



MIDDLESEX NOTES ON RFU COUNCIL MEETING

Teleconference – 11th June 2021 @ 10.00 am.

The meeting was chaired by the President, Jeff Blackett.

1. Introduction & Welcome

Jeff Blackett - President

- 1.1 The President welcomed the following observers to the meeting.
 - a Tom Ilube and Polly Williams. Subject to their appointments being ratified at the AGM later that day, 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.
[Post meeting note: Both were ratified by the AGM]
 - b Members of the National Youth Council; and
 - c Newly elected Council members
- 1.2 No new conflicts of interest were declared.

2. Decisions made using Email Protocol since last Council Meeting

Angus Bujalski - Legal & Governance Director

2.1 Chair of National Governing Body (NGB) Review Group

Mike Waplinton's appointment as Chair of the NGB Review Group was approved by Council using the email protocol.

3. National Youth Council (NYC) Report

Jordan Young - Chair of the NYC

- 3.1 Council received a report on the work of the NYC and its increased integration into the work of Council and its Committees & Subcommittees.
- 3.2 During 2021/22 the NYC's work will be project-based focussing on the following:
 - a **CGB Project – Young Volunteers**
 - i. The NYC will work to gain an understanding of the national landscape for Young Volunteers and aim to learn more about models of good practice for engaging young volunteers at Club and CB level.
 - ii. The aim is to report back and provide a bank of ideas around good practice at Club and/or CB level for engaging Young People.
 - b **PGB Project – Released Academy Players**
 - i. The NYC will work to understand the behaviours, attitudes and engagement in Rugby Union of players released from PRL academies in 2020/21 season.
 - ii. The Aim is to understand what factors play a role in retaining released Academy players within the Game, and to determine if there are any underlying themes as to why players do/do not continue playing.
- 3.3 The NYC is also keen to engage with CBs & Clubs and assist wherever possible.





4. Chief Executive's Report

Bill Sweeney - Chief Executive Officer

4.1 Six Nations

a Men

- i. Following the disappointing performance of the Men's team in finishing fifth in this season's Six Nations, a thorough review has taken place.
- ii. The review concluded that Eddie Jones remained the best person to lead England into the next Rugby World Cup, but several areas for improvement were identified and these will be addressed.
- iii. Following the recent departure of Simon Amor and Jason Ryles, the coaching team will be refreshed.

b Women

The Women's team secured their third successive Six Nations title, but several key areas have been identified for improvement as the team prepares for the postponed Rugby World Cup, which will take place in New Zealand later this year.

4.2 Commercial

a Broadcasting Rights

i. Six Nations

- 1 The men's and women's Six Nations tournaments will continue to be broadcast on free-to-air television following the recent announcement of new four-year agreements with BBC and ITV.
- 2 The BBC will be providing unprecedented coverage of the Women's Six Nations.

ii. Autumn Internationals

Agreement is close for the broadcasting rights for the 2021 Autumn internationals.

iii. Summer Tests

C4 will be broadcasting England's summer tests against the USA and Canada, along with England's A Game against Scotland A on the 27th June.

b Ticketing

- i. The strong response to recent ticket releases for the upcoming games at Twickenham has provided a clear indication of the appetite among rugby supporters to return to live games as soon as they are allowed.
- ii. The Allianz Premier 15s Final between Harlequins and Saracens (which was won by Harlequins) was attended by 1600 spectators.
- iii. The permitted attendance levels for the following forthcoming games have not yet been confirmed by Government but are expected to be a minimum of 10,000.

26 th June	Premiership Final
4 th July	England vs. USA
10 th July	England vs. Canada

c Debenture Donation Programme

The Debenture Donation programme has been a success with over 1,000 debenture holders gifting repayments due to them under their debenture loans to the Rugby Football Foundation. This has reduced the Union's debenture liabilities by £34m, while also raising approximately £1.5m in Gift Aid, which will be used to support the Community Game.



4.3 **World Rugby**

Jonathan Webb (RFU Representative on the WR Council) has been elected to the WR Executive Committee (Exco).

4.4 **Brain Injury Litigation**

A formal claim has yet to be received. A small number of clubs have been contacted by solicitors acting on behalf of ex-players and seeking information that the club may have on them. If clubs receive any such requests, they are requested to inform the RFU at the earliest opportunity.

