

**MINUTES OF GENERAL MEETING OF**  
**LANCASHIRE COUNTY RUGBY FOOTBALL UNION LTD**  
**HELD AT LIVERPOOL ST HELENS ON 15<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2023**

President Brian Stott welcomed everyone to the meeting , he asked everyone to be upstanding for a minute's silence for Frank Morgan , Dave Hodgson who were both Past Lancashire Presidents and Bob Grant , who had served as the County Treasurer who had all passed away recently,

1. **Apologies:**

Malcolm Phillips, Kate Bennata, Alan James, Alec Graham, Tony McClure, Nick Ingham, Geoff Perks, Malcolm Worsley, Ken Potter, Carol Baker.

2. **Minutes of the General Meeting and the Financial AGM held on Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2022 at Chorley RUFC**

These are on the County Website.

3. **Matters Arising:**

There were no matters arising.

4. **RFU Representatives Report:**

The report had been circulated by e mail prior to the meeting. KA also addressed the meeting to answer any queries. He opened his address by describing how the previous weekend he had hosted Charlie McNamara from Wythenshawe who had been awarded the Honda Value the Volunteer Award for his work that he had done with his club. KA thanked Gill Burns MBE who was the Lancashire Director of Volunteering for all the work that she had done in supporting this project.

KA then addressed the room with regards to the previous meeting that had been held with the clubs regarding the Tackle Height situation. They had been tasked to take the comments back form the meeting back to the RFU. They had fed back that the initial communications from the RFU had been unsatisfactory and that the RFU decision needed to be rescinded., but as stated previously the vote could not be rescinded without the support of 20 other Council Members. The message from the RFU was that the new tackle height law should have minimum effect upon current laws.

The next stage was decribed in Appendix 2 which had been attached to the report that had been circulated. The consultation was now ongoing and needed to involve a wide range of views from all areas of the game.

There was an open survey , that had launched on 01.03.23 and was now live on line.

There would be online focus groups in addition to 30 F2F meetings with the first meeting being held at Sedgely Pk RUFC on 30<sup>th</sup> March 2023.

MD had e mailed all the clubs to let them know that there were 55 places available at the meeting. He had had replies from 27 clubs. In addition the invites had also been populated with the W and G section . To date 35 clubs had not sent anyone.

The new laws would be written within the guidance of the new tackle height laws.

KA informed the meeting that on the 5<sup>th</sup> February WR had been in contact with the RFU and told them to go ahead with the new guidance and laws. The WR recommendation was that the tackle should be in the 'belly area'

KA then asked if any questions.

Tim Harper from Manchester raised the question of WR saying go ahead with the Community game but Elite Players would be playing a different game, M and J want to play like the Elite game.

KA replied that there was a meeting in May to discuss the matter further but it had not been ruled out that the tackle height would be lowered to below the sternum.

Nth Manchester asked if it was possible to join the focus groups or the meeting at Sedgeley but the MD informed him that the deadline was two weeks ago.

JB then asked if he could address the meeting, BS asked if it was a question about the report. JB then spoke about what had happened when the two Council members had gone back to the RFU, as Staffordshire had asked their Council Member to go back to the RFU to get the vote rescinded then why had our Council members not done the same? KA replied that as explained earlier they had gone back to the RFU, passed on the views of the clubs but as stated earlier and at a previous meeting they did not have the support of 20 Council Members. BS then closed down the discussion in order to move the meeting on.

#### **5. RFU Representatives Selection Vote:**

MD explained the process. There were 4 candidates. Each candidate had submitted a written 'application' stating their reason for wanting to be part of the RFU Council. Each club that was eligible to vote had two votes which should be marked on the voting paper. Each paper had all four candidates on it.

There would be two volunteers to act as independent scrutineers.

Ian Scott Brown                      Lancashire

Gopal Malhotra                      Nth Manchester RUFC

The reason for the vote was that Ken Andrews had completed his 9 years, Dave Clarke had also completed his 3 years and so had to be re-elected if he was to continue.

The 4 candidates were:

Jonathan Beardmore      Didsbury Toc H RUFC

Steve Blackburn              Rochdale RUFC

Dave Clarke                      Wigan RUFC

Paul Deakin                      Leigh RUFC

The club representatives then came up to the table to receive a ballot paper. Each club rep was then marked off on the list to ensure that each club only received one paper.

