

MIDDLESEX NOTES ON THE RFU COUNCIL MEETING

Held at East Stand, Twickenham - 8th February 2019

The meeting was chaired by the President, Chris Kelly.

1. CHAIRMAN'S UPDATE

Andy Cosslett - Chairman of the Board

1.1 CEO

- a. Following Steve Brown's departure, Nigel Melville has become interim CEO. Nigel Melville has received excellent support from the rest of the executive team.
- b. The CEO recruitment process is well underway. The first round of interviews has been completed and the second and final round has commenced.

1.2 Communications

- a. Andy Cosslett informed the meeting that he was aware of concerns about the flow of information in the Union and is reviewing communications between the Board, the Executive and Council.
- b. Part of the problem are the long gaps between Council meetings. To bridge this a monthly update will be provided to Council from the Chairman & CEO.
- c. Consideration is also being given to regular Council teleconferences.
- d. In addition, a survey of Council members is being planned to identify what further information needs to be provided and to assist in identifying improved methods of working to make use of the extensive experience of Council members whilst reducing the time commitment. It is hoped that this will take place in March 2019.

1.3 Board

The Board has been concentrating on the following key issues:

- a. Player welfare.
- b. The challenges and opportunities facing professional rugby (both on and off the field) at national and international level.
- c. The preparation of the 2019/20 business plan.

2. INDEPENDENT NON-EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND WORLD RUGBY REPRESENTATIVE APPOINTMENTS

Andy Cosslett - Chairman of the Board

2.1 Independent Non-Executive Director

Council **APPROVED** the recommendation of the Board Nominations Committee that Dominic Proctor be elected for a second term as one of the three INEDs on the Board. The term will run from 1st August 2019 to 31st July 2022.

2.2 World Rugby Representatives - Jonathan Webb

Council **APPROVED** the recommendation of the Board Nominations Committee that Jonathan Webb be elected for a second term as one of the Union's three World Rugby Representatives. The term will run from 1st August 2019 to 31st July 2022.

2.3 IN accordance with the Union's Rules, the appointments will be put to the 2019 AGM for ratification.

2.4 World Rugby Representatives – Jonathan Webb

- a. Council also **APPROVED** the appointment of Nigel Melville as World Rugby Representative on an interim basis until such time as a permanent CEO is in place, when the Board Nominations

Committee will reconsider the matter. If this arrangement is likely to persist beyond the 2019 AGM, it will also need to be put to that meeting for approval.

- b. Council **APPROVED** (by the two thirds majority required by the Union's Rules) Nigel Melville simultaneously holding the roles of World Rugby Representative, Six Nations Representative and EPCR Representative.

3. **CEO REPORT**

Nigel Melville - Interim CEO

3.1 **Transition**

The transition period is now complete, Steve Brown officially left office on the 21st December 2018.

3.2 **Development of the 2019/20 Business Plan**

The Executive Team continue to work on the 2019/20 business plan. This is not an easy process, but it is important to the future of the RFU that a business plan is built that can deliver the Union's key strategic priorities within the financial resources available.

3.3 **Engaging/connecting with Key Stakeholder Groups**

It has been a priority to connect with the key stakeholder groups; the staff, sponsors Council and the game.

- a. Nigel Melville has had face to face meetings with all members of the Board and continues to meet and call Council members.
- b. Additional meetings/calls have taken place with World Rugby, Six Nations, British and Irish Lions, Premiership/Championship Clubs, National Clubs Association, England Rugby Counties Association, sponsors (O₂, Quilter, Canterbury) and local & national government.
- c. Staff engagement is vital and is on-going.

3.4 **BREXIT**

The Communications and Legal team are working closely with the Department of Culture Media & Sport (DCMS) during this period of uncertainty and updating all stakeholder groups on the potential impact of BREXIT on the game.

3.5 **Health and Safety**

A new Health & Safety and Risk Executive group has been set up and meets on a monthly basis. The key responsibilities of the group are to:

- a. receive regular updates from various areas of the business including, Health and Safety, Stadium, Safeguarding and Player Welfare;
- b. Review and update the RFU Risk Register; and
- c. Ensure that key issues are addressed in a timely manner.

3.6 **Professional Rugby**

Premiership Rugby announced that they had sold 27% of their equity to CVC (Private Equity Company). PRL has advised that this investment will enhance the commercial capabilities of the Premiership and provide a cash injection into the Premiership clubs, which will be used to improve stadium facilities and training grounds.

3.7 **Six Nations**

- a. Guinness has been announced as the new title sponsor for the Six Nations for the next six years.
- b. The Six Nations Council also met to discuss their response to the World Nations League being proposed by World Rugby

3.8 **New Revenue Opportunities**

Following the Board's Strategy Day in December, the Executive were tasked with assessing several 'new' revenue generating opportunities, including ticketing/debenture sales, and additional games. Work continues developing these.

3.9 **Quilter Autumn Internationals**

During the Autumn international there was an increase in spectators arriving late at the ground, which, when combined with increased searching of all attendees and their bags, led to very big queues forming, particularly at Gate A. Action is being taken to address this problem.

3.10 Professional Rugby Injury Surveillance Project (PRISP)

The latest annual PRISP report was published on 9th January 2019 and as anticipated the news that injuries have continued to increase in the professional game received significant media interest. The RFU are the only rugby body collecting such detailed injury data and have received a lot of credit for leading in this area. The findings have been discussed with World Rugby and will be discussed further at the World Rugby Law Forum in Paris in March 2019.

