

LANCASHIRE COUNTY RUGBY FOOTBALL UNION

Minutes of the Board Meeting

Monday 5th June 2023

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

In Attendance: Mr A Soutar.

Apologies: Messrs, R.T.J. Briers, J.R.S. Greenwood, B.H. Stott, G.J. Morgan & A. Soutar.

CB Relationship Managers Report.

AS reported:

1. Conveyed thanks to members of the Board who had completed the targeted funding application.
2. A drop in session is to be held week commencing 12th June covering new tackle height and male recovery.
3. Player affiliation – 8005 age grade players registered with 46 clubs in Lancashire. Adult Male affiliation has been put back one season to 2024-2025 season. Due to lack of registration for players at 2nd team and below there are no accurate figures as to how many players are in the game.
4. 3 Clubs have been awarded grants for toilet facility refurbishment.
5. AS requested a season review over summer to discuss all clubs health status and identify those who may need support next season.
6. HH – Manchester Medics and North Manchester had transferred to NOWIRUL.
7. CAB questioned if there had been any progress on the Chorley governance issues raised – no progress.
8. Girls DPP (DC) – After the RFU Road Trip Board Meeting where this subject was discussed it appears that Cheshire are ahead of us on the project. Martin McTaggart reported that he had held a review meeting and whilst things were acceptable some things could be done better. Lancs were one of the last to set up. Organisers had reported at the review meeting that there had been no support from the Lancashire Board which was contested.
9. GAB – noted that she thought we needed Job Descriptions for all who volunteer for the County. There is a new member of RFU staff who is looking to work with a CB on role descriptions.
10. Funding for Girls DPP should be the same if not more for next season.

Minutes of the last meeting.

The minutes of the Board meeting held on Tuesday 2nd May 2023, (previously circulated) were accepted and signed as a correct record.

Matters arising.

There were no matters arising.

Questions to Written Reports.

No written reports had been received.

RFU Report.

KA reported:

1. There was to be a Council Meeting prior to the County AGM.
2. Governance and Representation Review – Mike Waplington had completed this which proved very comprehensive, a paper had been published suggestion re-invigoration. The Board are suggesting that this should be chaired by an independent.
3. Independent advisers have been appointed by the Government to look at the Professional side of the game. Council Members kicked back at this in case the review morphed in to looking at the grassroots game also. Chris Pilling and Ralph Rimmer had been appointed. (See Appendix 1)
4. Papa Johns Cups (DC) – The recent review of the competition had moved the it back to start 3 weeks later in the structured season but would still be completed in one block. Very large majority of CBs fed back to the review that this needed to be held throughout the season but this had not been listed to. We have devolved power over leagues at Level 7 and below. HH noted that giving clubs a week notice of a new structured season was not practicable.
Email clubs asking opinions of their preferred structured season at Level 7 and below. **Action DC/MD**

County Championship.

1. HH – Reported on the County Championship finals, congratulating the Womens XV on their victory in the Gill Burns Cup 25-15 against Buckinghamshire. Commiserations to the Mens XV who narrowly lost the Bill Beaumont Cup Final to Kent 39-37.
2. PD – in terms of finance, the group stages were on budget, however, in the current financial position we cannot afford to get to another final.
AS to see if there is extra funding for getting to the final. **Action AS**
22k watched the Mens game and 10k watched the Womens game on social media meaning they had to purposely search for it.
3. The budget is set for next season and will be the same.
4. PD - will feed back to LSH regarding the hospitality at the Senior Womens Yorkshire game.
5. PD - Suggested that we should charge entry for all representative County games.
6. HH – reported that Durham have won the County Championship. There is to be a review on regulations but if there is no change then we will not enter next season.
7. HH – County Championship finals day seemed poorly organised by RFU professional staff.

Annual Awards Dinner.

MD reported that everything was running to plan.

Correspondence.

None appertaining to this meeting.

New Members.

There were no new members.

50:50 Draw

June 23	Value
JE Nixon	£53.40
H Henderson	£8.90
H Henderson	£8.90
P Hanson	£8.90
DN Herriman	£8.90

Date of next meeting.

Next Meeting: 6:30 pm on Monday 3rd July 2023 at Liverpool St Helens.

Any other business.

PD – requested that anyone who stayed over at the hotel for the County Championship Finals and had not yet paid to do so.

MJW – advised the Board that Kate Bennetta would like to become more involved in County volunteering.

