

## LANCASHIRE COUNTY RUGBY FOOTBALL UNION

### Minutes of the Board meeting held using Zoom Video Conference on Monday 10<sup>th</sup> February 2021

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

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

Apologies: J.S. Greenwood.

#### RFU CB Relationship Manager

A Soutar.

1. Criteria for the Mitsubishi Awards will focus on Beyond Rugby, which focuses on work in the local community and secondly Internal Resilience looking at club members who have ensured their clubs survive the lockdown, gaining grants etc.
2. A North Womens & Girls forum will be held on Zoom on Tue 23<sup>rd</sup> Feb.
3. RSA Underwriters are giving bursaries to make clubs safe post lockdown.
4. The Payment of Players scheme has been suspended for 1 season.
5. Govt, Winter Sports Survival Package launched. RFU Staff have been brought back from furlough to support clubs applying as there is only a 13 day window to apply for grants.

AS left the meeting.

#### Minutes of the last meeting.

The minutes of the Board meeting held on Monday 11<sup>th</sup> January, (previously circulated) were accepted and signed per procuracionem by the Honorary Secretary as a correct record.

#### Matters arising.

There were no matters arising.

#### Questions & Comments.

1. KA – Presented a headline report covering the RFU Council meeting which is attached as Appendix 1
2. MD – believed it was disrespectful of the Premiership clubs to cancel last minute a vote on ringfencing as the sponsors were unhappy with the possible outcome. Who is in control ?
3. MD – Where is the promised Future Competition Review Structure ? Lancashire Clubs need to see it to be able to make decisions to accept or not. If it is planned to be published three weeks before Council vote it does not give a long time for club consultation. RTJB commented that there is a danger council could reject the plan with KA adding that ADM Clubs seem to be happy where they are.
4. KA – Age Grade Playing Calendar is now out and being populated by the various sub committees. There will be a joint meeting of these in early March. The process is to be complete by early April then Approved by the Board (not the RFU).
5. RTJB – Tim Miller who is chairing the County Championship Review had requested all Counties to respond with their thoughts. Lancs & Yorks have already responded.
6. DC is to speak to Helen Duggan to add a Women & Girls statement.
7. PD – County Health check. There is £150k in banks as we are currently not spending, however we have been advised we will not be receiving the second tranche of LRP monies from the RFU.

8. PD - Government / RFU Winter Sports Survival Package has been given the greenlight to start and clubs have 13 days to apply for grants totalling £13 million. The criteria for applying is unknown and PD will attend a Criteria Call and forward information to our clubs.
9. MD – The second North forum had been held and was better than the first meeting. There is to be an RFU hosted North Forum to be held.
10. ASK – attended a meeting of 8 CBs on 15<sup>th</sup> December. All CBs are to write a D & I policy. We may need to recruit a volunteer who is passionate about this subject.
11. MD – ERCA Review had been accepted by the Membership and the review group had been asked to form an implementation Group. The changes revolve around the association becoming more a player forum.

Correspondence.

There was no correspondence appertaining to this meeting.

New Members.

No new memberships have been received.

50:50 Draw

Feb 21	Value
P Hanson	£53.40
B O'Driscoll	£8.90
D Herriman	£8.90
T. Alexander	£8.90
R. Thompson	£8.90

Date of next meeting.

Next Meeting: To be confirmed.

Any other business.

RTJB – President Jeff Blackett is planning 15 x 10 miles sponsored walks in CBs around the country to raise money for IPF. Lancs will plan to do a walk.

HHH – Melissa Mullins RFU Head of Digital Comms attended North Forum. Lancs are still ahead of curve and are most followed CB on Twitter. Podcast now has over 100 subscribers.

BHS – Disciplinary suspensions are to be carried over.

DC – Will clubs want to return to play in June or September ? MD to survey club Chairmen.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8:05pm

Neal Stone Chairman Date 8<sup>th</sup> March 2021  
 PP

## **Appendix 1**

### **Council Meeting 5<sup>th</sup> February 2021 Headlines**

The President reported the sad death of England International John Pullin and a moment of silence was held for him.

#### **Decision taken since the last RFU Council meeting.**

##### **Age Grade Playing Calendar 2021-22**

Council approved both the following recommendations:

- a. The recommended changes to the Age Grade Calendar for 2021-22; and
- b. Related changes to RFU Regulation 15 with effect from 1 August 2021.

\*All stakeholders in Lancashire have a copy of the AG Calendar and a meeting will be held at the being of March to agree the structure of the season 2021-22

#### **150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the RFU plans.**

Ed Curran gave a presentation outlining the planned events and activities to celebrate 150 years of the RFU. Covid-19 and lockdown has prevented many of the activities to be held at the stadium but a series of online videos and presentations have been produced.

- The creation of a heritage rose similar to the very first rose featured on the caps of the 1871 team and still features on players' caps today.
- A social media campaign on 26 January inspired by the World Rugby Museum's RFU at 150 exhibition, charting the evolution of the game in England over a century and a half.
- A physical version of the exhibition will be available in the World Rugby Museum at Twickenham Stadium at a later date.
- A commemorative 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary book celebrating a century and a half of England Rugby.
- England Rugby will launch a commemorative rose on 1 February.
- A limited-edition heritage kit.
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There will be other anniversary products launching throughout the year. The RFU will also look to celebrate its momentous milestone further with the community game and with supporters back at Twickenham when it is safe to do so.

CEO Report – Bill Sweeney

#### ***Player Welfare Update***

The governance and strategy of player welfare remains an important part of the overall strategy of the RFU. To maximise the chances of reducing player welfare issues and concerns this work should be seen as an investment in both the professional and community game. The head injury litigation overseen by the RFU's lawyers and insurers is on going.

#### ***Rugby Support Fund (Community, RFU & Championship)***

The RFU is continuing to engage with government around possible funding for RFU initiatives, the community game and the championship (with PRL engaging separately for the Premiership). Specifically, RFU are seeking clarification on the loans/grants balance, process for application and delivery and clear criteria for allocation.

The RFU and the government need to have agreed the amount, terms and distribution for funding. In terms of next steps, the RFU will make its case for funding to be a balance of grants and loans.

There is sensitivity about this with the Government restricting the communication. This funding is coming, the game needs to show patience and start planning for the needs based application.

#### *Community return to play*

The immediate focus and task is to inform and support clubs by interpreting government advice and it will also be important to keep players, referees, coaches and volunteers engaged through this lockdown.

Webinars and video content are being worked on which will be rolled out to maintain levels of engagement

#### *British & Irish Lions Tour update*

A firm decision is not likely to be made until end May providing as much time as possible to make an informed decision.

The plans include: going ahead with the tour in South Africa either with crowds or not; postponing the tour to 2022; moving the tour back to 2025, South Africa touring the UK & Ireland, or outright cancellation.

#### *Ticketing and Hotel update*

Options are being considered in regard to the ticketing, including enacting the 2020/21 prices (that were not enacted last season), adding a £2 IPF donation to each ticket and the removal of the supplemental pot.

In regard to the status of the Marriott Hotel, which is currently closed until (earliest) April 2021, this will continue to be reviewed

#### **Future Competitions Structure- Stephen Pearson**

After the 27 November Council meeting, FCS group members were appointed to convene and oversee sub-groups in key areas where a final recommendation, or further detail, is to be agreed. These areas were:

- a. The overall league structure / travel
- b. Cup rugby
- c. Organising committee/geographical organisation
- d. Reintegration of clubs recently opting out i.e. Lancashire
- e. Inclusion of Lower XV's

Council received a presentation on the evening before Council and debated the key areas where work is still on going. FCS still envisages that this will support a final recommendation at April Council meeting.

#### **Moratorium on relegation from the Premiership and Championship**

Earlier this season, the Council agreed to remove promotion and relegation throughout the Community Game in season 2020/21.

This following proposal sets out the rationale to extend this removal throughout the game in season 2020/21, with the exception of promotion from the Championship to the Premiership.

It also sets out next steps for the possibility of a longer-term change to the mechanic for promotion and relegation in the professional game.

For decision:

The Council is asked to approve:

##### *1. Relegation in season 2020/21*

- a. That at the end of season 2020/21 there is no relegation from the Premiership into the Championship, and no relegation from the Championship into National One;
- b. That the drafting of the relevant regulation changes be delegated to the Governance Standing Committee.

##### *2. Future promotion and relegation*

That, in the event that wider requirements for promotion from the Championship and Premiership can be put in place based on consultation with Premiership and Championship Clubs and a suitable calendar can be arranged, then:

a. the regulations for season 2021/22 will include these requirements (but if not, then the mechanism for promotion to and relegation from the Premiership will be as currently happens); and

b. the RFU Regulations (including the Premiership Regulations) will state that the Premiership season 2022/23 will finish no later than 20 May 2023.

Following a debate on Thursday evening on the issue, Council received a late notice on Friday morning that Premiership Rugby requested more time to conclude its consultation with commercial partners therefore the vote will now be delayed. This will now be presented to Council for a vote in April.

#### **Governance Standing Committee report**

Decisions made on:

- Cancellation of the Community Game clusters. It agreed to delegate to DOCs and CBs to arrange any fixtures as and when any rugby can return during the 2020/21 season.
- approved draft regulations for the Championship for season 2020/21. This is built on a shortened programme, with the league broken into two conferences, with playoffs to determine placings.
- Disapply the requirement for clubs to make declarations under the payment of players regulations for season 2020/21 only.
- The Club Financial Viability Group agreed that Paula Carter would chair it, and other members would be added with the assistance of the Nominations Committees
- The Age Grade playing calendar for 2021/22 was agreed by electronic decision prior to the Council meeting.

#### **Championship Regulations 20-21**

##### *Structure*

Operating under the elite sport framework, the current proposal is that the competition will be split into two conferences.

Teams will play home and away within their conference producing 10 competition rounds, subsequent to which there will be a two-leg play off final between the winner of each conference to determine the team that will earn promotion to the Premiership for the 2021/22 season.

The setting of the conferences will be determined by standings when the 2019/20 season ended in March 2020; with Saracens taking the place of Newcastle Falcons and Richmond replacing Yorkshire Carnegie.

Therefore, the two Conferences will be:

Conference A: Saracens, Cornish Pirates, Ampthill, Jersey Reds, London Scottish, Hartpury  
Conference B: Ealing Trailfinders, Coventry, Nottingham, Bedford Blues, Doncaster Knights, Richmond

##### **Council:**

1. Approved in principle the proposed changes to the Championship Regulations;
2. Grant delegated authority to the Governance Standing Committee to finalise and/or amend the Championship regulations and RFU regulations as required; and
3. Grant delegated authority to the Governance Standing Committee to approve such law variations as may be proposed (if applicable) to apply to the Championship in season 20-21.

##### **Council:**

1. Approved the disapplication of the relevant provisions of RFU Regulation 7.4 so that clubs at Level 3 and below are not required to submit a declaration in order to be eligible for RFU Funding; and
2. Granted delegated authority to the Governance Standing Committee to make such amendments as are required in order to reflect and implement the above.

### **Council Nominations Standing Committee report**

Nominations have been discussing:

- Board Size and Composition
- Subcommittee composition and term limits
- Council representative on National Youth Council (NYC) and mentors for NYC members
- Volunteer Recognition Working Group members
- Club Financial Viability Group members

### **Board Nominations Committee Report**

Discussions on going.

- Recruitment of Chair and INED
- Board size and composition

Appointments to:

- Football Foundation (RFF) Trustees- Roger Clarke (Kent) and Kirsty Marlor (RNRFU)
- Rugby Europe ExCo – Rob Udwin (Middlesex) appointed for four year term

### **D&I Implementation Working Group**

The Group continues to meet every c.6 weeks and is now focused on the detailed implementation of the recommendations. The 10 recommendations are being prioritised and therefore, at each Council Meeting this season, Council will receive the detail of 1 to 3 recommendations for feedback and input at each meeting.

The focus for the February 2021 Council Meeting is:

- **Recommendation 2** led by Waheed Aslam - Working practices, location and timings of meetings of RFU standing committees, subcommittees and task & finish/working groups should be reviewed to enable a more diverse group of members to participate.
- **Recommendation 6** led by Geraldine Brown - CMs and CB officers and committee members to provide D&I data on a confidential basis to allow progress to be tracked and trends monitored anonymously. 2 stakeholder focuses: 1. Council 2. CBs
- **Recommendation 7** led by Waheed Aslam - Profiles of all Council members, Committee members etc to be freely available on the internet to ensure visibility and accessibility and to show the make-up of Council and working groups.

### **Men's International Ticket Pricing - Season 2021/22 –Mike Procter, Simon Massie-Taylor**

**Recommendation:** assuming full crowds return in time for the Autumn Internationals, the Executive and IRTSC endorse keeping the 2021/22 base prices the same as the previously approved 2020/21 prices. This recommendation can be reviewed in March/ early April prior to going on sale.

**Recommendation:** It has been recommended a £2 compulsory donation on tickets for the 2021/22 season, with clear messaging both to the consumer but also the IPF Trustees that this is not a permanent decision and will be reviewed this time next year (note: this could be in line with the voluntary donation option, assuming this option become logistically possible)

**Recommendation:** given the “self-taxing” issue with the Supplemental Pot and furthermore the significant reduction in funds available for strategic spend on the Community Game, it is recommend removing the Supplement Pot mechanic entirely and redirecting the funding to our identified strategic objectives. The two-tier pricing mechanic would remain. This would release £0.9m from the 2021/22 Community Rugby budget.

*Summary of recommendations for Council endorsement*

1. Keep 2021/22 base pricing the same as 2020/21
2. Add £2 compulsory donation to IPF with review next year
3. Indefinitely remove the Supplement Pot.

**Financial Report- Month 5- Sue Day**

Sue day presented the paper on 2020-21 Month 5 Report  
"No money in the pot"

K.Andrews, D Clarke & RTJ Briers 09.02.21