3.11 Championship Cup Tackle Height Law Trial 2018/19

- a. In conjunction with World Rugby, the Union has undertaken a Law amendment trial in the Championship Cup whereby the height of the tackle was reduced to the line of the armpit. The objective of the trial was to:
 - i. Identify whether tackle height could be reduced through Law change; and
 - ii. Determine the impact on the incidence of concussion on such a change.
- b. By the end of the pool stage of the competition it was apparent that, despite the tackle height having been reduced, there had been a significant increase in the rate of concussion (compared with matches in the Championship, which had not been subject to the trial). For this reason, the trial was ended
- c. Analysis is now taking place to understand the reason for the increase. A report will be produced and presented at the World Rugby Law Forum in Paris in March.

3.12 England Men

- a. Nigel Melville, as interim CEO, is now working closely with Eddie Jones.
- b. Several key players are finally returning from long term injuries.
- c. The Six Nations will be an important opportunity for players and coaches alike.

3.13 England Women

Nigel Melville has met with the 28 newly contracted Red Roses at their camp at Bisham Abbey.

3.14 Rugby Development

- a. The breadth of RFU development programmes across the country is impressive.
- b. The Community Game Board are having to make some tough decisions on where resources should be allocated to achieve the strategic priorities and get the best return on investment.
- c. The Professional and Development Rugby Departments are working to align the playing pathway of aspiring young players.

4. PROFESSIONAL RUGBY DIRECTOR

Nigel Melville - Director of Professional Rugby

4.1 Introduction

- a. Following the completion of the reviews into the Autumn matches, the department's focus has turned to the Six Nations.
- b. Several players have now returned to full fitness and competition for places within this year's men's squad has increased.
- c. The 28 newly contracted women's players attended their first camp at Bisham Abbey in preparation of the Women's Six Nations.

4.2 Medical Services

- a. **Research**
 - i. The Championship Cup Tackle Height Trial was successfully implemented.
 - ii. The Union co-hosted (with the Drake Foundation, the FA and ECB) the 3rd UK Concussion Research Symposium at Twickenham on 21st November 2018
- b. **Player Welfare (Professional)**
The Professional Rugby Injury Surveillance Project (PRISP) report on the 2017/18 season together with the updated action plan was published on 9th January 2019.
- c. **Anti-Doping and Illicit Drug Programmes**
The 2017/18 annual anti-doping report is currently being finalised.

4.3 Sevens

- a. The men's and women's programmes have been based at The Lensbury for the last four months. This innovative integration is part of the performance need to create a high-performance England Sevens centre.
- b. The next three months will include competitions in New Zealand (men & women), Australia (men and women), USA (men), Canada (men), Hong Kong (men), Singapore (men) and Japan (women).
- c. Simon Amor, Head of England Sevens, will be involved in discussions on the Worlds Sevens Series format going forward with proposed increases in women's competitions and combined men's and women's events as part of the Olympic drive.

4.4 Rugby Events & Competitions

- a. The Championship Cup's six pool rounds concluded in December and the quarter finals were played at the beginning of February 2019.
- b. In the six months until the end of December 2018 a total of 3,409 player applications have been processed which includes registrations - Men's (level 1 to 4) 1,610; Women's (level 1) 369; International Clearances 983; Governing Body Endorsements 50 and 397 England Qualified Players.
- c. Rugby event delivery continued in December with the AASE League play offs and the finals at Allianz Park with the U18s Champions Trophy. At Twickenham Stadium there have been three stadium hire match days - Barbarians v Argentina, the Varsity Match and Big Game 11. All these events require different levels of support.

4.5 England Pathway

- a. **Coach Development -**
The Field-based Level 4 award is new this season. Four full days of field-based visits with each of the coaches have taken place. There has been good engagement with the relevant DoRs and feedback from the individual coaches involved has been positive.
- b. **Under 20s**
There are an increasing number of Under 20s players being selected for Premiership squads. This has restricted access to several of the better players for the Under 20s squads
- c. **Under 18s**
Wales have opted for their fixture to be an Under 19s fixture, which has provided an opportunity to draft in a wider Under 19s group into the camp.

4.6 England XV v Barbarians

The England XV will be coached by Jim Mallinder, supported by Dave Walder and Phil Dowson.

4.7 Academies

- a. This is the first year of the new 'England first' approach which requires a dual eligible player (over 18s) to make themselves available to 'England first'.
- b. It is now a requirement that no-one in their 18th year can play in an adult competition without the agreement of all parties, which includes the club and the RFU. There is an upward trend of school boys being asked to play in the Premiership Cup;
- c. There is a new festivals programme, which aims to provide more opportunities to play in a more nationally integrated structure.
- d. The Union is hosting the U18s Six Nations Festival this year at Hartpury. It is hoped that a development conference will run alongside.
- e. 400 coaches have been invited to a National Coaching Day at the Wellington festival.

4.8 National Performance Programme (NPP)

The NPP group are returning to **Serve On** (a disaster recovery charity) to continue to provide non-rugby related development.

4.9 Professional Game Match Officials Team (PGMOT)

- a. **World Rugby Autumn International Appointments**
All 10 of the Union's professional referees had appointments (referee and assistant referee) during the November window. Wayne Barnes was appointed to Ireland v New Zealand. Two of our developing female referees, Nikki O'Donnell and Laura Pettingale, were given their first international referee appointments.

b. **Six Nations 2019**

- i. Wayne Barnes refereed France v Wales, which opened the tournament
- ii. Luke Pearce will referee Scotland v Italy; his first Six Nations game as referee
- iii. Matthew Carley will referee Italy v France; his first Six Nations game as referee
- iv. Karl Dickson has been appointed as assistant referee to three games. This will be his first Six Nations tournament
- v. Ian Tempest, Sara Cox, Laura Pettingale and Nikki O'Donnell have all been appointed to referee in the Women's Six Nations.
- vi. Craig Maxwell-Keys and Christophe Ridley have been appointed to Under 20s Six Nations games as referee