CAB – National Safeguarding Conference is to be held online which is not good as there is no opportunity for face to face networking.

KA – the Wooden Spoon lunch will be held on 24th November at Anfield.

MD – we currently have a dearth of Vice Presidents and requested that the Board consider suitable candidates.

Meeting ended at 8:10pm

D. [Signature]

Chairman

Date

3-7-23

Independent advisers appointed by Government to help stabilise future of professional rugby union

Embargo: 12pm

- *RFL's former CEO Ralph Rimmer and Chris Pilling of UK Sport appointed to work with the Rugby Football Union and Premiership Rugby Limited on their plans for the future of professional rugby union.*
- *Independent advisers will support solutions on the financial, sporting and regulatory challenges facing rugby following failures of Worcester, Wasps and uncertainty at London Irish.*

Former RFL CEO Ralph Rimmer, and UK Sport Board Member Chris Pilling have been appointed by the Government as independent advisers to support the RFU and PRL in their work on the future sustainability of rugby union.

Following the recent failures of several clubs and the wider challenges stemming from the Covid-19 pandemic, rugby union has a unique opportunity to reshape its future financial and sporting direction.

The Government supports the RFU and PRL's work to stabilise professional rugby union including attracting new capital investment. It shares the concerns of fans about where the game goes next, and has appointed two independent advisers to work with the RFU and PRL on their plans to restructure the Professional Game Agreement.

The issues at Worcester, Wasps and London Irish have laid bare the challenges facing the sport of rugby union. The inability of rugby clubs to raise capital investment and the financial challenges at various levels within the game have contributed to the need for urgent work to help secure rugby union's immediate future and advise on its future direction.

The appointment of Rimmer and Pilling as independent advisers will add to the work being undertaken by the RFU and PRL, and have been made with their full agreement. They will provide further independent support and scrutiny on their vision to lead the game to a sustainable future.

Ralph Rimmer delivered substantial financial and regulatory reforms during his time with the Rugby Football League, while Chris Pilling will bring extensive sports management and financial sector expertise to the role.

Sports Minister Stuart Andrew said:

"This is a challenging time for rugby union and Ralph and Chris have agreed to utilise their experience to help the game develop a clear path for the future.

"We have seen several high profile clubs and their fans left devastated in recent times and this additional independent advice will be of huge benefit to the RFU and PRL as they look to implement a new strategic direction for rugby."

Ralph Rimmer said:

"I absolutely recognise the importance of this sporting pyramid to communities across the country.

"I also understand from my own experiences in Rugby League the challenges and pressures which the sport currently faces and i'm confident that I can help all parties in creating not just a sustainable future but also an exciting one."

Chris Pilling said:

"I am delighted to have been asked by DCMS to support the work of the RFU and the PRL to seek the best solutions to help secure a better more sustainable long-term future for rugby union."

The independent advisers will begin work immediately to help provide solutions to the financial, sporting and regulatory challenges facing the game as it charts a more sustainable path for the future.

Bill Sweeney, CEO, Rugby Football Union said:

“The RFU and PRL have been working collaboratively for some time on a joint strategy to stabilise and transform Rugby Union following the exceptional challenges created by Covid.

“Government choosing to work with us on this process is an important and much appreciated development and we are delighted to welcome Ralph and Chris to support the work we are doing to re-shape the future of the professional game.

“The restructuring of the Professional Game Agreement into a strategic partnership provides a great opportunity for all stakeholders to set aside self-interest and collaborate to reset and secure the future long-term sustainable growth of the professional game including developing the strongest possible second tier.”

Simon Massie-Taylor, CEO, PRL said:

“We welcome the Government acknowledging the role that they play in helping stabilise the future of the Premiership.

“And we are looking forward to working with Ralph and Chris as we finalise our plans for the future of the professional game with our partners at The RFU, RPA and other key rugby stakeholders.

“In the coming days we will also announce our newly-formed Sporting Commission. And former Government adviser Sir Nigel Boardman has also commenced work on formulating new financial regulations, as part of our Financial Monitoring Panel, with the first elements planned to be in place for the start of the new season.”

During the pandemic, the Government stepped in to provide a financial lifeline to keep elite and grassroots rugby afloat, and as key stakeholder in the future of professional rugby union is taking action to further protect its investment on behalf of taxpayers.

Rimmer and Pilling will work closely with the RFU, PRL and private equity partners CVC over the coming months in an independent capacity, and report directly to the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport.