

MIDDLESEX NOTES ON THE RFU COUNCIL MEETING

Held at East Stand, Twickenham - 12th April 2019

The meeting was chaired by the President, Chris Kelly.

The meeting started with a minute's silence in memory of RFU Past President John Richardson, who died recently.

1. PRESIDENT'S OPENING REMARKS

Chris Kelly - President

- 1.1 The President congratulated the England Women's XV on their Grand Slam.
- 1.2 The England Men's XV had a mixed Six Nations, playing some excellent rugby at times.
- 1.3 The U20s also had a mixed tournament, but demonstrated that they have a very good squad, which bodes well for the future.
- 1.4 The England Men's 7s are competitive in what is again a strong competition.
- 1.5 The President thanked Joanna Manning-Cooper (Digital, Marketing & Communication Director), who will shortly be leaving the RFU to take up a senior position at SKY, for her work for the RFU.
- 1.6 The President also thanked Simon Massie Taylor (Commercial director) and Nigel Melville (Interim CEO) on their presentation that they gave to Council before the meeting on the World Rugby Nations Championship and the opportunities and problems that the Board were considering as well as potential alternative strategies. The presentation was well received, and the direction of travel supported.

2. CHAIRMAN'S UPDATE

Andy Cosslett - Chairman of the Board

- 2.1 Bill Sweeney has been appointed as the Union's new CEO. Bill Sweeney is currently the CEO of the British Olympic Association (BOA). The BOA has not announced Bill Sweeney's leaving date, but it is hoped that he will be free to join the Union in May 2019. Bill Sweeney is in regular contact with the Union to ensure that he is fully informed on matters affecting the Union.
- 2.2 The Chairman again complimented Nigel Melville on his work as Interim CEO.
- 2.3 The Board continues to work well as do its sub groups.
- 2.4 Overall the relationships within the Union and with external stakeholders continue to be good.

3. COUNCIL SURVEY

Chris Cuthbertson - Chairman of the Governance Standing Committee

- 3.1 Following a debate at the November Council meeting on the effectiveness of Council, it was decided that a survey would be undertaken to determine the more detailed views of Council.
- 3.2 Chris Cuthbertson presented a high-level review of the results of the survey.
- 3.3 Council **AGREED**:
 - a. To set up a working group to analyse the results of the survey in more detail and make recommendations to Council as to how its effectiveness could be improved;
 - b. That **NIGEL GILLINGHAM** chair the working group.
 - c. That the working group would consist of Council members, Board members and members of the executive.
- 3.4 Council will approve the composition of the working group, its terms of reference and the reporting timetable at the June Council meeting.

4. CEO REPORT

Nigel Melville - Interim CEO

4.1 Six Nations - Men

- a. Following a superb opening game against Ireland in Dublin, expectations were high when the team arrived in Wales. There is no question the team was capable of winning but a poor second half resulted in a frustrating loss. Against France and Italy, dominant first half performances effectively killed off each game and the same pattern emerged against Scotland. However, the second half against Scotland was a very different story, a resurgent Scotland turned around a 31-7 half time score to a final 38-38 draw. England ended the Championship in second place, but with questions about the team's resilience under pressure unanswered.
- b. Nigel Melville attended the England Team's internal Six Nations Review. The management team are confident that the squad are heading in the right direction and the competition for places is stronger than in recent seasons. The RWC plan is set and Eddie and his coaching team are now focussed on the important preparation phase.

4.2 Six Nations - Red Roses

- a. This was the first Six Nations following the introduction of professional player contracts in January. The squad had plenty of preparation time and made good progress during the Championship. Wins on the road in Ireland and Wales were backed up with an important win against a strong French side in Doncaster (attendance 4,674) and Italy in Exeter (attendance 10,545) before a comfortable Grand Slam game at Twickenham (attendance 13,278).
- b. Overall, great progress has been made in 2019 and taking the games on the road and effectively promoting them has generated sell-out crowds and increased sponsorship activity and media support.
- c. The Red Roses Grand Slam was celebrated with a reception at Twickenham.

4.3 Six Nations - Under 20s

This was a frustrating Six Nations campaign with constant personnel changes due to Premiership call-ups. This could also be viewed as a positive as several players in the wider squad were given their chance to play for the Under 20s. All the games were close, with an excellent win against France (the Under 20 World Champions) in Exeter (Attendance 9k), a win against Italy in Bedford (attendance 5k – sell out), and a convincing second half performance to beat Scotland in Northampton (attendance 5.3k). On the road, an injury time loss to Ireland and a narrow loss to Wales meant that the team finished third in the championship.

