

**MINUTES OF A GENERAL MEETING AND
FINANCIAL AGM OF
LANCASHIRECOUNTY RUGBY FOOTBALL UNION LTD
HELD AT PRESTON GRASSHOPPERS RFC 24TH NOVEMBER 2021**

President Gill Burns MBE welcomed everyone to the meeting, noting that it had continued to be a difficult time but Rugby was back and hopefully would go on to improve even more.

1. **Apologies:**

John Dewhurst, Noel Atkinson, Phil Mahon AA, Steve Bailey, E Neely , John Bradbury , Geoff Parks , Malcolm Worsley, Dennis Woodcock, Mike Dale , Helen Duggan, Mick Nichols , Gary Morgan , John Jeskins , Paul Westhead, Tim Stirk, Ernie Haynes, Bob Wilkinson, Ian Spivey. Christine Spivey, Dave Hodgson, Steve Willocks, Martin Griffiths, John Greenwood , Ken Potter , Frank Morgan ,Nick Ingham, Adrian Goulding.

2. **Minutes of the AGM and General Meeting held on 11th August at Tyldesley RUFC.**

These had been circulated and were accepted.

3. **Matters arising**

No matters arising.

4. **Financial AGM and Presentation of Accounts for 2019-2020**

Paul Deakin, the County Treasurer presented the accounts to the meeting. There would have to be some cost cutting but Lancashire would still be supporting Community Rugby.

- The Lancashire Academy had been put on hold.
- Mark Nelson had stepped down.
- The cost of the Admin had been halved.
- The cost of County Rugby had also been halved – a challenge for Howard.
- £10,000.00 had been ringfenced for schools
- £10,000.00 had been ringfenced for Women and Girls Rugby
- Money had also been ringfenced for Volunteers/Safeguarding.

There had been an increase in Sponsorship via Club Champions, £3K had been invested and it remained to be seen what the outcome was.

At the beginning of lockdown Lancashire had met with Steve Grainger and Bill Sweeney , they had said thanks for everything but at the moment there was no money. They did however like what Lancashire do.

The emphasis need to be on player retention and recruitment which were formerly roles done by the RFU however it was now the role of the County to do this.

The intention was to stay in close contact with clubs , keep an eye on the Finance , engage with clubs and do some 1:1 Health checks with them.

There were no questions.

5. RFU Representatives Report

The report had been circulated and KA/DC offered to answer any questions that may arise:

Revenue for the RFU had 'dried up' but was now getting back to playing to a full stadium. Noted the following highlights.

- Women's rugby was growing and the Women's Rugby World Cup had attracted a lot of attention. It was intended that England should bid for the Women's World Cup in 2025. At the moment we were the 'preferred bidder' and it was seen as an opportunity to grow the game.
- £18M had been set up as a survival fund but this had eventually grown to £30M
- Future Competitions structure was being looked at and DC would speak more about that later.
- There was a big change to the Girls Age Grade Rugby and more detail was contained in the circulated report.
- There was a drive to look at the diversity of the RFU Council, they are trying to make the Council look different with some members being co opted onto the board to add to the conversation. One or two new women had been appointed.
- The appendix is the Finance report but there is a discrepancy between then and now.

Mark Nelson raised a query about the County Championship., are we losing sight of tradition in order to create something new ?

KA replied that the County Championship had not been discussed and it was yet to be decided about the future. MN requested that the message be taken back to Twickenham that Twickenham is the game's 'clubhouse' and clubs and Counties would like the format to continue.

KA replied that he had spoken to other Counties and there was an appetite for it to continue , not only players but also volunteers et al and that message was being taken back to Twickenham.

Alan James raised a query regarding the future of U18 s rugby , the question had been raised at the Halbro Colts Leagues AGM , that Colts felt they wanted a vehicle for County Rugby but this seemed to be being removed ?. There was a perception that the RFU had a hidden agenda to do away with the U18s. Youngsters were now expected to go either to a Professional Academy or along the Aspirational Pathway. England U16 had already gone.

It was felt amongst the meeting that the message needed to go to Twickenham that we wanted to keep the U18 , AJ realised there were financial constraints but looking at the success of the past then we should carry on. Gill Burns then noted that Raffi Quirke was a product of the system we had in place , KA noted that clubs such as Broughton Pk who had brought him through the ranks should be recognised.

There then followed further discussion around the County Championship, it was noted that all the Lancashire Reps were fully behind keeping the County Championship going but there was a need for all the other Counties to also support it.

ISB then asked that the Success of the Inner Warriors campaign should be recognised , the prospect of hosting the Women's World Cup was exciting and the response amongst the participants had been very supportive and enthusiastic.

Peter Hughes then raised a query about the Young Volunteers CB , the project seemed to have gone flat, Lancashire had never had anyone on that Council and if the volunteers were not coming through the clubs then where would our future administrators come from ?

KA was keen to promote this as then the Young Volunteers could be put forward for the National Youth Council.

