

LANCASHIRE COUNTY RUGBY FOOTBALL UNION

Minutes of the Board Meeting

Tuesday 2nd May 2023

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

In Attendance:

Apologies: Messrs, K. Andrews, B.H. Stott, G.J. Morgan & A. Soutar.

CB Relationship Managers Report.

No Report.

DC had received an email from AS regarding the RFU Board meeting at Sale FC on 17th May to check the list of invitees.

Minutes of the last meeting.

The minutes of the Board meeting held on Monday 3rd April 2023, (previously circulated) were accepted and signed as a correct record.

Matters arising.

There were no matters arising.

RFU Report.

KA reported by email (Appendix 1):

1. DC noted that the recent Council Meeting was very limited in its topics. Mainly the proposals to affect the Championship which was defeated and the recent finance issues.
2. There will be an estimated £7m loss this season due to increased utility costs and now Autumn Internationals due to the World Cup Cycle. This loss was budgeted and is but at a higher value.
3. Twickenham will be hosting more Womens games after the success of the France international in the Womens 6 Nations.
4. The professional game agreement is not progressing.
5. MJW questioned why there are now 2 different tackle laws and would the Professional game follow suit in lowering the tackle height. The professional game is run by World Rugby and not the RFU so the decision on this is outside remit.

Disciplinary.

BHS provided a financial statement for the season (Appendix 2)

Finance.

PD Circulated the costs for the season to date.

County Championship Budgets.

1. PD – we are at budget to date and will need to draw on £5k from reserves. PD also requesting a further £10k from the Youth Trust Fund. RTJB commented that we need to have a look at the trustees list for the Youth Trust Fund as several were looking to retire.
2. At the recent Cheshire game MJW asked how they funded their campaign. The host clubs cover the costs. We should look to do this for future seasons starting with the U20s and Women.
3. DC – The small survey recently completed by Lancashire for the RFU on Clubs priorities for next season had produced the top 5 priorities as Player retention, Junior transition, facilities, more professional staff in person involvement & increased funding.

U20s

HH reported

1. This seasons County Championship had new eligibility rules so that players were only selected from level 5 and below. Lancashire have been critical of this but have stuck to the rules.
2. Over 50% of Counties in the competition (10) have been sanctioned for playing ineligible players.
3. Lancashire were heavily defeated by Durham. With the upcoming game against Yorkshire we have only 2 front row players fit and the suggestion is to give Yorkshire the walk over. **Agreed.**
4. We will advise Yorkshire of this decision and formally complain to the Competitions department.
5. Ironically, the council member pushing the new regulations, Gary Henderson, is Surrey who have also been sanctioned for ineligibility.
6. MJW – this regulation will drive players away and needs to be addressed.

Annual General Meeting.

1. All directors present with the exception of KA were willing to be nominated to stay in post for 2023-2024. DC was nominated by PD & JTH for the post of Chairman.
2. MD asked the Board to give some consideration to the next Vice President to be added to the list.

Annual Dinner and Awards

1. MD had circulated a list of past Award recipients and a discussion ensued on the recipients for this season. All award winners were decided.

Correspondence.

None appertaining to this meeting.

New Members.

A new team had applied for membership. Lancaster Lionesses are the non BUCS team of Lancaster University Womens Club and want to enter the Womens RFU leagues. This was approved by email correspondence within the Board.

50:50 Draw

May 23	Value
P Hanson	£53.40
P Hanson	£8.90
P Hughes	£8.90
D Welsh	£8.90
AT Rowntree	£8.90

Date of next meeting.

Next Meeting: 6:30 pm on Monday 5th June 2023 at Liverpool St Helens.

Any other business.

- GAB – 2 Honda Volunteer evenings had been sorted.
- CAB – had attended Age Grade Finals day at Eccles, Phil Lord mentioned as doing a great job within the M&J Committee.
- CAB – Website development is in abeyance.
- CAB – visited Chorley RUFC where improvements are needed in governance.
- HH – Combi Cup finals held at West Park which were well organised with a big attendance.
- HH – There are now not enough clubs in the Combi League (4) and they will go back to NOWIRUL. Thanks to Chris Farmiloe of TMV for running leagues over last 2 seasons.
- HH – Leagues have been published awaiting RFU ratification.
- MD – looking for volunteers to help with the Awards Dinner organisation.
- MD – We have 10 guests going to the Senior Cheshire Mens game.