4.5 **Return to Play**

- a Progress along the 'Return to Community Rugby Roadmap' has been halted due to Government concerns surrounding the prevalence of new COVID variants.
- b Dialogue with Government is ongoing to try to identify the trigger that will enable the return of full contact training, including the scrum and maul.

5. **Women's Rugby World Cup Bid 2025**

Steve Grainger - Director of Rugby Development &
Sue Day - Chief Operations Officer

- 5.1 The RFU is bidding to host Rugby World Cup 2025 (RWC25) with a vision to use the event to deliver a step change in the women's game, both in England and globally.
- 5.2 The formal process was launched in February 2021 when the Union expressed interest in hosting the tournament.
- 5.3 The Union has made its first phase submission. It is understood that France and the USA have also made submissions.
- 5.4 Final bids must be submitted prior to the deadline in January 2022.

6. **Community Game Update**

David Roberts - Chair of Community Rugby Committee

- 6.1 The key issues being dealt with by the CGB now are:
 - a Business plan & budgets
 - b Return to Rugby
 - c County Championships Review
 - d Project Touchstone (player affiliation)
 - e Girls Age Grade Band Review
 - f All Schools Review
 - g Safeguarding
 - h FCS Implementation (in conjunction with Governance)
- 6.2 In addition, the subcommittees will start preparing their detailed work plans for the 2021/22 season.
- 6.3 The first CGB meeting of the new season is on 7th September.

7. **Community Game – Rugby Union Winter Survival Fund**

Steve Grainger - Director of Rugby Development

7.1 **Loans**

- a 123 applications for Government grant funding have been received from clubs together with a further 8 applications for survival cashflow; totalling £11.5m
- b The applications are now being assessed by a joint RFU/DCMS panel.
- c This scheme is now closed.



- d Whilst the Government's requirement to only give loans to incorporated clubs, applications are being accepted from unincorporated clubs on the condition that, if awarded, the club will become incorporated.

7.2 Grants

- a 565 applications were received from clubs and 512 awards totalling £18.3m have been made.
- b Sample audits are being carried out to ensure that the monies are being used in accordance with the application.
- c The scheme is now closed.

- 7.3 In total our clubs are on course to receive a total of nearly £30m from the Government's Rugby Union Winter Survival Fund.

8. Project Touchstone Update

Ben Lowe - Head of Rugby Growth

- 8.1 Council received a written update on Project Touchstone.

- 8.2 Project Touchstone looks to deliver a new mandatory player affiliation process for adult community rugby players.

- 8.3 The aim of the project is to:

- a give players greater control over their own data record.
- b increase the ability for clubs, CBs and the RFU to communicate with players more effectively and with more engaging content to support player retention; and
- c provide better data to aid decision making.

- 8.4 The scheme will be soft launched in 2021/22. This will:

- a test the new technology process in a controlled environment with limited audiences.
- b understand the potential additional burden on volunteers.
- c determine how best to support CBs, clubs and players to complete the affiliation process.
- d test and determine the best way to communicate with players; and
- e help optimise the use of match card submissions at all levels.

- 8.5 If successful, a recommendation will be made to Council that affiliation become mandatory at all levels of the Community game in 2022/23.

9. Financial Report & Business Plan

Sue Day - Chief Operational Officer

9.1 RFU Financial Model

For the benefit of newly elected Council members, Sue Day explained the RFU's financial model and the need to plan over a four-year Rugby World Cup cycle. Sue Day also highlighted that at present over 80% of the Union's revenues are dependent on the playing of Men's England games at Twickenham.

9.2 Financial Report

- a The Covid pandemic has had a significant adverse effect on the Union's revenues with the Autumn matches (other than the final of the Nations Cup) and the Six Nations matches being played behind closed doors.
- b This has resulted in a forecast loss for the year of £25m, compared to an anticipated profit of £10m in a normal year 2 of a RWC cycle. The loss would have been higher had timely action to reduce the cost base not been taken.