The result was as follows:

Dave Clarke                    31 votes (72%)

Paul Deakin                    30 votes (71%)

Jonathan Beardmore    8 votes (18.5%)

Steve Blackburn            4 votes (9.5%)

The vote of 31 had been because one paper had only one vote recorded on it.

There was a 65% turn out of clubs eligible to vote.

Dave Clarke and Paul Deakin were duly elected.

6. **Committee Reports:**

a) Management Board.

All Board minutes are on the County Website. No matters arising.

b) Finance and Funding Committee.

PD reported that the School Programme was running well and up to now had involved 2.300 children. It was hoped to continue this over the next couple of seasons. Funds were still available if any clubs wanted to run an event to promote rugby. Looking forward to the County Championship Campaign and hoping to have a successful campaign.

c) Disciplinary Committee

There was a growing problem with Racial abuse in Manchester , mainly to do with inappropriate phrases. The message needs to be sent out that this is not acceptable and should not be viewed as a joke and it would not be tolerated.

There was also a problem with Lower XV playing U17 in adult games. They cannot play until they are 17 , any injuries would result in a very hefty legal bill , not to mention the fact that someone may suffer a serious injury.

There was also a query about the new laws and whether there would be any leniency, eg in the past a club who had 4 red cards would be penalised further. BS explained that a matrix was used to ensure fairness across all clubs eg a club running one team with 4 red cards would be treated differently to a club with 4 red cards and 4 teams.

There was then a query regarding players in the technical area , at the moment it seemed to be working well but who's responsibility was it to ensure that the right people were in the right area. BS replied it was the club's responsibility to 'police' the area.

d) Governance Committee.

No report at this meeting.

e) Rugby Development Committee:

There was currently a Schools Project running that involved 18 clubs. If anyone else wanted to be involved they should contact PD.

Last year Lancashire had run a Coaching Conference where 95 people had registered to attend, 35 had turned up, this had led to money being wasted. The coaches last year had been Warren Spragg and Brian Ashton. This year was being planned but it was being considered whether to split it into 2, 1 North and 1 South but this was still being discussed.

f) Club and Community Rugby Committee:

There was little to report. It had been the intention to mirror what the RFU were doing at their event at Sedgley Pk but it had been decided to put this back and then do something aimed at the M and J Section, linking to the problem of Referee Abuse. BS would then have an opportunity to speak to the coaches.

g) Competitions Committee:

The SF stage of the Competition had been disrupted by the weather but the games should be played by Easter.

7. **Playing:**

a) Senior XV

Due to play Hertford A then Cheshire and Yorkshire.

Steve Rigby is standing down as Team Manager and his place will be taken by Guy Lovegreen who is from Sedgley Pk.

b) U18

The U18 had had a very good season with several boys going onto represent the North. The U18 Girls had only conceded one try.

The U17 nominations were now being looked for and their competition would take place in May.

c) U20

The programme was due to start on Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> March, we had picked our strongest squad but the eligibility rules had changed and players cannot now be picked from higher than L5. This was perceived to be a bad move as it meant that players from L6 clubs who may be playing in the 2<sup>nd</sup> XV at that club were denied the right to represent their County. KA and DC had voted against but other CBs had voted for it.

d) Schools:

KA gave a report for Robbie Jones who was involved with the U18 Schools Finals that were being held at Saracens.

There was still a struggle with regard to Independent Schools v State Schools. The U13-U15 festivals had been a success with 34 teams in all age groups. The U13 had involved 42 schools of which 6 schools were primarily soccer schools.

In the National Cup St Marys lost to Harrogate.

There was also now an Islamic school involved in playing rugby on Fridays who had arranged it so that the players could still join in prayers and it was hoped that they would enter the schools competitions in the future.

e) Women and Girls.

It had been a successful season , the U18 would be playing at Preston Grasshoppers, the U20s had had players move into the England Squad .

The DPP had a new system in place and the coaches jobs were currently being advertised.

The U12 age group was proving to be the closest group in club rugby.

The Senior XV selection process was currently going on.

8. **League Report and North Report:**

Dave Clarke addressed the meeting before starting his report by thanking the clubs for their support in his re election as RFU Council Member. He considered it a great honour and would endeavour to do the best for the clubs in Lancashire.

