rugby for the Adult Community game and the Age Grade Game- recommendations will be communicated to the game as soon as possible.

Plans for Adapted Rugby Activity: How rugby activity can be supported if full contact not possible for part or all the season.

Plans to Support Clubs in Reopening Facilities: Support for clubs to undertake risk assessments and in rebooting bar and catering operations.

Future priorities

- Playing opportunities and competition
- Coaches and Match Officials
- Club Support

2020-21 Work Programmes

- Creation of a Club Support Fund
- Continued support for catastrophic injury insurance
- Maintaining support service to clubs (legal, groundsmen, volunteer recognition etc)
- Support for match officials at Level 3-5
- Continuation of qualification/training for coaches and match officials
- Maintaining support for DPP and CB age grade representative rugby
- Maintenance of support to All Schools programme, Universities and O2 Touch
- Suspension of ring fenced funding for onshore and offshore travel
- Suspension of funding into Aspirational & County Championships
- Reductions into planned work with;
 1. Target groups 14-18 players
 2. Growth of Women & Girls rugby
 3. Age grade & Education development work
 4. Suspension of investment into 7s and x-Rugby

Future Competition Structure Working Group- Stephen Pearson

- Detailed updates have been given in the regular Community Game Updates.
- Consultations have been conducted through Webinars due to Covid-19 restrictions
- Next stages:
 1. Conclusion of first stage consultation
 2. Consideration of feedback
 3. Further consultations with the Game- hopefully face to face
 4. Finals proposal considered at the October RFU Council Meeting
 5. Implementation in time for the 2021-22 season.

Minimum First Aid Standards in Community Game- Nigel Orton

- Council reaffirmed its commitment to the introduction of mandatory minimum standards in the age grade game with effect in the 2021-22 and in the adult game in 2023-24 season.
- Work now to commence on implementation and the provision of resources to assist the clubs

Governance- Chris Cuthbertson

Payment of Players

Closing date for declarations is 30th June 2020

Covid-19 Delegated Authority

Two working groups set up to ensure meaningful competition can commence and be maintained next season.

- *Adult Competitions Advisory Group chaired by Terry Burwell.*
- *Age Grade Restart Options Group chaired by Phil Attwell*

Covid-19 crisis may require the RFU to react quickly to maintain meaningful competition so Council agreed to delegate authority to Governance Standing Committee

- Approve and implement recommendations of the Adult Advisory Group and Age Grade Restart Options Group
- Put in place new regulation and/or amend any existing regulations to enact any recommendations from those groups

Council agreed to dis-apply Regulation 13.6.1 of the 2019-20 regulations that required fixture lists to be finalised by 15th June 2020.

Insolvency Regulations- Paula Carter

Council approved:

- The proposed amendments to RFU Regulation 5 for implementation for the 2020-21 season
- To delegate authority to Governance to finalise the drafting of the amendments.

Payment of Players (PoP) Threshold Review Group- Malcolm Wharton

Council accepted the recommendations that:

- No changes to the thresholds for the 2020-21 season
- Further review to be conducted early in 2020-21 for the 2021-2022 season

Council Nominations Standing Committee- Mike Waplinton

Council approved

- Genevieve Glover as the Chair of the Diversity and Inclusivity Implementation Group.
- Co-option of Genevieve Glover on to Council for a period of two years.

Council approved Distinguished Membership for the following:

1. Geoff Irvine Championship Clubs
2. Charlie McGinty Warwickshire
3. Ian Metcalfe Cambridge University
4. Norman Robertson National Clubs Association
5. Andy Shorney Somerset
6. Ivor Smith Essex
7. Robin Wannop Durham

Paul Kaminski has been appointed Chair of Professional Competition Organising Appeals Committee.

