



Minutes

Community Board meeting

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| Location: | Teams | Date: | Wednesday 17 th June 2020 |
| | | Time: | 10.00am – 1.00 pm |
| Invited to Attend: | Sqn Ldr Damian Clayton MBE, Fred Baker, Peter Moran, Trevor Hunt, Stuart Prior, Sue Taylor, Jan Robinson, Steve Curtis, Sandy Lindsay MBE | Chair Person: | Ralph Rimmer (Chief Executive of the RFL) |
| RFL Officers in Attendance: | Marc Lovering, Kelly Barrett, Dave Rotheram, Steve Ganson, Jenny Baxter, Richard Tunningley (in part) | Invited Guests: | |
| Apologies: | Robert Hicks, Lois Forsell, Neil Kelly, Neil Ashton | | |

| Item No. | Agenda Item | Action |
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| 1.0 | <p>Welcomes & Apologies</p> <p>Apologies were received from R Hicks, L Forsell, N Kelly and N Ashton.</p> <p>Mr Rimmer opened the meeting. He discussed the £16 million of Government funding the sport had recently received and detailed the work to obtain it, its effect on the game and its support to every level of the game. He stated the RFL needed to use it wisely to ensure the success of the sport moving into 2021/22. Mr Rimmer discussed the international dimension to the sport and his earlier call with the NRL regarding a coordinated international calendar. Communication to every level of the sport has continued during the current climate including the attendees of this meeting.</p> <p>Mr Rimmer went on to introduce Sandy Lindsay as the chair elect to the Community Board.</p> | |
| 2.0 | <p>Minutes of the March meeting</p> <p>The minutes were accepted as accurate with no additional matters arising.</p> | |

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| <p>3.0</p> | <p>Matters Arising</p> <p>Primary Rugby League – Leagues had been given dispensation in 2020 to run with their preferred version of the rules, which would be reviewed during the season. However, with the games not taking place this season the Youth and Junior Management Group had requested dispensation to roll this proposal forward to 2021. No objections were received.</p> <p>It was agreed that the action surrounding the community game being suspended during the Festival of World Cups in 2021 should be placed on hold and would be considered further at a later date due to the uncertainty created by the COVID-19 pandemic.</p> | <p>J Robinson</p> |
| <p>4.0</p> | <p>Chief Executive Update</p> <p>Received during item 1.0</p> <p>Mr Rimmer reaffirmed that discipline would be required on the call and that an opportunity would be given to ask questions following each agenda item. Attendees should use the hand feature to make it known their wish to speak.</p> | |
| <p>5.0</p> | <p>Sport England Update</p> <p>Mr Lovering detailed the information on the slides regarding both Sport England and the Community Game returning to play. He began with the update regarding Sport England; there had been 3 successive years of growth.</p> <p>Mr Hunt questioned whether the growth seen in the junior, youth and open-age game was primarily due to the figures from the women’s game. Mr Lovering stated that it was the overall figures that showed growth.</p> <p>Mr Baker questioned if all the positivity in the figures was from growth or if player retention was also a positive. Mr Lovering stated there was a separate specific target relating to retention figures, which was a bit more challenging to track however the 2% retention target had been met ahead of lockdown.</p> <p>The figures for the previous year were unavailable as they were not set to be signed off by Sport England until the next meeting scheduled for early July. There would then be a formal end of year process. Mr Lovering stated the next Sport England funding cycle would be evolution rather than revolution. The new Sport England strategy was not expected until January 2021, but Mr Lovering went on to discuss what he thought this may look like.</p> <p>Ms Robinson stated how difficult reporting for this year would be due to the lack of activity. Mr Lovering described how Sport England were being very understanding and were expectant of a drop in figures. Mr Lovering confirmed the sport would not be penalised because of this.</p> <p>Mr Lovering went on to describe the RFL process to present to Sport England ahead of the new funding cycle. He detailed this in slide 10. He was keen that a roadmap was used in the next funding cycle for tasks to be executed in a planned order. There would be in time a suite of more public facing strategy</p> | |

documents made available.

Mr Lovering stated the initial plan for the strategy document was to keep this in draft form, this was not to be confirmed until Sport England had finalised the RFL's interventions, due in January 2021. Mr Rimmer reiterated the draft would be circulated well in advance and discussed at the September Community Board meeting. At this time members would be able to have their input. The Community strategy must be informed by aligning with SE strategy, RFL strategic objectives, 17-21 strategic interventions and the whole game review. There must also be a strong focus on inequality and wider social outcomes.

No more questions were received.

Mr Lovering went on to present a document named CRL return to play guidelines. This document was requested by Sport England as a roadmap of how the RFL foresee the Community game returning to play. The government had already fed back that they were happy with the document's content.

The intro page detailed the purpose of the document and contained links to the DCMS, RFL and SE specific guidance. There were no dates on the document as these were unknown at the time.

The levels/stages within the document were linked to those of official government guidelines.

1. Lockdown, no rugby activity, virtual activity only.
2. Social distancing. Small group activity, non- contact. Mix of some online activity. (level at time of meeting)
3. Reduction to social distancing. Contact sport with restrictions. Progression through semi contact version of the game. A progression through small groups into activity for variants of the game. Mr Lovering detailed the modification of Touch RL could be adapted if social distancing was reduced to 1m.
4. Minimal social distancing. Routine monitoring. Phased return to normal activity. Adaption of rules/temp rule changes.

Mr Moran questioned if different locations could be at varying levels on this scale, to which Mr Lovering confirmed the guidance could and should be adapted for such instances.

Mr Hunt questioned if club houses would open at the time of pubs/restaurants. Mr Lovering foresaw that the upcoming openings of leisure centres would be linked to changing rooms opening, and that clubhouses reopening would be linked to pubs reopening. Initially these would have limited capacity and adhere to social distancing regulations. Mr Lovering stated there was a risk with every stage of the sport's return, but this could be minimised via varying elements of mitigation so that a phased return was possible.

Mr Prior suggested if the professional clubs returned to play, community clubs would wonder why they cannot open and asked what the strategy was in regard to dealing with this. Mr Lovering stated it was down to testing. Mr Rimmer supported Mr. Lovering in that the reasoning was testing procedures and the cost of it, but also the risk assessment of training, and players households' occupations (key workers etc). In the professional game, risk assessments must

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| | <p>be submitted to Public Health England and UK Sport on these issues and there were a variety of complexities in the development of bio-secure environments which currently only the SL clubs could meet. The return of the community game would have to wait until the situation moved forward and further Government advice on community sport was issued.</p> <p>Mr Hunt questioned if there was any possibility of cancelling all community game activity for the 2020 season. Mr Lovering stated if there was a window of opportunity to deliver some activity then total cancellation should not be an option. The impact on the following season would need be considered.</p> <p>The last page of the document was safeguarding and hygiene.</p> <p>No other questions were received.</p> <p>Mr Lovering stated that the document would be circulated in the media shortly and ongoing checks with the relevant authorities would continue so that the RFL could progress with the plan at every opportunity.</p> | |
| <p>6.0</p> | <p>Laws of the Game Recommendations</p> <p>Mr Rotheram outlined the task set to himself and Steve Ganson following the January Laws Committee which was to create a matrix of law differences between the UK, Australia and internationally. He also explained that, the joint objectives of the Laws Committee were to ensure that the game remained entertaining and safe. In relation to the latter it was important to show the game was following DCMS guidance and that reviewing the laws to adapt where possible to make it safer in the current pandemic was appropriate. The RFL had taken medical and scientific advice. Mr Rotheram offered that he could be contacted post-meeting with more detail in relation to the specific medical figures.</p> <p>Mr Rimmer stated resuming SLE activity was priority. The Laws Committee had recommendations to reform some laws to reduce risk which would go to the SL and Championship/League 1 CEO's forum before going to the RFL Board for approval. The outcome would go back to Public Health England and DCMS as part of the plans to resume the sport.</p> <p>Mr Hunt asked what would happen if the SL CEO's refused to remove scrums from the game. Mr Rimmer stated that the final decision sat with the RFL board.</p> <p>Mr Moran requested clarity that the laws discussed would not affect the Community Game. Mr Rimmer confirmed this was the case and this item was for information only. Mr Lovering stated other than the testing element the return to play would be similar to the community game and government guidelines would always be followed.</p> <p>No other questions were received.</p> | |

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Player Pathways 2021

Mr Rotheram presented the slides. He started by stating all player pathways are currently suspended. In March there was a revision to the Operational Rules for tiers 1-3, this had since been approved by the Board. Mr Rotheram went on to explain that the programmes within the professional club academies' development had ceased for the moment. Working with the Academies, the RFL needed to find a way to meet the needs of the players and ensure financial sustainability for the clubs. Therefore, it was required for interim measures for 2021 to be put in place.

Mr Rotheram explained the status and activity levels of programmes. Women's and Wheelchair RL EPU programmes had received webinars from sports psychology and nutrition. This has allowed staff to keep in touch with players and provide some learning opportunities. The Community Lions' staff had benefited from an inspirational webinar with Shaun Wane. The professional club Scholarship and Academy programmes were currently suspended with many staff on furlough.

Mr Rotheram went on to explain that the Regulatory meeting had been tasked to form a working group which comprised of RFL and SL club representatives in order to form a way forward for activity within SL clubs underneath their first team in 2021. The working group had to consider being player-centred, easing the financial burden on clubs and also keeping the pathway functioning.

Mr Rotheram went on to explain that the slide containing the key proposed recommendations for 2021 was subject to board approval. U15s would have a delayed start, Scholarship programmes were to be extended for a year and given 4 playing opportunities at U17. Academy U18's was to be extended for a year to become U19. It is also proposed that some amateur registrations are to be allowed. The Reserves programme would be suspended for 2021 but would remain governed by the Operational rules. The next steps were for these recommendations to go to the SL clubs and final approval to sit with the RFL Board.

Mr Hunt questioned why there was a need for amateur registrations for the academy programme to make teams up? Mr Rotheram stated that it would allow clubs to retain players, but they would not have to contract them, and therefore keeping them in the system whilst easing the financial burden on the clubs. Mr Moran questioned if the scope of these players would be limited. Mr Rotheram stated the clubs could recruit providing they acted within the Operational rules. Mr Rimmer confirmed this was for one year only.

Mr Prior stated that he agreed with Mr Moran on this point. He questioned if the U-17 players would get an extra opportunity to be signed by the professional clubs. Mr Rotheram stated that they would and that clubs may not sign U17 players in the current season. Mr Prior stated that in his opinion he would not necessarily re-name the Academy as Under 19 just for one year. Mr Rotheram accepted his reasoning but this is a RFL Regulation that the competition is age-banded for players Under 19 years,

Mr Baker asked in regards the scholarship recruitment in September, how would this be made fair. Mr Rotheram stated this was down to the clubs who had been

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| | <p>given guidance by the RFL.</p> <p>No more questions received.</p> <p>The meeting took a 10-minute break.</p> | |
| <p>8.0</p> | <p>Match Officials</p> <p>The presentation was received by members of the Match Officials working group.</p> <p>Ms Robinson commenced and stated that a Match officials Strategy had already been produced and was on the Community Board share point section. Ms Robinson requested the Community Board read through it and return any amends and suggestions to her by the 30th June.</p> <p>Ms Robinson stated that the working group had received support and guidance from Doctor Tom Webb. Dr Webb has extensive cross sport expert knowledge of the development of match officials and the barriers to recruitment and retention. By combining this work with that of the working group's review of the Whole game review, the working group had put together some game-wide aspirations.</p> <p>Ms Robinson explained that the working group had agreed at their previous meeting that a definition of abuse was needed.</p> <p>Ms Robinson went on to explain the call-to-action project. It was to be designed to address the requirements found in the whole game review around reducing the abuse directed toward young MO's and to explore the support work required around these officials.</p> <p>Ms Robinson described the armband system the working group had proposed. These would be different colours depending on the MO's experience. This was designed to indicate to others the level of experience of the match officials.</p> <p>MO's CPD was discussed as something that should be offered to officials to help them develop and cope with difficult situations.</p> <p>Mr Prior talked about the armband strategy being centred around education and gave a pathway for the MO's. The education would be aimed at MO's, societies, coaches, parents and Club leadership.</p> <p>Mr Moran voiced his concerns the armband strategy could highlight the MO's inexperience, potentially making the abuse worse. Mr Prior suggested the strategy would be aimed at progression and that education on the strategy was key. Mr Ganson explained the research had been completed by Dr Tom Webb with the FA and other NGB's, and such initiatives were found to have made a difference to decreasing the amount of abuse. Mr Rimmer stated it was down to clubs to support MOs and the armband strategy as there would be no game without MO's. Mr Ganson explained that appointment officers must buy into the armband system and take into consideration the likely culture of individual games when appointing MO's.</p> | <p>ALL</p> |