4.4 International Rugby and Broadcast Strategy

- a. World Rugby's proposals for a World Rugby Nations Championship came at a time when the Union was already in negotiations with the Six Nations about the aggregation of broadcast rights (Six Nations and Autumn Internationals).
- b. A Board Working Group (consisting of Andy Cosslett, Malcolm Wharton, Phil de Glanville, Simon Massie-Taylor, Dominic Proctor and Nigel Melville) has been meeting regularly to consider all options and keep the process moving forward. The options are fluid and changing rapidly.
- c. A full update was presented to Council at meetings ahead of the Council meeting.

4.5 Ticketing Update

- a. The RFU Commercial team has been working with the International Rugby Ticket Sub-Committee (IRTSC) to identify and create a revenue opportunity to release additional debenture seats.
- b. Options will be presented back to the IRTSC for endorsement. If the Board decided to proceed a recommendation will be presented to Council at the June 2019 meeting.
- c. The RFU Ticketing Team has engaged with MBA students from Imperial College London to review and benchmark the Union's membership and seating products against other venues and leisure options.

4.6 Artificial Grass Pitches (AGPs)

Following the Board's decision to suspend construction on 10 of the 12 outstanding Phase 3 AGPs a full Communications plan was implemented. This landed successfully and whilst there was significant disappointment from the host clubs the level of understanding and acceptance has been good.

4.7 Team GB

As part of the Business Planning process and to improve the chance of winning a medal at the 2020 Olympics, meetings were held with Wales and Scotland to discuss merging our teams into a Team GB Sevens model. Wales and England were keen to explore this opportunity, but Scotland were not.

4.8 Digital Marketing and Communications - Six Nations Highlights

- a. Record number of video views (74.1m) driven by big increase (and more accurate analytics) on Instagram and syndication platforms
- b. Over 62m interactions on social media across the 61-day period
- c. Estimated overall sponsor value on social media of £7.8m.
- d. There were record attendances for the Red Roses at Doncaster, Exeter and Twickenham
- e. The England Rugby Podcast: O₂ Inside Line reached number one in the charts for the first time
- f. Provided players with more content for their social media channels leading to a 290% increase in engagements on player channels vs Quilter Internationals 2018
- g. Re-engaged over 10,000 fans via email.
- h. Over a third of fans opened the squad announcement email each week (industry standard is approx. 17%).

5. FINANCIAL REPORT

Sue Day - Chief Financial Officer

- 5.1 Sue Day presented the financial results for February 2019 (month 8).
- 5.2 The outcome for the year shows that the forecast result will be £0.6m adverse to budget, but the executive is confident that this can be remedied.

6. 2019/20 BUSINESS PLANNING UPDATE

Sue Day - Chief Financial Officer & Steve Grainger - Rugby Development Director

- 6.1 Sue Day reminded Council of the assumptions underlying the preparation of the 2019/20 budget and the reasons behind the need to reduce the Union's cost base.
- 6.2 Steve Grainger updated Council on the cost saving measures being proposed within the Community Budget.
- 6.3 Whilst the budget will not be considered for approval by the Board until its meeting on 15th May 2019, the CBs and Clubs will shortly be informed as to what is being proposed so that they can take this into account when preparing their own budgets and action plans for the new season.
- 6.4 It is anticipated that most Clubs will not suffer a material reduction in their RFU funding.

7. TYRELLS PREMIER 15s SEASON 4

Louise Latter - RFU Council Representative for Women 7 Girls & Nicky Ponsford - Head of Women's Performance

- 7.1 Council received a proposal on promotion and relegation from the Tyrells Premier 15s.
- 7.2 The aim of the proposal is to ensure that the competition remains vibrant, continues to deliver player development to prepare players for International Rugby, that the minimum operating standards continue to be met and that as far as possible there is a good geographic spread of the Clubs.
- 7.3 Feedback on the proposals was encouraged.
- 7.4 Final recommendations will be put to Council at its June 2019 meeting.

