



MIDDLESEX NOTES ON RFU COUNCIL MEETING

Teleconference - 16th April 2021 @ 10.00 am.

The meeting was chaired by the President, Jeff Blackett.

The meeting observed a one-minute silence to mark the death of HRH The Duke of Edinburgh.

1. Introduction & Welcome

Jeff Blackett - President

- 1.1 The President welcomed Council and three members of the National Youth Council to the meeting.
- 1.2 The President also welcomed Tom Ilube and Polly Williams. Subject to their appointments being ratified at the AGM, Tom Ilube will be taking over from Andy Cosslett as Chair of the Board and Polly Williams will be replacing Helen Weir as an Independent Non-Executive Director.
- 1.3 The President acknowledged the decision of the Premiership clubs to change their kick-off times on Saturday to avoid playing during the funeral of HRH The Duke of Edinburgh.
- 1.4 No new conflicts of interest were declared.

2. Decisions made using Email Protocol since last Council Meeting

Angus Bujalski - Legal & Governance Director

2.1 Covid Delegated Authorities

- a The Governance Committee proposed that the delegated authorities granted to it to agree any Covid related recommendations and implement new regulations or amend/disapply existing regulations be extended for the 2021/22 season.
- b Using the Email protocol Council unanimously approved:
 - i. The recommendations of the Adult Competitions Advisory Group.
 - ii. The recommendations of the Age Grade Restart Options Group.
 - iii. Such other Covid related recommendations that may be proposed (including pertaining to laws of the game).
 - iv. Implementation of new regulations (including updated versions of Regulation 22) and/or amend or disapply existing regulations, prior to and during the season to enact any agreed recommendations.

3. Chief Executive's Report

Bill Sweeney – Chief Executive Officer

3.1 Six Nations Review

- a Following England's disappointing performance in the 2021 Six Nations, a transparent & robust review has taken place.
- b The findings of the review will be presented to the Board.

3.2 Global Calendar

- a Work on the Global Calendar continues.





- b World Rugby has set up a working group, which is expected to report to WR Exco with recommendations this November.

3.3 **Player Welfare Update**

The RFU and World Rugby attended a DCMS Select Committee meeting on head injuries in sport.

- a The meeting was split into two sessions; several medics were interviewed in the first session with players and governing bodies interviewed in the second session.
- b In addition to representatives from the Football Association and the BOA (specifically focusing on boxing and snow sports), Bill Sweeney presented at the meeting alongside Dr Eanna Falvey (CMO of World Rugby). This was a useful and important opportunity to emphasise the global nature of the work and to explain the work the game has been doing over many years.

3.4 **Lions Tour**

- a It has now been agreed by all parties that the tour will go ahead in South Africa this summer as planned.
- b There will be an eight-match schedule.
- c The South African Rugby Union (SARU) is confident that fans will be admitted to the games, but final confirmation is awaited from the South African Government.
- d The touring party will be announced on 6th May.
- e The Lions v Japan game in Edinburgh on 26th June will be go ahead, although it is still too early to say whether this will be behind closed doors or whether fans will be admitted.

3.5 **Women's Six Nations**

- a England have progressed to the Final when they will play France.
- b The game will be played on Saturday 24th April and be broadcast on BBC1. [Post meeting note: England beat France 10:6 to win the Women's Six Nations for the third consecutive year.]
- c The England Scotland game was watched by 200k viewers and it is hoped that the final will attract over 1 million viewers.

3.6 **RFU Transgender Policy Consultation**

- a Following World Rugby's change of policy regarding transgender players, the Union has been reviewing its own transgender policy. A draft policy has been circulated as part of an extensive consultation exercise.
- b The Union is aware that this is a very emotive and sensitive subject.
- c Following the consultation exercise, a final version will be presented to Council in due course for approval.

3.7 **Return of Fans**

It is hoped that spectators will be permitted at the Premiership Final and the summer matches against Canada and the USA, which will now be played in England due to the Covid travel restrictions in North America.

4. **Governance of Player Welfare Work**

Conor O'Shea - Professional Rugby Director

- 4.1 Conor O'Shea and Simon Kemp continue to work on the governance and strategy of player welfare to align all stakeholders to address player welfare issues and concerns.
- 4.2 This work remains an important part of the overall strategy of the Union.



- 4.3 In order to bring together the various initiatives, and to build on over 20 years of work in this area, the Head Injury Prevention & Management Group will continue to operate as a cross functional working group with involvement across the game.
- 4.4 The group will continue to examine what further research can be undertaken, and what methods can be used to reduce head impacts in the game.
- 4.5 Whilst the group reports directly to the Board with feeds into the PGB and the CGB it will need to ensure that its work is aligned with World Rugby.
- 4.6 It is important that the Union is seen to be leading and driving work in this area,

5. **Update on Professional & Community Injury Trends**

Simon Kemp - Medical Services Director

- 5.1 Simon Kemp reported on the results of the 2019/20 Professional Rugby Injury Surveillance Project and the 2019/20 Community Rugby Injury Surveillance Project
- 5.2 As these reports have not yet been published, Council was asked to treat the information as confidential at this stage but will shortly be published on EnglandRugby.com.

6. **Adult Male Future Competition Structure (FCS) - Final Recommendations**

Stephen Pearson - Chair of FCS Working Group

- 6.1 Stephen Pearson presented the final recommendations of the Adult Male Future Competition Structure Working Group.
- 6.2 The recommendations had been arrived at following extensive consultation throughout the game. This has been aided by the Covid restrictions which had enabled more engagement, albeit virtual.
- 6.3 Regarding Lower XV's playing in the Leagues, Stephen Pearson stated that in those areas where the introduction of lower XV's was unlikely to achieve the objectives of the FCS review (minimising travel, player welfare/need, quality of competition and club sustainability), then the views of the local CBs and clubs would have to be taken into consideration.
- 6.4 The recommendations were discussed and approved by the Community Game Board at their recent meeting.
- 6.5 Following discussion, Council **APPROVED** all three recommendations (Appendix 1)

7. **Support for the Community Game**

Stephen Grainger - Rugby Development Director

7.1 **Return to Play**

- a The Community game resumed restricted contact activity on 29th March in line with Step 1 on the Government Roadmap.
- b On 12th April, outdoor hospitality opened, but spectators were still not permitted (Step 2).
- c On 26th April, games between clubs, using amended Laws, will be permitted.
- d It is looking hopeful that the Government will announce that Step 3 as planned on 17th May. This will permit full contact scrums and mauls to be reintroduced into training.
- e Assuming Step 3 is achieved on 17th May, full contact matches under normal Laws will be permitted from 31st May.
- f There is no restriction on adult matches being played over the summer, but there will be a need to focus on the scrum in the adult game to ensure that it can be safely reintroduced.
- g It is hoped that the 2021/22 leagues season will commence in September 2021.



h **Age Grade Rugby**

- i. Clear guidance has been issued to the game as to what activity is permitted for the age grade game over the summer.
- ii. The season has not been extended but permitted activity has been amended to enable preparation for the new season for those clubs that wish to carry out summer activity. This will be supported by appropriate resources from the RFU, which will be distributed before 31st May.

i **Constituent Body Calls**

Following the success of the CB group calls to communicate & consult with over the Return to Play, these will continue. The plan is to hold them regularly on the second Thursday of the month.

7.2 **Rugby Union Winter Survival Fund (RUWSF) Grants**

- a A significant amount of work has gone into securing the support from the Government through the Winter Sports Survival Fund. This is the largest investment ever made into our clubs and the process has helped strengthen the RFU's relationship with the Government and Sport England.
- b A huge collaborative effort from the staff and CB volunteers has resulted in 522 applications from clubs, with 454 eligible. Following these applications, the independent Board on 1st March confirmed an offer of £17m of grant support with a maximum cap of £50k per club.
- c The Independent Board has made a £1.1m grant for the elite Women's game, a £6m loan offer to the RFU to support community programmes and a £27m loan facility for asset improvement in clubs.