Meeting ended at 8:15pm

D. 

Chairman

Date

5-6-23



LANCASHIRE COUNTY RUGBY FOOTBALL UNION LTD
Board Meeting 02 May 2023
RFU Representatives Report

Notes from RFU Council meeting held at Twickenham, on 21st April 2023

Red Roses

Congratulations to the Red Roses on becoming the Six Nations Champions last Saturday in front of a world record 58,500 crowd at Twickenham.

Results:	v Scotland	58-7
	v Italy	65-5
	v Wales	59-3
	v Ireland	48-0
	v France	38-33

CEO Report-Bill Sweeney

Report containing an update from the CEO on strategic matters for the RFU and our game.

Topics covered:

Community Game Outlook:

- Discussion on the Community Game Delivery and Engagement & Representation Strategies.

Adult Male Recovery Plan

- 'Play together Stay together' campaign which supports the adult male recovery plan is reaching its conclusion
- The national promotion for the 'Twickenham Takeover' day for Lower XV's has concluded and clubs qualifying by virtue of their playing volumes this year, subsequently winning the opportunity to play at Twickenham on 1 May

Professional Game Agreement

- RFU Executive have been working with PRL to develop potential solutions for the future of the professional men's game through a number of working groups examining EPS requirements, player development and welfare, domestic competition structures, system governance and system finance.
- While good progress has been made in discussions across some of the EPS, competition structure and governance requirements, conversations are still ongoing regarding the optimal player development model and the financial sustainability of the system.
- Both the RFU and PRL are committed to creating a sustainable, long-term partnership that is mutually beneficial. However, it is clear this may take more time than outlined in the aspirational timeline, to work to June 2023 to finalise an agreement.

England Men's Senior Team Six Nations Debrief

- Given the changes in the coaching team in December following the Autumn Series, Steve Borthwick and his staff had an incredibly short lead into what was a challenging Six Nations.
- Undoubtedly the experiences will have fast tracked the development of the group and their requirements leading into RWC 2023 and beyond.
- The opening defeat to Scotland was disappointing, as it was a game we largely controlled and after dispatching an improving Italy followed by a win against Wales in Cardiff, the French match was a huge disappointment.
- The final performance against Ireland in Dublin, despite being down to 14 men for the second half, demonstrated the fight within the group. It also indicated the gap between where

England are at the moment, against the best teams, isn't insurmountable in the build-up over the Summer leading into France 2023.

- England have a number of returning players plus a preparation time which will put the squad on an even footing with their rivals, and we are looking forward to seeing a resurgence in performance and results in the upcoming period.

P 15s status

- After the initial eight teams were selected in December 2022, the process was put into place to support two further clubs to enter the league for the 2023/24 season.
- Both Sale Sharks and Worcester Warriors Women were granted 1-year conditional licences,

Tackle Height – Consultation update, law and regulation amendments and next steps

1. Council approved the amendment to Law 9 as set out below:

Domestic Law Variations

Definition: Below the base of the sternum: This is the area of the tummy or belly and below.

Law 9 Foul Play:

- 9.11. (a) Players must not do anything that is reckless or dangerous to others including leading with the head, shoulder, elbow or forearm, or jumping into, or over an opponent.
- (b) Ball-carriers must not lower their height significantly before making contact with an opponent in open play.
- 9.12. A player must not physically or verbally abuse anyone. Physical abuse includes, but is not limited to, biting, punching, contact with the eye or eye area, striking with any part of the arm, head, shoulder, forearm or knee(s), stamping, trampling, tripping or kicking.
- 9.13. A player must not tackle or attempt to tackle an opponent early, late or dangerously. Dangerous tackling includes, but is not limited to, tackling or attempting to tackle an opponent in open play above the base of the sternum even if the tackle starts below the base of the sternum.

Council will also be reviewing law variation guidance. This will focus on helping players, coaches match officials et al interpret and apply the law changes and other areas of law that will come under additional focus (eg actions of the ball carrier, sanctioning, clarification of open play when tackles occur etc).

2. Council approved a regulation amendment to Regulation 15 as set out below

The key changes are summarised below:

- a. Updating the terminology of player affiliation to player registration.
- b. The rules of play will also need to be amended to reflect the new tackle height.
- c. Following the suspension of the permitted out of season activity provisions and their replacement with the Summer Activity Framework during the Covid period, EAGSC and AGG propose that the Summer Activity Framework will be the regulation going forwards (thereby replacing the previous out of season activity wording). They have all agreed it is simpler, clearer and provides a much better off season offer for young players. To reflect this, a number of changes have been made to Regulation 15.8
- d. Continuation on the combining of male age grades from Under 14s to Under 19s.
- e. Amendments to reflect that there are no U16s permitted in Centres of Excellence therefore some provisions are redundant.

Council adopted this regulation amendment to create a flexible framework for Age Grade rugby over the summer, enabling appropriate contact training to take place.

Diversity and Inclusion

Council approved the following:

- a. The current Council Inclusion & Diversity Implementation Working Group Terms of Reference end as planned, in July 2023.

- b. A new group be established and recruited, ensuring greater representation from across Council and the professional and community games.
- c. New Terms of Reference be developed, to run for three years from 2023/24, to allow time to embed inclusive cultures across the game, through the three focus areas of Sustainability, Representation and Game Support.
- d. A new Chair is appointed within this time, from Council under the auspices of Council Nominations Committee.

Board Nominations Committee

Council approved:

1. The appointment of Auriol Stevens as Independent Non-Executive Director for a three-year term to run 1 August 2023 to 31 July 2026.

2. The reappointment of David Roberts as Chair of the Community Game Board for an additional three-term to run 1 August 2023 to 31 July 2026.

3. The reappointment of Deborah Griffin as a World Rugby Representative until 31 July 2024.

4. The reappointment of Jonathan Webb as a World Rugby Representative until 31 July 202.

Council Nominations Committee

1. Council approved the appointment of Kirsty Marlor as a Council Elected Director (and for ratification at the AGM) for three seasons from 1 August 2023 to 31 July 2026

2. Council approved Jonathan Webb to serve an additional one year term as a Board Director from 1 August 2023 to 31 July 2024

3. Council approved the appointment (and for ratification at the AGM) the President, Senior Vice-President, Junior Vice President and Immediate Past President of Rugby Football Union for the 2023/24 season:
President: Rob Briers
Senior Vice-President: Rob Udwin
Junior Vice-President: Deborah Griffin
Immediate Past President: Nigel Gillingham OBE (note the IPP does not require AGM ratification)

Championship Relegation Proposal

Council debated a proposal that no relegation occurs from the Championship at the end of season 2022/23 to increase the number of competing teams from 13 to 14 with no consequential effect on the required league structure and calendar.

This proposal is made by the current 12 Championship clubs and National League Rugby.

After a lengthy debate the proposal was defeated.

Financial statement

Summary of the RFU position at 28 February 2023

- The strategic financial target is based on our loss before the contribution of sale of shares and our strategic growth investment. With respect to this metric, a £1.1m loss is forecast which is £0.5m favourable to budget.
- Taking into account the strategic growth fund investment, the forecast is an £5.8m loss being £2.0m favourable to budget.