4.10. **Women**a. **Seniors**

- i. 28 contract offers were made at the end of November. It is a young group with some very experienced players, there are 834 caps across the group. The squad selection is looking to producing the strongest team for the Women's RWC in 2021. The contracts all started 1st January 2019 and have either been offered as eight months or 20 months.
- ii. Secondment Agreements have been made with seven clubs to provide the full-time players with appropriate coaching, S&C and medical support for these players.
- iii. An additional seven players have been awarded EPS places and trained with the contracted players in January 2019. They will be available for selection.

b. **Talent Development Group**

The Under 20s and Under 18s Talent Development Group have had training camps in January to prepare for games against the Army and France. The Talent Development Group will also play Scotland Under 19s and Wales Under 19s

c. **Pathway**

The Centre of Excellence programme is now nearing the end of year one. There are a total of 309 girls registered across 10 centres. The centres will be re-populated in July 2019 after the completion of the CB programme. All centres have delivered a between 10 and 35 sessions. Changes are being prepared for year two around the nominations process and timing, festival opportunities and CPD programmes for staff. The focus will remain with U18s for next year and will not include an Under 15s programme.

d. **Tyrrells Premier 15s**

Only Worcester have yet to win but both they and the teams above them are more competitive than last season.

5. **RUGBY DEVELOPMENT REPORT**

Steve Grainger - Director of Rugby Development

5.1 **Strategic plan priorities**a. **Artificial Grass Pitches**

- i. 26 sites are now fully operational with a further 12 others set to commence in the spring of 2019. Over 300 rugby organisations have made use of the pitches with over 3000 matches played on them.
- ii. The agreed review, during the build break, is continuing.
- iii. The third (of four committed) Rugby Turf projects has gone live.

b. **Community Sevens offer**

- i. Changes have been made to the 24/7s (now known as Secure Trading Sevens Series) for 2019. The top 20 male & female teams in the eligible local qualifying tournaments will progress to the national finals. This removes the regional stages and reduces the length of the overall series to around two months.
- ii. As XRugby begins its migration into "business as usual", specifically within All Schools, targeted use of it continues in the University sector and at AGPs.

c. **Engaging New Communities**

- i. An additional 100 Inner Warrior camps have been planned for Q1 2019.

- ii. The Union's Disability Action Plan was launched in partnership with the **Activity Alliance** (a charity aimed at making disabled people more active) on 3rd December 2018 (international Day for Disabled people).
 - iii. Solid progress continues on **Project Rugby** with the next Steerco meeting receiving data on phase one of year three of the programme.
 - iv. A new partnership with **Stonewall** (a charity campaigning for lesbian, gay, bi & trans equality), is showing early positive signs.
- d. **Age grade to Adult Transition**
- i. Key interventions in schools, colleges and universities have passed the halfway point in the season with solid work continuing in all areas. The focus in schools continues around player safety messaging and, in universities on culture and initiations.
 - ii. After extensive deliberation the Under 19s Commission task group looking at the playing age for adult rugby concluded that the status quo be maintained (although on a 50/50 vote). However, it has been agreed to maintain a close watch on this and the impact of recent changes to DBS and safeguarding are currently being considered.
 - iii. The Half Game rule continues to be rolled out on a voluntary basis. Positive player impact is reported through a University of Essex research project.

5.2 Data and Insights

- a. Geographic CB insight packs are currently being finalised for release to CBs.
- b. Updated data on matches and teams for Q2 should be available shortly.
- c. A positive half year review was undertaken with Sport England. There was a strong focus here on our much-improved data and insight position.

5.3 Business as Usual Headlines

- a. Over 20,000 attendances at training courses for coaches, match officials and medics were recorded in the first six months of the 2018/19 season.
- b. Membership of the England Rugby Referees association has now topped 10,000.
- c. 512 Young Match Officials (93 female and 419 male) have completed the Kids First Refereeing Course. 310 Young Match Officials have completed the England Rugby Refereeing Award (39 female, 271 male).
- d. 1,042 Clubs and schools have signed the Quilter Kids First Pledge.
- e. O₂ Touch numbers stand at over 27,000 in 467 centres. Over the winter 100 centres have maintained activity with monthly participation up to 10k. Female participation continues to grow with it currently sitting at 27%.
- f. The concept of "**Game On**" (aimed at getting more games played) is being well received and will come to Council later in the season.
- g. The roll out of Electronic Match Cards (EMC) has been well received and is providing some useful data.
- h. RFF loans with a value of £471k have been made year to date along with Groundmatch small grants of £259k.
- i. 2018/19 facility funding grants of £214k have been made this season.
- j. Over 800 club volunteers were rewarded with entry to the volunteer recognition space in the British Airways Fan Village during the Quilter Autumn Internationals with a further 18 being recognised in the Spirit of Rugby for their outstanding contribution to the game.

6. CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER UPDATE

Sue Day - Chief Financial Officer

6.1 Finance Update - Tax

A meeting was recently held with HMRC on player payments (National One and below) including player image rights. Payment of players by Clubs is an ongoing HMRC review. Image rights is a fact-finding mission so that they can understand how image rights are treated by the RFU. HMRC usually revisit this every three-years, so this is not unusual.