8. COUNCIL RECOGNITION & REWARD REVIEW GROUP PROPOSALS (CRRRG)

James Cook - Members of the CRRRG & Angus Bujalski - Legal & Governance Director

- 8.1 Council approved several changes to the entitlements of Council Members, Privilege Members and Past Presidents.
- 8.2 The changes, all of which reduce entitlements, will result in a reduction in expenditure of approximately 6% in 2019/20.
- 8.3 It was also agreed that Committees, Sub Committees & working groups should embrace new technology and consider holding more virtual meetings, which would reduce the time commitment of volunteers and reduce travel and accommodation costs.

9. NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE REPORT

Mike Waplington – Chairman of Council Nominations Committee

9.1 Mike Waplington advised that the Board had accepted the recommendation of the Council Nominations Committee and appointed **TIM MILLER** to sit on the Audit Committee.

9.2 Council **APPROVED** the following recommendations of the Council Nominations Committee for the 2019/20 season:

- a. President: **PETER WHEELER**
- b. Senior Vice-President: **JEFF BLACKETT**
- c. Immediate Past President: **CHRIS KELLY**

Council had previously approved the appointment of **NIGEL GILLINGHAM** as Junior Vice-President

9.3 Council also **APPROVED** the appointment of **PETER WHITING** as Council Elected Board Director for three years with effect from 1st August 2019. Peter Whiting will, if the appointment is ratified by the Game at the AGM in June, replace **MALCOLM WHARTON**, who finishes his term on the Board at the end of the current season.

10. AGM CALLING NOTICE 2019

Chris Cuthbertson - Chair of the Governance Standing Committee

10.1 Council **APPROVED** the Calling Notice for the 2019 AGM.

10.2 The AGM will be held at 5.00pm on **Friday 14th June 2019 at Cowdray Hall, Cavendish Square, London.**

11. GAME ON

Chris Cuthbertson - Chair of the Governance Standing Committee

11.1 The Game On principles are Law variations that have been developed to facilitate games being played. The principles are outlined in Appendix 1.

11.2 The Game On principles will **NOT** apply to RFU League & Cup matches but will automatically apply in all other matches and competitions unless the competition organiser has applied to the RFU for dispensation for them not to be applied.

11.3 Council **APPROVED**:

- a. the Game On principles for Season 2019/20 and beyond;
- b. Appendix 2 to Regulation 13 and Appendix 1 to Regulation 16; and
- c. the granting of delegated authority to the Governance Standing Committee to finalise any drafting as required.

12. COUNCIL CODE OF CONDUCT RECOMMENDATIONS

Paul Murphy - Chairman of the Council Code of Conduct Working Group & Ewen Murchison - Member of the Council Code of Conduct Working Group.

12.1 The Code of Conduct outlines the behaviour expected of Council Members, Privilege Members and Past Presidents and the process that will apply in the case of any allegations that the Code of Conduct has been breached.

12.2 Council **APPROVED** the proposed Code of Conduct.

12.3 The President thanked Paul Murphy and the Group for their work.

13. WOMEN'S SIX NATIONS OVERVIEW

Simon Middleton – Head Coach England Women's XV

13.1 Council received a presentation on the England Women's successful Six Nations campaign together with an overview of the development of the current team.

14. AUDIT COMMITTEE UPDATE

Deborah Griffin - Member of the Audit Committee & Mike Waplington - Former Member of the Audit Committee

14.1 Council received a report on the work of the Audit Committee.

15. PROFESSIONAL GAME BOARD (PGB) UPDATE

Phil de Glanville - RFU Representative on the PGB

15.1 The PGB will shortly be reviewing:

- a. The Six Nations;
- b. The Premiership season;
- c. The Championship season;
- d. The performance of English Clubs in Europe; and
- e. Reports from the PGB sub-committees

15.2 Proposals are awaited from PRL concerning promotion to and relegation from the Premiership. These will then be considered by the PGB before recommendations are made to the RFU Board.

16. COMMUNITY GAME BOARD

Rob Briers - Chairman of the CGB & Steve Grainer – Rugby Development Director

16.1 Business Plan 2019/20

A major recent workload of the CGB has been to identify savings in the Community Game to be included in the Union's 2019/20 Business Plan.

16.2 Community Rugby Injury Surveillance Project (CRISP)

- a. CRISP is the Community Game equivalent of the PRISP which covers the professional game that was published earlier in the season.
- b. The CGB received a presentation from Simon Kemp on the recent CRISP report. Overall the outcomes were positive, but there were some issues in the School game and the BUCS leagues. A presentation will be made to the June Council meeting.

16.3 Measurement/Health of the Game

The CGB has considered and agreed proposed changes to the Strategic Plan KPIs and endorsed the current approach to measurement.

16.4 Adult Playing Age

The CGB is reviewing the Safeguarding guidance to the participation of 17-year olds in the adult game.

16.5 Half Game Regulation

The CGB approved the proposal that Under 18 Academy League players be subject to a minimum of 20% play time rather than the 50% required under the Half Game Regulation.

16.6 Sport England – Active Lives Survey

Steve Grainger informed the meeting that the recent Sport England Active Lives Survey (covering the period November 2017 to November 2018) showed rugby as no change, whereas most team sports are showing a 10% reduction. The full report can be found at:

<https://www.sportengland.org/media/13898/active-lives-adult-november-17-18-report.pdf>

16.7 CB Leaders Conference 2019

The CB Conference 2019 has been cancelled. This is to allow the executive and the CBs to concentrate on the devolution agenda.

16.8 CB Engagement

The next round of meetings with CB Executives will commence in April 2019.

17. GOVERNANCE STANDING COMMITTEE REPORT

Chris Cuthbertson - Chairman of the Governance Standing Committee

17.1 BREXIT

The Union continues to monitor the potential impact of BREXIT on the game in England and is reviewing the appropriateness of current regulations.

17.2 Professional Game Education Strategy

The third and final phase of the online module closed on 29th March 2019 and covered players and staff who joined Premiership or Championship Clubs between December and March.

17.3 Competition Structures in the North

- a. Discussions are continuing with the CBs and Clubs in the North about a new competition structure.

b. It is hoped that proposals will be brought to the June Council meeting.

17.4 **Wellington Festival Laws Variations**

A small number of Law variations were approved for use in the Wellington Festival. The variations are designed to promote more ball in play time, more ball movement and more decision-making opportunities.

17.5 **Safeguarding**

Governance is also reviewing the guidance given to Clubs to ensure compliance with Safeguarding legislation in respect of the playing of 17-year olds in the adult game (matches & training).

17.6 **Payment of Players Declaration**

- a. Clubs are now able to submit declarations through GMS for the 2018/19 season;
- b. One case of a misdeclaration being submitted has already been detected and is being dealt with by the Discipline Department.
- c. The closing date for declarations is 30th June 2019; and
- d. Any Club below Level 3 that does not complete a declaration will be ineligible for funding from the RFU (including the Supplemental Pot Payments) during 2019/20.

17.7 **RFU Regulations**

The main topic on the May Governance meeting will be the proposed changes to the RFU Regulations for the 2019/20 season.

18. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

- 18.1 Council were updated on the news concerning the twitter updates made by Billy Vinapola that had broken in the media during the meeting.

The next Council meeting is on 14th June 2019 at Cowdray Hall, Cavendish Square, London.

[Immediately before the RFU's AGM]

Chris Cuthbertson & Rob Udwin

23rd April 2019

These notes are our personal recollections of the meeting and include those matters which we believe will be of interest to Middlesex Clubs. No attempt has been made to convey all the opinions expressed during the debates.

APPENDIX 1

GAME ON PRINCIPLES

1. The Game On variations apply to all non-RFU competitions **UNLESS** the competition organiser has applied to the RFU for dispensation not to apply them in their competition.
2. There are five Game On variations that can be applied (if the teams on the day agree)
 - a. **TEAM NUMBERS** (Law 3.2)
A match can start with a minimum of 10 players in each team.
 - b. **MATCH DURATION** (Law 5.3)
A match can be a minimum of 40 minutes (20 minutes per half)
 - c. **ROLLING SUBSTITUTIONS** (Law 3.34)
Rolling substitutions may be used (provided they comply with Regulation 13 (appendix 2))
 - d. **HALF GAME RULE** (Law 3.34)
Where rolling substitutions are used, teams are encouraged to apply the “half game rule” ie all players in the match day squad should play at least half the game.
 - e. **LINE-OUTS** (Law 18)
Teams may agree not to contest or lift in the Line-Out.
 - f. **SCRUMS** (Law 19)
Teams may agree that scrums will be uncontested.
3. On the day teams may decide to apply all, some or none of the variations. If the teams cannot agree, none of the variations will be applied.

End