WE were currently coming to the end of the current season and recently the weather had caused problems, particularly as League games needed to be played but the Papa Johns Cup was due to start.

Easter Saturday may now be deemed to be a League Saturday.

The Papa John Regional draw was now on the North Website but there had been problems as 4 clubs had withdrawn as the draw was taking place.

The Proposed Structured Season had been released and had kept the cup games at the end of the season. The North ROC had already discussed the format and it was felt that the clubs views should be asked with regard to a Cup Competition running through the season. Several clubs had indicated that they did not like their season ending in March and wanted to go back to the 'old system'

JB commented that it should not be written off just yet , DC replied that it was not being 'written off ' but he was asking the clubs what did they want? The Competition Committee need to know the clubs views by the end of March

Chris Smail suggested that clubs should be written to ask their views as a show of hands would not perhaps be the easiest way at the moment.

MD would write to all clubs.

The Cup Competition that was a National Competition would give clubs the opportunity to play in other parts of the Country. There would be a travel allowance which would start at 98 miles round trip.

9. **Honours Tie**

Allan Bower was awarded his Honours Tie by Brian Stott in recognition of services to Lancashire County RFU M and J Section.

10. **Correspondence:**

There was no correspondence appertaining to this meeting.

11. **New Members:**

No new members to report.

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

Annual General Meeting

Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> June 2023

Tyldesley RUFC at 6.30pm

13. **AOB:**

Tim Harper, Manchester RFC queried how the RFU Council Position had been advertised. MD replied the information had been sent to all clubs and had also been posted on the website. He also commented 'how do we implement a change if the Council Members cannot be mandated'.

IS (Mini & Junior) queried a tournament that was going on that was being run by Leicester Tigers. Lancashire M and J were currently organising a tournament but some teams had dropped out to go and play in the competition run by Leicester Tigers. There was some concern if that should be going on because of dates etc . HH and IS would investigate.

**Attendees:**

Brian Stott	President
Gill Burns MBE	Past President
Peter Hughes BEM	Past President
Dave Herriman	Past President
Ken Andrews	Past President/RFU Representative
RTJ Briers	Past President
Dave Herriman	Past President
Tommy Hughes	Past President
S R Blackburn	Past President
Dave Clarke	Past President/RFU Representative
Mark Downs	Hon. Secretary
Paul Deakin	Hon Treasurer
Howard Hughes	Director of Rugby Development
D Hardy	Aldwinians RUFC
Allan Bower	Ashton U Lyne RUFC
S Bailey	Aspull RUFC
E Wiles	Birchfield RUFC
Mark Brocklehurst	Bolton RUFC
M F Seers	Broughton RUFC
A Marsland	Broughton Pk FC
E Haynes	Burnage RUFC
M Nichols	Burnley RUFC
Owen Williams	Chorley RUFC
Bob Wilkinson	Clitheroe RUFC
Ian Bailey	Didsbury Toc H RUFC
Don Edmondson	Eccles RFC
D Todd	Heaton Moor RUFC
Tommy Hughes	Leigh RUFC
B Hurst	Littleborough RUFC
G Morgan	Liverpool Collegiate RUFC
Ian Harrison	Liverpool St Helens RFC
Clive Ennis	Manchester and District Referees
Tim Harper	Manchester RFC
Ed McCarthy	Mossley Hill RUFC
Gopal Malhotra	Nth Manchester
R Heptonstall	Oldham RUFC
G Winstanley	Orrell RUFC
K Brierley	Preston Grasshoppers RFC
SR Blackburn	Rochdale RUFC
R Berry	Sedgley Pk RUFC
P Merriman	Sefton RUFC
Paul Andrews	Southport RUFC
Barry Cook	Tarleton RUFC
H Hughes	Tyldesley RUFC
Andrew Perry	Vale of Lune RUFC
J Bradbury	West Pk RUFC

Martin Griffiths  
D Clarke  
H Duggan  
C Spivey  
Dave Herriman  
I Spivey  
I S Brown  
Anne Clarke

Widnes RUFC  
Wigan RUFC  
Women and Girls  
Safeguarding  
Schools  
Mini and Junior  
Individual Member  
Minutes.