6.2 Legal and Governance

a. Safeguarding

The Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) is issuing new guidance to sport which is likely to increase the numbers of individuals who will be required to undertake DBS checks. The Safeguarding Team are working with relevant groups, including the Age Grade Governance Sub-committee to understand the impact of this. Further details will be circulated to Council and the Game once the impact is better understood.

b. Ticketing – Secondary Market

The secondary market continues to operate and was especially active during the New Zealand fixture. The legal team continues to investigate unofficial operators and is applying sanctions to clubs breaching the RFU's ticketing Terms & Conditions.

c. Discipline

- i. The number of on-field cases at Levels 1-4 thus far this season is above last season's level, particularly in National One and Two; the largest increase being dangerous tackles.
- ii. Several CB Disciplinary Officers have decided to step down at the end of this season. The RFU is working with those CBs to ensure adequate succession planning and to provide additional training where required.

d. Council Services, Fundraising and CSR

The **Try For Change** Board has recently discussed the support for Try For Change events in 2019, including events in Asia.

e. Technology

- i. A Discovery phase has been completed with IBM as the first stage of the Digital Refresh and Data Re-Platform projects. The most visible change will be the re-platforming and re-design of Englandrugby.com; it is hoped to complete this ahead of the start of the new season.
- ii. A beta version of 'Stat Centre' will be launched in February 2019. This will be an enhanced fixtures & results (F&R) offering that surfaces Electronic Match Card (EMC) data from GMS, and will allow derivations such as top scoring teams, top try scorers. If successful, this would then form part a new F&R launch with the new website in parallel with the further rollout of EMC in the 2019/20 season.
- iii. A new Service Management tool for IT and GMS Support, and Skype for Business platform will be launched in Q1 of 2019 as part of an ongoing improvements to RFU Technology.

7. COMMERCIAL REPORT

Simon Massie-Taylor - Chief Commercial Officer

7.1 Broadcast

The 2018 Quilter Autumn Internationals broadcast figures were strong across both Sky and BBC

7.2 East Stand/ England Rugby Hospitality – First Series

- a. The East Stand facility was operationally completed ahead of the Quilter Autumn Internationals, in line with the budget approved by Board in March 2018 and was opened by Bill Beaumont on 3rd November 2018.
- b. The Autumn International series was successfully delivered with no major operational issues to report across all departments and stakeholders.
- c. Twickenham Experience (TEL) operations performed extremely well across the series to cope with the significant increase in venue catering demands. A record 37,000 hospitality covers were serviced (over 130,000 plates of food) with over 4,500 match day staff kitted out and trained to cope with demand. A five-star food hygiene rating was also achieved for the entire stadium during this period
- d. The new England Rugby Hospitality (ERH) brand has been established with a record-breaking number of retail sales and a strong product.
- e. Whilst there is room for improvement on-day, customer satisfaction was in line with targets and importantly improved from match to match for the traditional big games. a full product review will be taking place prior to the next sales cycle.

f. **Other Issues**i. **Spectator flows**

Certain points of congestion have been identified including Level 2 (Gate 2), Level 3 access to Lock suites, Level 4 (Clubhouse). Problems areas are mostly related to half time. Alternative solutions will be tested during Six Nations as well as recalibrating some seating allocations

ii. **Entrance to stadium**

There were issues with the new perimeter due to very late walk-ups and increased security requirements. A key remedy is communicating an earlier arrival. A revised communications plan is being rolled out for Six Nations. Gate E and F are also congested within the concourse as spectators adjust to the new layout – this will be remedied by stewarding and signage.

7.3 **Twickenham Experience Limited**

TEL is unlikely to meet its budget for the current season as it adjusts to selling and servicing the new East Stand Facility. A review of trading performance is currently underway to boost sales in the second half of the year and to reduce costs wherever possible. Food & beverage (F&B) sales and Conference & Exhibitions (C&E) sales are performing well. There is still confidence that the long-term business plan will be achieved.

7.4 **Corporate Boxes**

Corporate box sales are ahead of business plan with renewal rates exceeding expectation.

7.5 **Licensing and Retail**

- a. Licensing sales are set to meet 18/19 budget.
- b. Store sales and online sales are up on last year.
- c. The Brave Blossoms exhibition at the museum covering the history of rugby in Japan opened in November 2018. The museum is trading in line with business plan.

7.6 **Ticketing and Membership**

- a. The Quilter Autumn International Series sold out and the Guinness Six Nations home matches will also sell out.
- b. The 2019 Quilter Summer Internationals (Wales, Ireland and Italy) are selling well.

7.7 **Stadium**a. **Extended Perimeter**

- i. All turnstiles completed before the Autumn Internationals, Phase 1 hostile vehicle mitigation barrier install completed in December with snagging continuing into January 2019.
- ii. Replacement of the internal West security fence between gate D and the shop has commenced, old gates A and C turnstiles are being removed and new fence erected.

b. **Stadium Roof**

A structural inspection of the Stadium bowl glass reinforced plastic (GRP) roof was carried out in October 2018. The normal life span for this system is 25 years. The North is now 28 years old, the West and East are both 26 years old. All three roofs will therefore need to be replaced; this will be done over a two-year period.

8. **DIGITAL, MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS REPORT**

Joanna Manning-Cooper - Director of Digital, Marketing and Communications

8.1 **International**a. **World Rugby**

- i. At the November World Rugby Council meeting Mark Alexander (SARU) was elected on to EXCO to replace Pat Whelan (IRFU) who has stood down. Fiji and Samoa were elected onto Council and will each have one representative and one vote from the May 2019 meetings. This means there is now a total of 50 votes within the World Rugby Council and the Home Nations no longer have a blocking minority on votes that need a two thirds majority to pass.
- ii. At the meeting New Zealand was selected to host the 2021 Women's Rugby World Cup and beat Australia 25 votes to 17.

- iii. A decision was also made to differentiate the two Rugby World Cups which will now be called the Men's Rugby World Cup and Women's Rugby World Cup.
 - iv. Council was informed that EXCO had agreed the terms of reference for the Professional Game Committee.
 - v. The Professional Game Committee and EXCO agreed to set up an operational working group to progress the international competition format project. The working group will consist of Lord Mervyn Davies (Chairman), Brett Gosper (CEO), Alan Gilpin (World Rugby COO), two SANZAAR representatives and two Six Nations representatives (Ben Morel and Mark Dodson).
- b. **Rugby Europe**
- i. Florent Marty has been appointed as CEO of Rugby Europe and started in January 2019.
 - ii. At the December 2018 Board meeting one of the main issues on the agenda was the European 2020 Olympic qualification route. It was agreed that teams will now have to play in a single ranking event ahead of the standalone Olympic qualification tournament with both happening as soon as possible after the end of the World Rugby Sevens Series. The Grand Prix Sevens Series will then happen after these two events.
 - iii. The Rugby Europe Board has set up a working group (which will include independent expertise), to look at its own effectiveness and other governance improvements.
 - iv. Finally, five RFU representatives were awarded Rugby Europe medals in recognition of their work to develop the sport. Andy Thompson and Jim Coulson from Northumberland and Colin Wooster from Kent were awarded Bronze Medals for their work with Spain and Georgia respectively. **ROB UDWIN** and Nicky Ponsford were awarded silver medals for their committee work.
- c. **Six Nations**
- i. Ben Morel is now in position as CEO.
 - ii. Guinness has been announced as the new title sponsor.
 - iii. Dates for the 2020 and 2021 Championships (the last two years of the current broadcast deal) are currently being discussed. The longer-term plan is to agree the schedule for 2022-2025 (six years) with a Friday launch match each year.
- 8.2 **Public Affairs**
- a. **Introduction to the new Sports Minister**
- After Tracey Crouch's resignation in November 2018, Mims Davies MP was appointed the new Sports Minister; she is MP for Eastleigh, Hampshire.
- b. **School Sport Roundtable**
- i. In December, the RFU attended a roundtable on the new school sports strategy with the Secretary of State for DCMS and the Secretary of State for Education. The Secretary of State afterwards made a statement that sporting bodies offer a huge number of programmes and wants to make them easier for schools and teachers to access.
 - ii. The roundtable was a first step to forming the government's School Sport Action Plan. The plan will aim to ensure that every child will have the opportunity to take part in competitive sport - and in the minimum guarantee that children have access to quality, protected PE and sport sessions during the school week. The RFU will continue to work with DCMS and Department for Education to influence the drafting on the plan.
- c. **Broadcast Roundtable**
- In early January, the RFU attended a roundtable with the Secretary of State on the broadcasting of women's and disability sport. The increased broadcast of each was a commitment made by the Secretary of State in October 2018.
- d. **VVIP visit**
- The UK Prime Minister and Japanese Prime Minister visited Twickenham Stadium on 10th January 2019. The visit included a tour of the Japan exhibition at the World Rugby Museum, and watching All Schools play XRugby on the pitch.

e. **BREXIT**

In November the Department of Culture Media and Sport held a meeting to help professional sports prepare for BREXIT (with or without a deal). During the meeting, the sports in attendance focused on how the issues of data, movement of people, borders and finance could impact on sport, especially with reference to fixtures due to take place after 29th March 2019 (the date upon which the UK leaves the EU). Information from the meeting was shared across the RFU to help departments plan for BREXIT.

f. **Residents' complaints and focus in 2019**

- i. For the five matches in the autumn the RFU received three complaints and four compliments. All three of the complaints concerned traffic management.
- ii. The Army v Navy game continues to elicit more complaints from residents and was raised as a concern during the licencing application. As a result, additional measures have been agreed with the organisers; these include an earlier kick-off of 14:00 with no morning matches at Kneller Hall.

g. **Community grants**

- i. The RFU received 12 applications for community grants, of which 10 went to the Sponsorship Panel (made up of RFU and local representatives); five were successful and awarded funding
- ii. In addition, the RFU continued to support the Ivybridge Centre (Bridgelink), a homeless charity and the Christmas lights in Whitton and Richmond.

h. **Christmas dinner for the homeless charities, respite carers and families**

The Community Relations Officer worked with TEL to host a successful event before Christmas for local homeless people and for respite carers and their families. The lunch was held in the Live Room with a choir and TEL are keen to run it again next year.

i. **Residents survey**

- i. A condition of the RFU's licence (as a result of the most recent application) was that the RFU would conduct a residents' survey to gauge their thoughts on the type and management of events at Twickenham as well as the RFU's role in the community.
- ii. The survey was sent to residents ahead of the first Six Nations match and was promoted on social media.

j. **Meeting with Leader of the Council and our local councillors**

A senior leadership meeting took place between the RFU, the Leader of Richmond Council and our local councillors on Friday 18th January 2019. This was the first formal meeting since the new administration took office in Richmond

8.3 **Content**

- a. There was a positive set of results on RFU owned digital channels during the period compared to the previous year. Key to this was innovation on video formats and keeping pace with how different platforms are performing and developing.

b. **IBM Digital Refresh:**

The digital refresh of EnglandRugby.com has reached the end of the Discovery Phase and has moved into the Build Phase. The main aim remains delivering a top-quality user experience with the user journey at the heart of the site. Navigation and search functionality will be key.

c. **Event Marketing:**

Campaigns to sell tickets for the Red Roses and Under 20 Six Nations matches, England v Barbarians, Quilter Summer Internationals, and London Sevens are all underway.

d. **Participation Campaign**

We Play Rugby is being launched during the Six Nations period as the over-arching banner for the promotion of participation campaigns. This will consolidate activity in marketing rugby rather than the previous segmented approach of marketing single campaigns in isolation. However, it will be flexible enough to allow those programmes to maintain their own identity. Activity around We Play Rugby will ramp up at the end of this season, over the summer heading into the new season and through the Rugby World Cup.

8.4 CRM

- a. CRM was a major communication channel for the RFU in 2018 with 44.2m emails sent out to rugby fans and stakeholder across the Game - helping to support all commercial and grassroots targets.
- b. In 2019 there will be an increased level of support for rugby growth initiatives with the introduction of a more streamlined communication journey for players, coaches and match officials - enhancing the quality and relevance of the content communicated to them. This will have no impact on CRM's commercial targets for the year.
- c. The database has grown by 80k in the last quarter and the active emailable audience has grown by 50k (+10%) in this period. GDPR continues to limit the organic growth rate.
- d. The First XV has continued to contribute towards ticket sales with 7.5k tickets sold (c£700k) for England v Italy in the Guinness Six Nations and 25k tickets already sold (c£1.6million) for the matches against Ireland, Wales and Italy in the 2019 Quilter Summer Internationals - highlighting the value and importance of this model.

8.5 Brand

- a. The **We Play Rugby** participation campaign has been developed, with a promotional video produced to launch during the Six Nations.
- b. The brand update was further implemented across the organisation, including match-day presentation, social channels, and new stadium/sponsor branding. This will continue to be implemented in a cost-effective manner when new/updated materials are required.
- c. The RWC 2019 campaign will be finalised shortly.
- d. Brand Tracker headline results:
 - i. Passion for rugby shows a marginal increase in interest amongst those who say 'it is a sport that's for someone like me to watch'
 - ii. There is little difference across the waves in perceptions of rugby, although 'social' showing signs of increasing
 - iii. Awareness of the RFU's leading sponsors remain the same
- e. **Match-day Presentation**
 - i. Post-series feedback on atmosphere at Quilter Autumn Internationals was positive, with notable mentions from supporters across social channels.
 - ii. Improvement required for the Red Roses match-day experience when at Championship venues; cost effective plans are being developed for this.
 - iii. Plans have been developed for the Six Nations; balancing budgets with match-day experience/expectation.

8.6 Communications

- a. **England Men's Team**
 - i. The Rugby World Cup media regulations were implemented for the Quilter Autumn Internationals. This was an opportunity to prepare players and staff as to what to expect in Japan in terms of the daily routine of interviews with players and coaches and access to watch and film training.
 - ii. There was positive engagement with Sky Sports during the Quilter Autumn Internationals in terms of additional access to the team. Sky Sports broadcast a 30-minute programme 'Eddie Jones, rugby, Japan and me' on Sky Sports News and Sky One. Additional access was granted on match day including static camera in the changing room and player access on arrival at the stadium before kick-off.
- b. **England Women's Team**
 - i. There was consistent good quality media coverage of the Quilter Autumn Internationals against the USA, Canada and Ireland
 - ii. There was excellent positive coverage concerning the announcements regarding the 28 full-time contracts and seven EPS deals in January.
 - iii. All new EPS players were media trained earlier this month.

9. Q2 FINANCIAL REPORT

Sue Day - Chief Financial Officer

Council received an update on the Q2 Financial Results and the challenges facing delivery of the budget.

10. 2019/20 BUSINESS PLANNING

Sue Day - Chief Financial Officer, Steve Grainger – Director of Rugby Development, Rob Briers – Chair of Community Game Board & Nigel Melville – Director of Professional Rugby.

10.1 Sue Day gave a presentation that explained the RFU's revenue sources and gave a detailed breakdown of where the money goes.

10.2 Sue Day also explained the cyclical nature of the RFU (due to the varying number of matches at Twickenham) and the increased costs associated with the Rugby World Cup.

10.3 In addition, the challenges currently being faced by the RFU due to general uncertainty in the economy and structural changes in the broadcast and sponsorship markets were highlighted. The combination of these means that the RFU must reduce its cost base in 2019/20.

10.4 Cost savings are being sought throughout the organisation (overhead, professional as well as development), but this is difficult due to contracted costs and sponsored programmes (which yield no financial benefit if scrapped).

10.5 Community Game

a. Steve Grainger & Rob Briers explained how the Community Game Board is approaching cost reductions in the Community Game programmes and outlined the current thinking of how savings could be made. It was emphasised that the ideas are still at the proposal stage and that further work was required.

b. The CGB has spent a great deal of time in arriving at their proposals.

c. Council members were asked to contribute to the work by consulting with their CBs and proposing areas where costs could be saved.

d. Undoubtedly, unpopular cost reduction decisions will have to be made.

10.6 Professional Game

a. Nigel Melville expanded on the analysis of the costs incurred by the Professional Department.

b. A high proportion of the department's costs are fixed through the legal agreement with the Premiership Clubs and the players.

c. Focus is therefore on the underlying costs, which will be cut to the same extent as in other areas.

d. As in the Development Department, difficult decisions will have to be made.

10.7 The 2019/20 business plan will be discussed by Council before being considered by the Board, who will make the final decision.

11. AGE GRADE HALF GAME REGULATIONS

Chris Cuthbertson - Chair of Governance Standing Committee

11.1 Chris Cuthbertson presented a paper proposing the making of the current voluntary age grade half game policy mandatory from the start of the 2019/20 season by including it in RFU Regulations.

11.2 Under the proposal: **"all clubs, teams, schools and colleges must ensure that each player selected in every match day squad must play at least half of the available playing time"**.

11.3. The proposal was brought to this meeting, as opposed to being brought with the rest of the regulations changes later in the year, to provide as much notice to the game as possible.

11.4 This proposal has been considered and recommended by the Community Game Board, the Schools & Youth Governance Sub Committee and the Governance Standing Committee.

11.5 Council **APPROVED** the proposal and delegated authority to Governance to finalise the drafting of the regulations and such other changes as required in order to implement any additional principles agreed by the Community Game Board.

12. TRANSGENDER POLICY

Chris Cuthbertson - Chair of Governance Standing Committee

12.1 Chris Cuthbertson presented a paper proposing the adoption of a new RFU transgender policy.

- 12.2 The policy follows the World Rugby recommendation that each Union has its own transgender policy to facilitate participation at domestic level.
- 12.3 The Government Equalities Office estimate that there are 200,000 to 500,000 transgender individuals in the UK.
- 12.4 The policy proposed is the culmination of a broad consultation programme involving other national sports governing bodies, rugby unions, World Rugby, Sport England, transgender organisations and transgender medical experts.
- 12.5 The objective of the policy is to provide clear guidance to Clubs and transgender individuals. Under the policy, if an individual wishes to play for a gender, other than that assigned to them at birth, they will require RFU permission.
- 12.6 The policy only applies to contact rugby, to age grades above Under 11 and to adult rugby.
- 12.7 Sport England is producing broader guidance for sports clubs and facility operators and it is expected that this will be published shortly.
- 12.8 Council **APPROVED** the transgender policy and delegated to Governance to finalise the drafting of the policy and to make any other changes as required considering any further changes to the World Rugby Transgender Policy.

13. **CODE OF CONDUCT WORKING GROUP**

Paul Murphy - Past President & Chairman of the Code of Conduct Working Group

- 13.1 Paul Murphy updated Council on the work of the Code of Conduct Working Group.
- 13.2 The Group was set up to consider Codes of Conduct for Council Members, Privilege Members and Past Presidents and action to be taken in the event of a breach.
- 13.3 Work is progressing well. The next steps are for (1) the Group to finalise its proposals (2) to present those proposals to the March meeting of the Governance Committee and (3) for Council to consider any recommendations at its April meeting.

14. **COUNCIL RECOGNITION & REWARD REVIEW GROUP (CRRRG) UPDATE**

Malcolm Caird - Chair of the CRRRG

- 14.1 Council received an update on the work of the CRRRG and preliminary proposals
- 14.2 The aim of the work of the CRRRG is to review the entitlements of Council Members, Privilege Members and Past Presidents and to make recommendations to ensure that they are either necessary to permit the recipients to discharge their responsibilities to the Union and the Game and that they are appropriate to a modern Sport Non-Governmental Body.
- 14.3 In addition, the CRRRG is considering ways in which the entitlements can be amended to reduce the cost to the Union. It is estimated that the preliminary proposals, if adopted, would save the Union £130,000 per annum.
- 14.4 Council debated the proposals and were asked to submit any further comments to the Group for consideration ahead of firm proposals being put to the April Council meeting for decision.

15. **TECHNOLOGY UPDATE**

Jonathan Conn - RFU Technology Director

- 15.1 Jonathan Conn gave Council a technology update.
- 15.2 The recent focus areas have been:
 - a. GDPR
 - Guidance provided to the Game
 - 400+ processing activities identified within the RFU
 - b. 2018/19 Season
 - Roles & Permissions
 - Electronic Match Card
 - Age Grade Self-Registration
 - c. IBM Renewal
 - New 4-year partnership
 - Focus on Digital, Cloud & AI

- d. East Stand
 - Implementation of technology infrastructure
 - Operationally adjust to supporting new space.
- 15.3 in 2018 EnglandRugby.com had over 6.3m users, who viewed 39.6m pages. The redesign, which will be launched ahead of the Rugby World Cup, will build on this by being user centric with the right templates for the right information.
- 15.4 There will be an informal meeting with Council members on the morning of the Scotland game to discuss future developments and proposals.

16. **PROFESSIONAL GAME BOARD (PGB) REPORT**

Phil de Glanville - RFU Representative on the PGB & Nigel Melville - Director of Professional Rugby

16.1 **Review of Autumn Internationals**

Eddie Jones presented his review of England's performance in the Autumn Internationals to the PGB, highlighting strengths & weaknesses.

16.2 **Professional Rugby Injury Surveillance Project (PRISP)**

The PGB received a presentation of the 2017/18 PRISP data. This covered injury incidence, severity and burden of injuries in the professional game. The data shows an increase in severity of injuries (measured by time unavailable to play or train).

16.3 **World Rugby Law Forum - March 2019**

Following the death of four players in an 8-month period in France, World Rugby have convened a Law Forum in Paris on 18th/19th March 2019 specifically to look at the issue of injuries and to start the process of understanding and addressing it.

16.4 **Worcester Warriors**

Following investigation, the Board has approved the change of ownership of Worcester Warriors as required by RFU Regulations.

16.5 **Championship Tackle Height Trial**

- a. The trial was set up with the two-fold objectives of determining:
 - i. whether the height of the tackle could be lowered through Law changes and refereeing; and
 - ii. The effect on the incidences of concussion of such a change.
- b. After the pool stages it was evident that:
 - i. The tackle height had been lowered; and
 - ii. Concussion had increased.
- c. As a result, the trial was halted before the knock-out stages.
- d. A full report is now being prepared, which will be presented at the World Rugby Conference.

16.6 **New Structured Season 2019-22**

- a. During the 2019-22 period, mid-season breaks (arranged on a player by player basis) will be implemented. The PGB received a presentation on the system that will be used to monitor playing time by player to ensure that the agreed limits are not being exceeded.
- b. The system will be overseen by the Player Performance Management Group, which will be independently chaired. This group will resolve any issues that arise.

17. **TYRELLS PREMIER 15s**

Deborah Griffin - Chair of the Women's Performance Management Group (WPMG) & Louise Latter – Women & Girls Representative

17.1 Deborah Griffin presented a paper to Council from the WPMG reviewing the Tyrells Premier 15.

17.2 The WPMG paper asked Council to approve:

- a. The recommendations set out in the paper, namely
 - i. That the size of the league will remain at 10 clubs.
 - ii. The mechanism to access the league in year 4 will be through a combined process of audit and tender/retender process.
 - iii. This structure will be put in place for three years.

- b. Delegated authority to Board to agree upon the operational details pertaining to the audit and tender / retender process.
 - c. The principle that there will be no promotion and/or relegation from the Competition for a further three years from 2019/20.
 - d. Delegated authority to Governance to amend the TP15s regulations to reflect the principle set out in point 3 above.
- 17.3 Council **APPROVED** the recommendation that the league will remain at 10 Clubs but **REJECTED** the recommendation that the league would be ring-fenced for a further three seasons.
- 17.4 The Club eligible for promotion at the end of the 2019/20 season will still, however, have to meet the minimum operating standards.

18. **COMMUNITY GAME BOARD (CGB) REPORT**

Rob Briers - Chair of the CGB

18.1 **Business Planning 2019/20**

Over the last few months the CGB has been focussed on the challenges presented by reducing the Community Game budget, whilst still delivering the strategic plan objectives.

18.2 **PFR Funding**

The CGB has agreed a simplified process of both planning and fund release, which should reduce the administrative burden on CBs.

18.3 **National Rugby Survey**

The survey outcomes have been reviewed by the CGB. These will be shared with the CBs shortly.

18.4 **CBs/Council Member Engagement**

- a. An offer has been made to CBs for Board/Exec members to attend CB Exec meetings in April/May 2019. This has been well received and arrangements are currently being made.
- b. Informal meetings are being arranged with Council members around the Six Nations games.

19. **FUTURE U15/U16 PATHWAY CONSULTATION**

David Ewing - Chair of the Player Development Sub Committee & Don Barrell - RFU Head of Regional Academies

19.1 David Ewing advised Council that an independent review is being undertaken into the integrated player pathway from Under14 to Under18 to ensure that it is fit for purpose.

19.2 It is intended to consult the following groups:

- Players in the Developing Player Pathway (and their parents)
- Academies
- Regional Player Pathway Groups
- County Schools Unions
- CBs

19.3 A report will be produced in May 2019 with the aim to making recommendations to be implemented in the 2019/20 season.

19.4 Don Barrell gave an overview of the current pathway and the challenges.

20. **GOVERNANCE STANDING COMMITTEE REPORT**

Chris Cuthbertson - Chair of Governance Standing Committee

20.1 **RFU Position Statement on Supplements**

Governance reviewed the RFU position statement on supplements and proposed several changes. The draft statement recognises that supplementation is part of the current amateur sporting and general lifestyle landscape and supports the key message that supplements are not a substitute for the correct diet and should only be taken once suitable advice has been obtained.

20.2 **Game on Project**

Governance discussed a proposal from the Community Game Board that regulations be introduced to permit law variations (to the extent permitted by World Rugby) at defined levels of the game. The intention being to help more games get played. Governance agreed this in principle and will consider detailed regulations together with guidelines to assist league/match organisers at its next meeting.

20.3 Competition Structures in the North

Discussions and consultations are continuing with the Clubs in the North to determine a new competition structure that meets the needs of their Clubs and players. This is not an easy task, but proposals have been drawn up, which are being considered.

20.4 Club Takeovers

The Committee will be reviewing the regulations governing takeovers and mergers with a view to putting in place a more formalised process that will enable any applications for approval to be dealt with in a timely manner.

21. COUNCIL NOMINATION COMMITTEE REPORT

Mike Waplington - Chair of the Nominations Committee

21.1 Organising Committee (OC) Members

- a. Following approval by Governance earlier in the year the number of OCs dealing with matters arising from competitions has been reduced to two; one for the professional game and one for the community game.
- b. The composition of each Organising Committee is a Chair and a member (both of whom must be Council members) plus two members of staff.
- c. Expressions of interest were sought from Council members to participate as the Chair or a general member of each OC and 7 Council members submitted their interest.
- d. Terms of reference were obtained for the OCs which enabled Council NomCo to consider the merits and eligibility of each applicant to form the OCs and whilst all 7 could equally undertake any of the roles, after due consideration it was agreed that the composition of each Organising Committee should be as follows:
 - i. **PROFESSIONAL COMPETITIONS**
Norman Robertson - Chair
Terry Burwell - Committee member
Tom Price - RFU Staff member
Dean Ryan - RFU Staff member
 - ii. **COMMUNITY COMPETITIONS**
Ron Jones - Chair
Simon Collyer-Bristow - Committee member
Paul O'Leary - RFU Staff member
Mike Bennett - RFU Staff member

21.2 Audit & Risk Committee Member

Interviews are currently taking place to fill the vacancy on the Audit & Risk Committee.

21.3 Council Elected Board Member

On 4th January 2019 Council members were invited to apply for the role of Council Elected Board Member for the 2019/20 season. The closing date was 5th February 2019. Interviews will be held on 28th February 2019 and 1st March 2019.

21.4 Junior Vice President

Council **APPROVED** the recommendation of the Council Nominations Committee that Nigel Gillingham (Gloucestershire) be appointed Junior Vice President for the 2019/20 season.

22. PRIVILEGE MEMBERSHIP PROPOSALS

Mike Waplington - Mike Waplington - Chair of the Nominations Committee

22.1 Mike Waplington presented the updated paper on Privilege Membership.

22.2 Privilege Membership is currently awarded to those who have provided exceptional service to the Union whilst upholding its core values.

22.3 Council **APPROVED** the following recommendations, which were included in the paper:

- a. Privilege Membership be renamed Distinguished Membership.
- b. Only Council members will be eligible for Distinguished Membership (other recognition programmes are available for non-Council members).
- c. Council members must have served a minimum of seven years before being eligible.

- d. An individual will have served on a range of Board, Standing or Sub Committees as well as volunteering to participate in other Working Groups within the RFU or external bodies.
- e. An individual will have shown adherence and respect to the Code of Conduct (currently being drawn up) and the core values of the Game to be a credible ambassador for the Game and the Union.
- f. The Council Nominations Committee will nominate candidates to Council for approval at the last Council meeting of the season. Approval will require the support of 66% of Council members present.

The next Council meeting is on 12th April 2019 at Twickenham

Chris Cuthbertson & Rob Udwin

19th February 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.