Reports received from:

Community Game Board

- CGB agreed to initiate a rapid review of travel funding ahead of next season.
- It was agreed to allocate monies from the Community Rugby Support Fund towards work on Women & Girls (additional facilities support and participation campaign)
- More regular updates on the head impact reduction work.
- Adult male recovery plan (Project Phoenix) – the focus in 22/23 had been largely on return/retention of older players and whilst it was agreed that this is important and should continue it was agreed that the emphasis in 23/24 should migrate to one around retention and transition of teenage players

Professional Game Board

The PGB meeting scheduled for 20 April will cover:

- Six Nations review
- The future of the women's professional game
- Academy audit results
- Higher Education rugby pathway report
- Deep dive into Medical Advisory Group sub committee
- Instrumented mouthguard data analysis and implications for Professional Game

Governance Committee

Items for discussion and decision were:

- The size and schedule of games for the Championship in 23/24,
- The regulations to support the playing of the Premier 15s league in the first season of its new format and the progress that has been made by the RFU and the game in dealing with discrimination complaints.
- The Club Financial Viability Group has resumed meeting to consider a possible take-over of London Irish and carry out the necessary due diligence on the new owners and their proposed business plan.
- Review the proposed domestic law variation to implement the decision by Council to lower the tackle height in the community game.

Head Injury Prevention and Management Group

2023/24 Community Game Changes

As part of business planning, we have sought funding for:

- a. The use of iMGs in U16s boys and U18s girls
- b. Additional funding for Lower Tackle Height Implementation and Monitoring project stages

CRISP will be the primary mechanism to report on the injury impact of the Lower Tackle Height project in the community game. We will encourage more clubs and schools to contribute to extend the database while maintaining year on year comparisons.

Women's Performance Management Group

The Women's Competition Review Group has been a sub-group of the Competitions Development Sub-Committee (CDSC) and was formed in 2021-2022 season to review the women's competition offering to ensure it is fit for purpose for the next five years and beyond as the game continues to grow.

The key focus areas included:

- reviewing the competition structures, playing opportunities and league structures of the existing women's competition structures;
- review the administration of women's competitions;
- to review areas of the game where learnings can be made from both the male and female games to make life simpler for volunteers and enhance the playing offering;
- to review the opportunity for clubs aspiring to play in the Allianz Premier 15s in the future;

Ken Andrews, Dave Clarke RFU Council members

Rob Briers Senior Vice Presiden

Disciplinary Committee

Monthly Hearing Budget Report

Season to Date

	<u>Income</u>	<u>Hearing Costs</u>	<u>Equipment Costs</u>	<u>Total Costs</u>	<u>Surplus/Deficit</u>
Budget	£3,200.00	£400.00	£200.00	£600.00	£2,600.00
Actual	£3,800.00	£163.19	£202.57	£365.76	£3,434.24
Difference	£600.00	-£236.81	£2.57	-£234.24	£834.24
% Difference	18.75%	-59.20%	1.29%	-39.04%	32.09%

30 April 2023

	<u>Income</u>	<u>Hearing Costs</u>	<u>Equipment Costs</u>	<u>Total Costs</u>	<u>Surplus/Deficit</u>
Budget	£400.00	£50.00	£25.00	£75.00	£325.00
Actual	£280.00	£34.17	£37.07	£71.24	£208.76
Difference	-£120.00	-£15.83	£12.07	-£3.76	-£116.24
% Difference	-30.00%	-31.66%	48.28%	-5.01%	-35.77%

Disciplinary Committee

Costs Report

Item Date	Number	Item	Expense
July 2022			
28/07/2022	7	Zoom Software for 1 year	£119.90
Month Totals			£119.90
August 2022			
09/08/2022	8	One Month Office 365 (Business)	£16.60
Month Totals			£16.60
October 2022			
05/10/2022	9	One Month Office 365 (Business)	£16.60
Month Totals			£16.60
December 2022			
02/12/2022	10	Stationery & Equipment	£21.09
Month Totals			£21.09
January 2023			
10/03/2023	11	Two Months Office 365, Stationery and Printer Cartridges	£43.28
Month Totals			£43.28
March 2023			
28/03/2023	13	PDF Management Software Lifetime	£49.99
28/03/2023	12	Refurbished Laptop to run RFU software	£98.30
Month Totals			£148.29
April 2023			
21/04/2023	14	Refund John Leight (Lan-2019-127)	£40.00
Month Totals			£40.00
Season Totals			£405.76

Costs Notes

- 1 Zoom Software will be an ongoing annual cost.
2. Office software will end now that we have access to the RFU Office software.
3. John Leight refund is for costs which should not have been paid.