



## **MIDDLESEX NOTES ON ADDITIONAL RFU COUNCIL MEETING**

Teleconference – 12<sup>th</sup> February 2021 @ 1.00 pm.

The meeting was convened at short notice to consider the resolutions that were withdrawn from the meeting on 5<sup>th</sup> February 2021 at the request of PRL so that they could complete their consultation process with their stakeholders.

The meeting was chaired by the President, Jeff Blackett

### **1. Future of the Men's Professional Game**

Bill Sweeney – Chief Executive Officer

- 1.1 Bill Sweeney updated Council on the latest discussions with the Premiership and Championship clubs.
- 1.2 Darren Childs (CEO of PRL) confirmed that PRL's discussions with its stakeholders had been satisfactorily completed and he would be supporting the resolutions.
- 1.3 Council discussed the implications of Covid-19 on the integrity of the Premiership and the Championship competitions this season.
- 1.4 It was noted that there is no availability in this truncated season to re-schedule any postponed matches in the Premiership; these matches would have to be cancelled and the matter considered by the organising committees, who would inevitably be making decisions that could affect the final position of teams in the league table. It seems inequitable that a team could be relegated based on the final table arrived at in this manner; hence the proposal to disapply relegation for the 2020/21 season.
- 1.5 Whilst the Championship is part of the Elite game and can therefore play under the same Covid-19 protocols as the Premiership there are considerable financial issues that have made this impracticable so far.
- 1.6 Following discussions with the Championship clubs it has been agreed that a meaningful truncated competition is still possible, although participation would be voluntary and will not affect any club's place in the Championship in the 2021/22 season.
- 1.7 To date eleven of the twelve Championship clubs have committed to the 2020/21 season; London Scottish has opted not to participate. The eleven participating clubs will play each other once only with a play off between first & second to determine the winner. There are three reserve weekends built into the fixture schedule, which should ensure that all games will be played.
- 1.8 The intention is that the winner will be promoted to the Premiership, which will mean that in the 2021/22 season, with no relegation from the Premiership, there will be 13 teams in the Premiership and 11 teams in the Championship.
- 1.9 Discussions are ongoing around bringing in minimum operating standards for promotion to the Premiership during the 2021/22 season. It is hoped that these discussions will be concluded by 31<sup>st</sup> May 2021 and will form the basis of a longer-term agreement. Any proposals will be brought to Council for consideration.

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- 1.10 If no agreement is reached then the status quo will resume, which means one team will be relegated from the Premiership and one promoted from the Championship at the end of the 2021/22 season. This will mean that the Premiership will remain, pro temp, a 13-team league. Discussions will also take place as to the optimum size for the Championship and how this will be achieved.
- 1.11 After a thorough debate, during which it was emphasised that any longer-term proposals must be brought back to Council for approval, Council **APPROVED** the following resolutions:
- a **Relegation in season 2020/21**
- i. that at the end of season 2020/21 there is no relegation from the Premiership into the Championship, and no relegation from the Championship into National One.
  - ii. that the drafting of the relevant regulation changes be delegated to the Governance Standing Committee.
- b **Future promotion and relegation**
- That, in the event that wider requirements for promotion from the Championship to the Premiership can be put in place and after agreement by the RFU Council following consultation with Premiership and Championship Clubs and a suitable calendar can be arranged, then:
- i. the regulations for season 2021/22 will include these requirements (but if not, then the mechanism for promotion to and relegation from the Premiership will be as currently happens); and
  - ii. the RFU Regulations (including the Premiership Regulations) will state that the Premiership season 2022/23 will finish no later than 20<sup>th</sup> May 2023 to allow preparation time for the 2023 RWC in France.

## 2. **Any Other Business**

There was no other business.

Meeting closed at 3.00 pm.

The next scheduled Council meeting is on 16<sup>th</sup> April 2021.

### **Chris Cuthbertson & Rob Udwin**

15<sup>th</sup> February 2021

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