7.3 **RUWSF Asset Improvement Loan Applications**

- a The Rugby Union Winter Survival Fund Asset Improvement Loan is a partnership between the RFU, Sport England and the Government. It is designed to help clubs with their immediate survival through investment into their assets, enabling them to improve their financial sustainability.
- b Loan funding is available between £20k and £150k for facility projects.
- c Applications opened on 14th April and will close on 11th May.
- d Further information is available at [EnglandRugby.com](https://www.englandrugby.com).

8. **Community Game Board (CGB) Report**

David Roberts - Chair of the Community Game Board

8.1 **Business Planning 2021/22 Season**

- a Business planning discussions are challenging again this year and CGB are working through this diligently.
- b To date, the CGB has confirmed and agreed its prioritisation of where 2021/22 focus needs to be against the Project Union strategic objectives, and it has undertaken a critique of initial expenditure priorities drawn up by the staff team. This has led to the development of a headline indicative budget for 2021/22 that will be finalised once the overall organisational financial position is known.
- c CGB has also begun to review the implications of decisions in areas where it is likely that spend cannot be committed in 2021/22.
- d The budget is subject to RFU Board approval.

8.2 **Pitch Advisor Support**

Approval was given on a forward financial commitment to partner with Sport England on a programme with the Football Foundation to provide a dedicated Pitch Adviser support for Rugby Union. The government funding will fund three posts



(employed by Grounds Management Association) and the RFU will fund one additional post to provide dedicated support to clubs.

8.3 Match Official Communication Equipment

Approval was given on a forward financial commitment to replace match official communication equipment.

8.4 CB Safeguarding Support

Discussion took place on a revised assessment framework for CB safeguarding support and how this would be monitored by the CGB going forward. This focuses on a self-review undertaken jointly with the CB and CB Relationship Manager with a deep dive on each of the four geographic areas once per annum.

9. Payment of Players Recommendations

David Roberts - Chair of the Community Game Board

9.1 The Payment of Players regulations have now been in place for two seasons and have been working well.

9.2 Earlier in the season, the Payment of Players Review Group was reformed under the Chair of Malcolm Wharton to review the regulations and make recommendations for the 2021/22 season.

9.3 The review group's recommendations were presented to the CGB who agreed to recommend their approval to Council.

9.4 Council **APPROVED** the recommendations of the Payment of Players Review Group (Appendix 2).

10. Professional Game Board (PGB) Report

Phil de Glanville - Senior RFU Representative on the PGB

10.1 Composition

Nicky Ponsford (RFU Head of Women's Performance) will join the next formal PGB meeting as the Women's game governance structures start to become better integrated at a professional level.

10.2 Covid

Most of the focus has been on Covid-related policies, analysis and developments including:

- a Enhanced Covid protocols during Lockdown 3, focusing on off-field practices and behaviour in the main, especially as community prevalence rose after Christmas.
- b The introduction of fines (£100 to Restart) to reinforce those protocols for staff and players. The behaviour and response of the players and staff has been almost exemplary through this period of Lockdown 3.
- c A change to the testing system with an analysis of lateral flow tests leading to a recommendation to change from the more expensive and longer results lead time for PCR tests to lateral flow tests from the end of March 2021. This will likely be three days per week of testing.

10.3 The Championship

The Championship signed up to all the testing protocols (apart from London Scottish) and started their abridged season on 6 March after some warm-up matches. The competition is due to complete in June with a play off for promotion between the top two teams.

10.4 Second Team Matches

Several Premiership clubs requested second team matches. These are subject to the same match day protocols as for the 1st team and will be played locally to



minimise travel. This has included the England U20 team playing internal games alongside some matches against Premiership A XV's. England U18 camps have also been running successfully.

10.5 **Brain Health**

PGB was presented with a paper offering a brain health service for retired former professional rugby players along with an associated research project running for five years. Further information has been requested before this can be considered further.

10.6 **European Professional Cup Rugby (EPCR)**

- a The cancellation of the two EPCR rounds in January due to Covid cases meant the competition had to be re-formatted.
- b Sale and Exeter progressed to the Quarter Finals of the Champions Cup, but both lost.
- c Leicester Tigers and Bath have both progressed to the semi-finals of the Champions Cup and could meet in the final. The semi-final matches are on Friday 30th April (Leicester Tigers v Ulster) and Saturday 1st May (Bath v Montpellier).

10.7 **Autumn Nations Cup**

In January Eddie Jones presented a review of the Autumn Nations Cup and England's performance in it, successfully winning the competition.

11. **Premiership Minimum Standards & Structure Update**

Bill Sweeney – Chief Executive Officer, Conor O'Shea - Professional Rugby Director & Angus Bujalski – Legal & Governance Director.

- 11.1 The Union is currently in discussions with the PRL owner group and Championship Exec to determine new minimum criteria for entry into the Premiership.
- 11.2 The aim is to produce an "English Solution" that provides a competition structure that has long term financial sustainability (and is attractive to new investors) and develops England Qualified Players whilst providing a pathway for ambitious clubs with resources commensurate with playing at the highest level of the domestic game.
- 11.3 Angus Bujalski took Council through the draft criteria, workstreams and timetable.
- 11.4 A working group of Board and Council has been engaged and will work in tandem with consultation with the Premiership and Championship club owners.
- 11.5 Council continues to be updated through the regular informal sessions which have been introduced during the Covid restrictions and which have proved to be beneficial.
- 11.6 It is hoped to bring proposals arising from this work to the June Council meeting for approval.

12. **Governance Standing Committee Report**

Chris Cuthbertson - Chair of the Governance Standing Committee

- 12.1 The last meeting of Governance was on the 3rd March. At that meeting Governance:
 - a Approved the Premiership Regulations to affect the principle agreed by Council that there will be no relegation this season.
 - b Approved the 2021/22 Structured Season for both the Men's & Women's Game, which were circulated in a Community Game Update.
 - c Approved the Terms of Reference for the Adult Competition Regulations Review Group, which as previously reported to Council will be reviewing Regulations 13 (Adult Men's Competitions), Regulation 14 (Player Registration)



& Regulation 16 (Adult Women's Competitions). The Group is chaired by James Cook, who hopefully will give a short presentation to the June Council meeting on objective, process & timetable for this work. Any approved recommendations will be introduced for the start of the 2022/23 season.

- d Approved the recommendations of the Age Grade Restart Options Group relating to the 2021/22 season, which have now been communicated to the Game.

12.2 The next Governance meeting will be on 28th April, when the following will be considered:

- a Annual Regulation Review, which includes: Proposed changes (mainly clarification) of Regulation 3 (membership) and Changes to Payment of Player thresholds.
- b Changes to Regulation 9 (Pitch-side care).
- c Project Touchstone, which is the mandatory player affiliation project.
- d A new AP15s cup competition.
- e Updates on:
 - i. Transgender policy; and
 - ii. Covid Law amendments.

12.3 Foreign Player Definition

Council **APPROVED** the recommendation from Governance that the definition of a foreign player in RFU Regulations should remain unchanged for the 2021/22 season.

12.4 AGM Calling Notice

- a Council **APPROVED** the calling notice for the 2021 AGM, which will be held virtually on Friday 11th June at 5.00pm.
- b The calling notice includes:
 - i. Changes to RFU Rules to reflect:
 - 1 Recommendations from the Review of Powers of Council Working Group.
 - 2 Specifying that the RFU's financial statements should only be signed by RFU Board Members as it is the Board that has the fiduciary responsibility.
 - 3 Reducing the size of the Board from 14 to 12 to comply with the Sport England Governance Code. This will be achieved by removing one Council member and one member of the Executive from the Board.
 - ii. Ratification of the appointment of the following:

Chair of the RFU Board	Tom Ilube
INED	Polly Williams
 - iii. Re-election of the following:

President	Jeff Blackett
Senior Vice President	Nigel Gillingham
Junior Vice President	Rob Briers

13. Board Nominations Committee Report

Dominic Proctor - INED & Chair of Board Nominations Committee

13.1 Recruitment of Chair of the Board and INED

- a The recruitment process run by Perrett Laver was extremely effective, with a range of impressive candidates in the mix.
- b Tom Ilube and Polly Williams were both approved, as Chair of the Board and INED respectively, by the Board on 26th February and ratified by Council on 1st



March. Subject to final ratification at the AGM in June, they will take up their appointments on 1st August.

- c The induction process has already started with Exec and Board Members giving helpful feedback to the process.
- d Tom and Polly joined the main Board meeting on 19 March and will be attending Council and other senior Committee meetings ahead of their terms officially beginning on 1 August.

13.2 **Rugby Football Foundation (RFF) Trustees**

- a Following the appointments of Roger Clarke and Kirsty Marlor as RFF Trustees, a vacancy remains for a second Independent Trustee, the recruitment of which will be assisted by the RFU's HR team, and it was agreed that this should if possible be an individual with a protected characteristic to fit in with D&I objectives.
- b Recruitment of the independent Trustee will consider the skills and experience of the existing Trustees.

13.3 **International Representatives**

a ***International Representatives Generally***

- i. The last Board meeting agreed that a holistic review of how international representatives should be appointed considering the strategic needs of the RFU should be undertaken.
- ii. The International Relations Advisory Group (IRAG) will be reconvened to discuss the international strategy before the next round of WR meetings and will report back to the joint NomComs meeting in May.
- iii. The Board NomCom agreed to wait for this wider discussion before making decisions about international representatives, including Six Nations and Rugby Europe.

b ***World Rugby Exco Vacancy***

- i. World Rugby (WR) is currently running an election process to fill the vacancy created by the retirement of Gareth Davies.
- ii. Jonathan Webb has been nominated for the vacancy.
- iii. The election will be held in May.

c ***Independent Member on the Remuneration Committee***

The current independent member, Naomi Sutcliffe, finishes her first term at the end of this season, and the Board NomCom recommended, and the Board approved that she be reappointed for a further three-year term.

14. **Council Nominations Committee Report**

Mike Waplinton - Chair of Council Nominations Committee

14.1 Council **APPROVED** the recommendation from the Council NomCom that Maggie Alphonsi and Martin Corry be elected for a second three-year term as National Members on Council.

14.2 Mike Waplinton updated Council on the other work of the Council NomCom

a ***Volunteer Recognition Group (VRG)***

David McAteer (Chair), Nigel Gillingham & Mike Proctor and have been appointed to the VRG.

b ***Club Financial Viability Group***

Deborah Griffin and Stephen Pearson have been appointed to the Club Financial Viability Group, which is chaired by Paula Carter and reports to Governance.



- c ***Organising (Appeals) Committee for the Community Game***
Dave Clarke has been appointed as Chair and Steve Mead appointed as the second Council member on the committee.
- d ***Women & Girls Representative on Council***
Eleven applications have been received for this role. Council NomCom will prepare a shortlist for Board NomCom to consider.
- e **Remunerations Committee**
Two applications have been received for the Council role on RemCom, which Malcolm Caird vacates at the end of the season. Both have been forwarded to Board NomCom for further consideration.
- f ***Subcommittee Composition and term limits***
 - i. The Council NomCom has continued to work closely with the D&I Implementation Working Group on this aspect of work in developing an overall policy for both Council Members and independents on subcommittees and working groups.
 - ii. Part of this work will look to implement base term limits of three years on any one subcommittee as a member and three years as a chair.