9.3 2021/22 Business Planning

- a Business planning has been exceedingly difficult due to the uncertainties as to the short & long term impact of the Covid pandemic.
- b The 2021/22 business plan has been prepared on the basis that, on average, attendance at matches will be 50% of normal (returning to 100% in 2022/23) and that other revenues will take up to four years to recover.
- c This means that the cost base must be reset. The Board Finance Working Group (BFWG) agreed that the average expenditure over a RWC cycle should be reduced from £160m to £140m. Given that this includes contracted expenditure the impact on discretionary expenditure will be greater. Expenditure will be focussed on the strategic plan priorities. The impact on Community clubs will be communicated through the Community Game Update.
- d Should the revenue recover more quickly than assumed, the expenditure levels will be revisited.

9.4 Borrowings

- a The RFU's borrowings peaked at £64m and are currently at £60m with a further £50m of contracted facilities available.
- b If the financial situation does not worsen, it is anticipated that the Union will be debt free again by 2024.
- c This does assume receipt of the Union's share of the sale of a minority stake in the Six Nations to CVC.

9.5 Reserves

The RFU's reserves will be boosted by the CVC sale and the voluntary waiving of the debenture loans by many debenture holders. Whilst the latter does not generate cash (although it saves it in the long term) it does increase the Union's profit in the year in which it is waived.

9.6 Conclusion

The Union remains financially resilient and, save for an unexpected and dramatic downturn in its ability to stage matches is well placed to ride out the current financial storm caused by the Covid pandemic and recover strongly in the short to medium term.

10. Professional Game Board Report

Conor O'Shea - Director of Professional Rugby

10.1 Academies

- a Since the cancellation of the Premiership Cup, which had been earmarked as a 'development' competition for younger players, PGB has been discussing the ongoing issue of lack of a meaningful competition.
- b 'Second team' matches between Premiership Clubs are currently being arranged on an ad hoc basis.

10.2 Professional Rugby Injury Surveillance Project (PRISP) Report

- a This is a major item for the PGB over recent meeting. The key focus areas arising from the PRISP report are:
 - i. Match injury severity – reducing through World Rugby law change and application.
 - ii. Match concussion incidence – reducing injury through law change and application.
 - iii. Training injury risk
 - iv. Artificial Grass Pitches (AGP) – extending the moratorium on new AGPs.



10.3 **Premiership Rugby & Minimum Standards Criteria**

- a Discussions continue with the Premiership and Championship clubs on the best way for the professional game to 'Reset & Recover' over the next three seasons leading up to the end of the current Professional Game Agreement.
- b The final decision on the structure of the Premiership & Championship for the next three seasons rests with Council. To ensure that Council is fully aware of the issues, two briefing/discussion Council sessions have already been held. These sessions allow more time for discussion than would normally be available at a Council meeting.
- c An additional formal Council meeting has been called for 29th June so that Council can consider the options and decide.

10.4 **Championship Working Group**

- a As part of the review of the professional game, a working group will be set up to consider the future of the Championship, its role and competition format going forward.
- b The working group will start work in July and submit its report in December 2021.

11. **World Rugby Update**

Deborah Griffin - RFU Representation on WR Council

11.1 Council received an update from Deborah Griffin on WR's role & structure.

11.2 WR is the worldwide governing body for Rugby Union and as such is responsible for the Laws of the Game and governing the Game, as well as the playing of international matches (including the Rugby World Cups).

11.3 **WR Council**

- a The WR Council, which meets twice a year, consists of 52 representatives from 24 Unions:
 - i. 3 Representatives (one female) from each of RFU, Australia, France, Ireland, Italy,
 - ii. 2 representatives New Zealand, South Africa, Wales, Scotland
 - iii. 2 representatives (one female) from Argentina and Japan
 - iv. 2 representatives (one female) from each of 6 Regions
 - v. 1 representative from each of Canada, Fiji, Georgia, Romania, Samoa, Uruguay, USA
 - vi. Chair and Vice Chair
- b The RFU representatives are Deborah Griffin, Bill Sweeney & Jonathan Webb

11.4 **WR Committees**

WR consists of the following (shown with their RFU Representative):

- a Executive Committee (EXCO) – Jonathan Webb
- b Regulations Committee – Bill Sweeney
- c Professional Game Committee – Bill Sweeney
- d Community Rugby Committee – Jonathan Webb
- e Women's Advisory Committee – Sue Day
- f Finance Committee – No representation
- g Regional Committee – No representation
- h Audit & Risk – Deborah Griffin (Chair)
- i Sevens Strategy Group - Simon Massey Taylor

11.5 **WR Subcommittees**

- a High Performance Rugby Committee - Eddie Jones
- b Foul Play Sanctions Review Group – David Barnes



- c Anti-doping Advisory Committee – No representation
- d Laws Review Group – Simon Kemp

11.6 **WR General Assembly**

A General Assembly of all 128 Member Unions and Member Associations is held every two years.

12. **Governance Standing Committee Report**

Chris Cuthbertson - Chair of the Governance Standing Committee &

Angus Bujalski - Legal & Governance Director

12.1 Since the last Council meeting, Governance met on 28th April & 26th May.

12.2 Most of the recent work has been on determining and recommending changes to the RFU Regulations and RFU Competition Regulations. These changes were presented to Council at the meeting. Council **APPROVED** the changes and delegated final drafting to Governance.

12.3 The major changes approved included:

a **Regulation 3 – Membership**

The requirements for clubs to become voting members of the Union have been clarified and simplified.

b **Regulation 9 – Player Safety**

The requirements for pitch side first aid to be provided by clubs & match organisers for matches & training have been increased. As clubs will require time to understand and implement the new regulation it will not become mandatory until 2022/23, but clubs are advised to adopt the provisions as soon as possible.

c **Regulation 15 – Rules of Play**

The tackle height has been reduced to the armpit for the Under 15 to Under 18 age grades. This brings them into line with the regulations covering the rest of the age grade game.

12.4 In addition, Governance approved a trial whereby the height of the tackle is further lowered to waist height in specified Under 16 to Under 18 age grade competitions. In addition, in those trial competitions, the ball carrier will be penalised for 'dipping into tackles'.

12.5 Council also **APPROVED** a request from the National Clubs Association (NCA) to change its name to National League Rugby (NLR). The change will need to be ratified by the 2022 AGM to make the necessary change in the RFU Rules, but the new name will be adopted in the 2021/22 regulations.

12.6 All Regulation changes will take effect from 1st August 2021.

12.7 **Global Law Trials**

World Rugby is currently considering several Global Law Trials to be brought in before the start of the 2021/22 season.

13. **Board Nominations Committee Report**

Dominic Proctor - INED & Chair of Board Nominations Committee

13.1 The Board Nomco, whilst working closely with the Council Nomco, handles appointments reserved to the Board.

13.2 The following recommendations by the Board Nomco have been approved by the Board.

a **National Members on Council**

Maggie Alphonsi

Martin Corry



- b **Chair of the Rugby Football Foundation**
Kirsty Marlor
- c **Remuneration Committee members**
Naomi Sutcliffe (Independent)
Simon Wakefield
- d **Women & Girls Representative on Council**
Lou Latter

13.3 Additional ongoing work

- a Time limits for Committee members (including independents & chairs)
- b D&I targets for composition of Committees & Subcommittees
- c international representatives
- d Women's representative on PGB
- e Appointment of Directors to subsidiary companies
- f Appointment of chair of the Head Injury Prevention Management Subcommittee (to replace Helen Weir who is standing down from the Board)
- g Appointment of Board members to the NGB Review Group

14. **Council Nominations Committee Report**

Mike Waplinton - Chair of Council Nominations Committee

14.1 **Distinguished Members**

Council **APPROVED** the recommendations from the Council Nominations Committee that the following Council members who are leaving Council at the end of this season be awarded Distinguished Membership of the Union

- Malcom Carid (Surrey)
- Jim Chapman (Yorkshire)
- Simon Collier-Bristow (Gloucestershire)
- David Ewing (Cheshire)
- Steve Guy (North Midlands)
- Danny Hodgson (Northumberland)
- Ron Jones (Dorset & Wilks)

Rob Udwin (Middlesex)

- Mike Waplinton (Notts, Lincs & Derby)
- Malcolm Wharton (England Colleges)

14.2 This year there will be 13 new Council members, including **Eddie Keal** from Middlesex, who replaces Rob Udwin, who is stepping down after 20 years as Middlesex representative on Council.

14.3 The appointment of current Council members to the Committees & Subcommittees was also **APPROVED** (Appendix 1).

14.4 Council Nomco will now start work on interviewing new Council members with a view to allocating them to Committee & Subcommittees commensurate with their skills & experience. Staff appointments are made by the CEO.

15. **Diversity & Inclusion Implementation Working Group**

Genevieve Glover - Chair of D&I Implementation Working Group

15.1 Following their approval of the recommendations of the D&I Working Group, Council set up the D&I Implementation Working Group in 2020 with Genevieve Glover as Chair.

15.2 The working group has a two-year term, with one year left to run.

15.3 Council was updated on the work of two of the working group's task groups, namely.
a Diversity awareness training for Council & CBs. (Chair Matt Webb).



- b Guidance to CBs & Clubs to support inclusive practices and showcase best practice (Chair Ralph Knibbs).
- c Both are currently work in progress.

15.4 Recruitment of CB D&I leads continues, with 20 having been appointed.

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

Andy Cosslett - Chair of the RFU Board

16.1 Andy Cosslett steps down as Chair of the Board on 31st July. He will be replaced by Tom Ilube (whose appointment was confirmed at the AGM).

16.2 Recently the Board has focussed on:

- a Business planning & budgeting
- b Proposals for 'Reset & Recovery' in the professional game.
- c Health & safety

16.3 The Board Finance Working Group has completed its work and presented its final recommendations to the Board, which have been incorporated into business planning.

17. **National Governing Body (NGB) Review Group**

Mike Waplinton – Chair of NGB Review Group

17.1 The Terms of Reference have been circulated to Council and feedback is being received. The final ToRs will be submitted to Council at the first meeting of the new season.

17.2 In the meantime, work will start on recruiting members to join the Review Group.

18. **Valete**

The President paid tribute to Andy Cosslett (Board Chair) and Helen Weir (INED), who are both stepping down from the Board at the end of the season and to the following Council members who are also leaving the Union (year shown is their first year on Council): **Rob Udwin (2001)**, Simon Collier-Bristow (2010), David Ewing (2010), Danny Hodgson (2010), Ron Jones (2010), Malcolm Wharton (2010), Jim Chapman (2011), Mike Waplinton (2011), Malcolm Caird (2012), Steve Guy (2012), Chris Smith (2017) & Mo Jackson (2018)

Meeting closed at 3.40 pm.

The meeting was followed by the Annual General Meeting

The next Council meeting is on 29th June 2021. This is an additional Council meeting convened primarily to consider proposals for a three-year Covid recovery plan for the Premiership.

Chris Cuthbertson & Rob Udwin

18th June 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

Appointments to Committees & Sub Committees 2021/22

COUNCIL NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE

Ken Andrews, Ted Atkinson, Deborah Griffin, Steve Miles, Rob Walsh

COMMUNITY GAME BOARD

David Roberts (Chair), Maggie Alphonsi, Phil Attwell, Ted Atkinson, Roger Clarke, James Cook, Dave McAteer, Nigel Orton, Peter Whiting

Rugby Growth Subcommittee

James Cook (Chair), Terry Burwell, Kirsty Marlor

Player Development Subcommittee

Ted Atkinson (Chair), Fred Batchelor, Chris Brookes, Richard Bryan, Gary Henderson, Alan Milliner

CB & Club Development Subcommittee

Roger Clarke (Chair), David Clarke, John Inverdale, Steve Miles, Roger Pierson

Education & Age Grade Subcommittee

Phil Attwell (Chair), Ken Andrews, Gary Henderson, Lou Latter, Dick Tyler

Game Development Subcommittee

Nigel Orton (Chair), Keith Gee, Tim Miller, Michael Procter, Matt Smith

Competition Development Subcommittee

Dave McAteer (Chair), Paul Candlish, Lou Latter, Steve Mead, John Rogers, Rob Walsh

GOVERNANCE STANDING COMMITTEE

Chris Cuthbertson (Chair), Fred Batchelor, Terry Burwell, Paula Carter, James Cook, Peter Howard, Tim Miller, Nigel Orton, Jonathan Webb

Adult Competition Management Subcommittee

Terry Burwell (Chair), Paul Candlish, David Clarke, Paul Kaminski

Laws Subcommittee

Tim Miller (Chair), Simon Wakefield, Jonathan Webb

Education & Age Grade Governance Subcommittee

Fred Batchelor (Chair), Roger Clarke, Keith Gee

COUNCIL SUBCOMMITTEES

International Rugby Ticket Subcommittee

Michael Procter (Chair), Chris Brookes, Steve Mead

Ticket Sanction Subcommittee

Dave McAteer (Chair), Michael Procter