Board Nominations Committee- Dominic Proctor

For 2020-21 work is being carried out to recruit:
Chair of the Board and Non-Executive Director (INED)
World Rugby Representative
Rugby Europe Representative
6 Nations Representative

European Professional Club Rugby (EPCR) Representative

Stephen Pearson was appointed as Board Representative on the Audit & Risk Committees

Professional Game Board- Phil de Glanville

Fortnightly conference calls have been held since April:

Topics of discussion include:

- Return to train/play.
- Professional Rugby Injury Surveillance Project (PRISP)
- Brexit Challenges
- Premiership Salary Cap

Chairman's Report- Andy Cosslett

Board continues to meet weekly discussing the effects of the Covid-19 crisis

The financial security of the Union is the main priority

Board Effectiveness Review was positive but challenges were identified.

Chairman thanked Rob Briers and Deborah Griffin for their contribution to the Board.

International Rugby Ticket Sub Committee (IRTSC) Update- Charlie McGinty

Council received a presentation from CMcG on the current issues facing the Union regarding the coming season's international match programme due to the restrictions caused by the Covid -19 crisis

Council approved the following recommendations:

1. A temporary suspension of current ticket distribution policy, ticket privileges and entitlements for the 2020-21 season.
2. A suspension of the supplementary ticket pot for clubs for 2020-21 season
3. The ability to prioritise the protection of ticketing income during the Covid-19 crisis
4. An understanding that once the c28,000 contracted tickets are fulfilled, the remaining tickets are prioritised to club and key stakeholders and, once a capacity of 50,000 is allowed, a more proportionate allocation model will be used.
5. To delegate a Working Group (to include IRTSC members) to determine the exact distribution of a more proportionate allocation model.

Other points to note:

- The Board will finalise ticket pricing once the Autumn fixtures and capacities are confirmed
- The IRTSC will be consulted on the final details of distributions amongst the Clubs and key rugby stakeholder groups
- Council will be informed of all decisions

Council Aide Memoire- Jeff Blackett

Council approved the Aide memoire for the season 2020-21

Council Members Valete

Peter Wheeler paid tribute to Chris Kelly, Damian Hopley, Geoff Irvine, Charlie McGinty, Ian Metcalfe, Norman Robertson, Andy Shorney, Ivor Smith and Robin Wannop all of whom will be leaving Council at the end of the this season.

Lancashire Appointments on RFU Council for 2020-21

Rob Briers-	Junior Vice President
Ken Andrews-	Secretary of Nominations Standing Committee Education and Age Grade Sub Committee RFU Representative on ERFSU
Dave Clarke-	Adult Competition Management Sub Committee

KA/RTJB

29.06.20

Appendix 2 Disciplinary Report

Introduction

Dave Clarke received a telephone call from somebody in the Manchester Referees Society who complained that the Disciplinary Committee was not doing enough to combat referee abuse. The purpose of this report is to refute this assertion.

Action Taken

The Committee have put the following actions into effect.

1. An additional 2 weeks added to all proven referee abuse charges. Cheshire and Yorkshire have also followed our lead.
2. We only deal with abuse cases at a hearing. The purpose of this is to explain to players' and club representative, if present, why abuse will not be tolerated.
3. We have started to raise a second charge if the referee is abused post sending off. This enables the Panel to add a consecutive suspension. For example a player would get 3 weeks for striking and 5 weeks for referee abuse making a total of 8 weeks.
4. We issued to all clubs a Technical Area Protocol to assist referees in dealing with non-players. However, I have to say from my experience most referees are ignoring it and are still allowing people to patrol the touchline.

Club

Dave's caller wanted the Committee to take disciplinary action against clubs who have players sent off for Match Official Abuse. This is not possible for two reasons which are as follows.

1. Unless all CB's did the same it would be totally unfair on our clubs.
2. Under the current World Rugby Regulations it would be extremely difficult to sanction clubs. If we did and the club appealed it would very likely be overturned. Another CB tried increasing sanctions against players and deducting points all of which were overturned on appeal.

Going Forward

It is the view of the Committee that the way forward is one of communication with clubs. I suggest that a joint team from the County and Referees Society arrange to visit a club who has had a player sent off or a coach sanctioned for abuse and aim to educate the players and club officials.