15. **D&I Working Group Update**

Genevieve Glover - Chair of the D&I Implementation Working Group

15.1 Council received an update on three of the 10 recommendations previously approved by Council.

a ***Recommendation 1***

The composition of (i) RFU standing committees, (ii) RFU subcommittees, and (iii) RFU task & finish/working groups, to be considered within a D&I context and committees to be supported in achieving a diverse mix of members.

b ***Recommendation 3***

Consideration given to the D&I overlay on Council Member appointments, supporting CBs to attract and retain a more diverse pool of volunteer leaders.

c ***Recommendation 10***

To agree in principle to strengthen the relationship between National Youth Council (NYC) and RFU Council and leverage the experience and perspectives both groups can bring.

15.2 Further updates will be provided to the June Council meeting.

16. **Report from the Chair of the Board**

Andy Cosslett – Chair of the Board

16.1 **Board Meetings**

- a The last scheduled meeting of the Board took place on 19 March. The Board welcomed Tom Ilube and Polly Williams as observers as part of their induction process.
- b Mike Waplinton also attended the meeting as an observer in his capacity as Chair of the Council Nominations Committee. Given that that Committee is responsible for recommending the appointment of Council Elected Directors to Council, it is important that that Committee has a full understanding of the operation of the Board.

16.2 **Risk Register**

Part of the work of the Board is to review the RFU's Risk Register; this was undertaken at the March Board meeting. The Board noted that significant strides had been made in identifying and categorising the risks, and demonstrating how



they were being mitigated, but this remained a work in progress.

16.3 Board Finance Working Group

The Board Finance Working Group continues to meet, with specific focus on areas including liquidity, cost base, reserves, and Covid-related cash/revenue generation. A verbal update will be given at the Council meeting. This Group was set-up to be a short-term task and finish group, rather than a permanent standing subcommittee, and therefore is expected to finish its work before the end of this season.

16.4 Chair and INED induction process

It has been recognised that the induction process for new Board members has needed further work, and therefore comprehensive, bespoke induction programmes have been put together both for Tom Ilube and Polly Williams. These will involve providing a range of documents, together with a series of one-to-one meetings with key individuals, from Board, Council and the Executive, and attendance at a range of meetings. This has also been used as an opportunity to update additional induction programmes, such as for new members to the Audit and Risk Committee.

16.5 Board size and composition

The AGM Calling Notice includes Rule changes that propose the Board reduces in size from 14 to 12 over time. From 1st August 2022 there would be three rather than four Council Elected Directors, and the third Executive board seat will be removed at such time as the incumbent leaves the RFU.

17. Board Finance Working Group (BFWG)

Helen Weir - INED & Chair of BFWG &

Simon Massie-Taylor – Commercial Director

17.1 Workstream Update

- a Helen Weir updated Council on the work of the BFWG.
- b The group has been reviewing the financial modelling of the Union to ensure long term financial sustainability. This has been difficult due to the uncertainty caused by the Covid pandemic restrictions and the uncertainty around when they will be lifted.
- c Prudently, the BFWG has advised the Board that for the next three years, the cost base will have to be reduced from the pre-Covid level of £165m per annum to £140m. This will present some significant challenges to all parts of the union.
- d Due to the bank facilities that the Union put in place early in the pandemic, no liquidity problems are envisaged – in fact, consideration is now being given to releasing some of the facilities as it would be imprudent to maintain spending levels in an uncertain period with borrowings.

17.2 Debenture Debt Waiver Update

- a Simon Massie-Taylor updated Council on the debenture debt waiver project.
- b The Union currently has approximately £230m of debt owing to debenture holders. Albeit that the earliest debt is not due to be repaid until 2075.
- c The Union has embarked on a project to ask debenture holders to waive the debt to support the Union.
- d To date £28m of debt has been voluntarily waived by debenture holders and, by utilising the Government Gift Aid scheme has generated £1.2m of gift aid.
- e The target of £46m is still some way off, but progress has been hampered by the need to clean the debenture database. This has now been done and it is hoped that further funds will be waived.



18. Financial Report

Sue Day - Chief Operations Officer

18.1 Sue Day updated Council on the latest financial reports & projections.

18.2 The latest full year forecast shows a reduced loss of £25m. Whilst this is encouraging, it should be borne in mind that pre-Covid the Union was anticipating making a profit of £8-10m this year. The forecast loss therefore shows an adverse Covid variance of approximately £33m.