6. Committee Reports

- a) Management Board. All minutes were on the website, No questions.
- b) Finance and Funding Committee. Already covered in the Financial AGM previous to this meeting.
- c) Disciplinary. The main concern at the moment is around the problem of Referee Abuse. There are currently four cases of Juniors abusing the referee and there was a need to get the message across to Junior Chairmen and Coaches that Referee Abuse will not be tolerated. There is a message posted on Social Media at the moment by the referees which has had 25,000 views so hopefully this will help. There is also Police involvement regarding a Colts game but cannot comment further as it is Sub Judice.
- d) Governance. Nothing to report.
- e) Rugby Development. HH gave a precis of what was happening.
 - There was some traction with the U15/U16
 - U15 this season would be playing in the DPP
 - There is no U15 squad this season
 - U16 squad will be picked from the DPP. There will be two games against Cheshire. 5th Dec and a game in February. Yorkshire are not involved.
 - U14 DPP numbers are down by 250 as players have not been playing because of the pandemic.
 - The Lancashire Royals have been inactive but it is hoped that there will be a games on 27th December. Any club at Level 7 can nominate a back and a forward.
- f) Club and Community Committee. Steve Blackburn gave a report saying that it was good to get back to rugby. The Safeguarding Conference would be happening again and this will include a section on the importance of Mental Health. No venue had yet been set. It was also hope that the President's meetings would also return.
- g) Competitions Committee. The ADM Leagues were running fine , some lower XV were struggling to fulfil a fixture so that may have to go down as a concede. There have been a lot of postponed games because of Covid. The Cup Competition was due to happen this weekend. Fred's Leagues were also going well with only 5 games being cancelled. KA reported that the Independent schools seemed to be doing Ok but this was not the case with state schools. BH reported that the Cup finals would take place at the beginning of May.

7. Playing

- a) Senior Rugby. The County Championships would resume in May with details still to be confirmed.
- b) U20s. There had been trials involving 67 players from 18 Clubs. The fixtures were:
23rd January A Cheshire
6th February H Yorkshire
- c) U18s There had been two trials involving 137 Player am/pm which had resulted in a squad of 27 players.
HH raised the point that the U18 Manager had had some abuse from parents regarding selection. However all the selectors had made the same choice of squad, identical in fact which goes to show that the selectors do know what they are doing. The U18 Coach is valued and is a good motivator.
- d) U16s There would be two games against Cheshire.
- e) Women and Girls. The Age Grade s were changing to U12/U16/U18 from U13/U15. The priority was to set up workshop to organise information throughout the County. Information was also in the Community Game Update. Women's County game was equivalent to the DPP and many girls had gone on to eg Amy Dale, Lizzy Duffy, Sarah Beckett and Holly Aitchison. The U15 and U18 had moved to later in the season playing in a festival format. U15 in February and March and U18 in April and May.

8. North Division

DC reported that Return to Rugby was still beset with problems. Games called off because of Covid were rearranged but if a game was called off because of Non Covid e.g. unable to raise a team then the game was not rearranged . This rule was applied throughout the Country.

Problems continued regarding travel to the IOM, In Sept/Oct it is not possible to travel to the IOM there and back in a day. Carlisle had travelled and it had cost them approximately £7000.00 The schedule has not changed but the IOM are insisting that all visitors are double vaccinated.

Broughton Pk brought up the situation that they were currently in, there had been suggestions to reverse the fixtures early in the season but Douglas had refused. David Barnes from the RFU was no involved in trying to get the fixture played , Ken Potter the League Secretary was also involved and all were finding the situation very frustrating as was trying to get hold of anyone from the RFU to speak to!. DC admitted that the situation at the moment regarding IOM because of reduced travel funding etc was a 'bit of a shambles'.

DC then moved on to discuss the New Structure , the proposal to accept Lower XV had been 'passed' by the RFU but every County is to be allowed a dispensation not to allow Lower XV in their Leagues. The League structure that was now available was for illustration only .e.g. 4 Leagues at L6 would change to 8 Leagues at Level 6 , there was some concern about the impact of Level 4 moving to Level 5 . Level 7 will change. Cumbria will play in a League on their own, but all this was depending on

what was going to happen with the Championship , many members expressed the opinion that this was disgrace that it had not been sorted and consequently neither had anything else.

The above should be decided by January and would go to Council in February. The vote of the clubs in each CB had to be a 2/3 majority and clubs would be asked what they wanted to do.

A letter would be sent to clubs asking about Lower XV being accepted into the RFU leagues at L7.

9. **Correspondence**

There was nothing appertaining to this meeting.

10. **Date and Time of Next meeting**

Wednesday 23rd March 2022

Liverpool St Helens RFC at 7.00pm

11. **AOB**

- There was query re any information regarding Baths from the RFU , it was noted that showers were acceptable. There was a section on the RFU website regarding Return to Rugby following Covid and there may be some information on there.
- PH queried what was happening with regard to a club in Yorkshire. He was reassured the situation was being discussed but no solution had been arrived at yet.
- PH asked about how new people were being encouraged on to committees so that their views were being represented,

The meeting closed at 9.15pm. Gill thanked everyone for attending.

Attendees:

Gill Burns	President
Alan James	Vice President
Ken Andrews	Past President
Tommy Hughes	Past President
Steve Blackburn	Past President
Dave Clarke	Past President
Mark Downs	Hon Secretary
Paul Deakin	Hon Treasurer
Howard Hughes	Director of Rugby Development
J R S Greenwood	Director
Gary Morgan	Director
C J Smail	Director of Finance
D Hardy	Aldwinians
A Marsland	Broughton Pk
M Seers	Broughton
D Edmondson	Eccles
T Mc Clure	Firwood Waterloo
S Doherty	Fleetwood
M Nelson	Fylde
D Todd	Heaton Moor
B Hurst	Littleboro
J Williams	LSH
A James	Lostock
I Mac	North Manchester
R Heptonstall	Oldham
B Stephenson	Ormskirk
G Winstanley	Orrell
I Crossley	Preston Grasshoppers
S Blackburn	Rochdale
D Clarke	Wigan
A James	Colts
J Powell	Leagues
F Swarbrick	Leagues
I S Brown	Individual Members
A Clarke	Minutes