18.3 The Union remains solvent.

19. Organisational Review of RFU as a National Governing Body

Nigel Gillingham - Senior Vice President & Chair of Organisational Review Working Group

19.1 Nigel Gillingham reported that the working group had considered the feedback received during the informal Council meeting. Whilst there was a view that the review should be wholly independent, the working group unanimously agreed that for the review to be carried out in a timely manner the chair should be an internal appointee with detailed knowledge of how the Union operates. An independent element would be provided by including independent members on the group.

19.2 Council **APPROVED** the recommendation of the RFU Review Working Group that the Chair of the Organisations Review of the RFU as a NGB should be a recently retired or about to retire Council member.

19.3 The RFU Organisational Review Working Group will now undertake a recruitment process with a view to making a recommendation to the June Council meeting.

19.4 Once appointed the Chair will be instrumental in drawing up the terms for reference for the review (in line with the outline scope already shared with Council) which it is hoped will be presented to the first Council meeting of the new season for approval.

20. Any Other Business

20.1 Newly Elected Council Members 2021/22

The President informed the meeting that the newly elected Council members would be invited to the June Council meeting as observers as part of their induction.

Meeting closed at 3.30 pm.

The next scheduled Council meeting is on 11th June 2021, which will be followed by the RFU's Annual General Meeting

Chris Cuthbertson & Rob Udwin

26th April 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.



APPENDIX 1

ADULT MALE FUTURE COMPETITION STRUCTURE WORKING GROUP

Recommendations **APPROVED** by Council

1. That, from season 2022/23, the English Clubs Championship at Level 3 and below will consist of:
 - a. One league at Level 3
 - b. Three leagues at Level 4
 - c. Six leagues at Level 5
 - d. Twelve leagues at Level 6
 - e. approximately sixteen leagues at Level 7*
 - f. approximately 20 leagues at Level 8*
 - g. at Level 9 and below will be determined by the relevant organising committee.

*Exact number of leagues to be determined by final size of leagues, number of team entries and local need.

That at all levels leagues would be organised aligned to the key FCS principles (minimising travel, player welfare/need, quality of competition and club sustainability), and that at Level 4 to 6 this would be implemented on a regional basis, whereas at Level 7 and below this would be implemented on a broadly Constituent Body basis (retaining some flexibility where it makes sense for clubs on CB borders to play in different CBs).

2. That, from season 2022/23, cup rugby will be delivered after the league season (per level, from L5 and below) with mid-season (optional) entry for teams. The competition format will be determined such that pools will operate at Level 5 and top tier of Level 6, and with regional knockout waterfall competitions at bottom tier of Level 6 and for Level 7 and below, all culminating in a 'Community Game Finals Event'.
3. That from season 2022/23, Lower XV teams will be able to play in the English Clubs Championship up to and including Level 7 subject to specific criteria to be set out in the RFU Regulations.



APPENDIX 2

PAYMENT OF PLAYERS REVIEW GROUP

Recommendations **APPROVED** by Council

1. Changes to the Payment of Players thresholds for season 2021/22 as follows:
 - a. Level 3 - £250,000 (down from £275,000)
 - b. Level 4 - £125,000 (down from £157,500)
 - c. Level 5 - £50,000 (down from £65,000)
 - d. Level 6 – £0 - no change

The thresholds will need to be reviewed following the implementation of the Future Adult Competition recommendations as this may have an implication on the number of clubs at each level.

2. Clubs at Level 8 and below only need to complete the declaration annually if they pay their players or player coaches and wish to be eligible for RFU Benefits.
3. Student Clubs and non-voting clubs be removed from the Payment of Players regulation unless the Student Club plays in an RFU League at level 7 and above (ie Loughborough University).
4. No change to the regulations pertaining to Women's teams
5. No change to the current list of RFU Benefits as defined within Regulation 7.