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| | <p>Overall positive feedback received for this strategy.</p> <p>Mr Hunt suggested defining the term abuse could leave loopholes if the wording was too specific.</p> <p>Mr Rotheram reminded the group this strategy was not one in isolation and was integrated with other projects following the whole game review.</p> | |
| 9.0 | <p>Protect Our People</p> <p>Sqn Ldr Damian Clayton MBE commenced the presentation on the Protect Our People project.</p> <p>The Enjoy the Game campaign has been relaunched. SL, Championship and League 1 teams have been supplied with Enjoy the Game assets. The video was not played but could be viewed later. The RFL website has also been updated with these messages.</p> <p>Ms Barrett detailed the infographics displayed. These were a user-friendly version of what was contained within the Operational rules. Only three were displayed but more had been produced for volunteers, coaches, and administrators.</p> <p>Ms Barrett went on to detail the plan for reinstating the Game Day Manager training.</p> <p>Ms Barrett detailed the education required to improve touchline behaviours which would also support the MO working group strategy.</p> <p>Mr Hunt asked if a report could be received when circulating communications to ensure that the RFL were aware of who opened, read and engaged in these communications relating to these projects. Ms Barrett stated the CRM system had this capability.</p> <p>Ms Barrett presented the remaining slides quickly due to time. Slides would also be made available on SharePoint for everyone to review. Included were details around insurance policies for community game players. Clearer communication was needed; however, the information was also available on the RFL website.</p> <p>Mr Baker suggested that the insurance cover could be stated when a player was registering. Ms Barrett confirmed that it was our intention to communicate with players on a whole range of areas however this was on hold until we were back playing.</p> <p>Sqn Ldr Damian Clayton MBE detailed the actions set to the Community Board namely; do all clubs have a Game Day Manager, ensure RFL were aware of all discipline cases, feedback thoughts on the website, receive the views from leagues on using discipline fines for education packages and review the RFU's website for injury prevention and suggest ways the RFL could recreate. Feedback to be sent to Ms Barrett.</p> <p>Mr Rimmer questioned, in relation to injury prevention, had it been considered to amend the rules of the community game. Sqn Ldr Damian Clayton MBE stated it had not, but it would now be looked at.</p> | <p>Kelly Barrett</p> <p>ALL</p> |

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| <p>10.0</p> | <p>Coach Education</p> <p>The proposal paper had already been circulated ahead of the meeting.</p> <p>Mr Tunningley began by stating that during the whole game review, there were aspirations identified which included a need to raise the number, status, and quality of coaches. The working group was then created which led to the production of the proposal paper.</p> <p>Mr Tunningley detailed the current situation in terms of the minimum standards for coaches. He noted there were currently no CPD requirements and there was no culture of continued learning among coaching standards. Mr Tunningley stressed the importance of CPD in order to improve standards.</p> <p>Mr Tunningley went on to explain the game wide review feedback and how that was used to shape the proposal.</p> <p>Mr Hunt detailed the behaviour changes that were needed to improve from the feedback received. Part of this was the requirement that from January 2021 coaches would be required to complete the Coachright course prior to the season starting.</p> <p>Mr Baker stated that from his experience CPD has been lacking and suggested online resources could assist in its delivery. He suggested this would not increase the number of coaches but would possibly improve the quality of current courses and increasing the number of coaches had not been covered in the paper. He suggested a lower level coaching course could be rolled out to make stepping in to coaching easier, as currently time and costs were high.</p> <p>Ms Robinson suggested a precursor course be reinstated which used to be in place, as Mr Baker suggested. Mr Rotheram affirmed the current level 1 and 2 courses were of industry standard with UKCC. He suggested a level 0 course for PRL could be considered.</p> <p>Mr Lovering requested an update on the Level 2 course being condensed to include some online learning. Mr Tunningley stated a blended learning model was being explored.</p> <p>Mr Rimmer and Ms Lindsay MBE left the meeting.</p> <p>Mr Tunningley stated CPD was being created and curated for coaches which would be housed on Our Learning zone which could be aimed at the Level 0 coach.</p> | |
| <p>11.0</p> | <p>Any Other Business</p> <p>Mr Hunt questioned if the community Game Euro league would be administered by the RFL. He was concerned of its activity affecting the community game. Mr Rotheram stated Mr Rimmer would be speaking with the appropriate people.</p> <p>Mr Hunt also suggested asking children who play in community clubs what school they attended to give a better understanding of which clubs and schools are working together. Mr Lovering explained the past issues in capturing this</p> | |

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| | <p>data. Ms Barrett stated the question was asked during player registration but was not currently mandatory. Mr Lovering would pick this up with Neil Ashton.</p> <p>Mr Moran asked if the rule change regarding a 6-tackle restart was in place for the community game. His concerns were regarding the game becoming too quick for a regular tier 5 player. Mr Rotheram stated the rule changes were yet to be confirmed. He reaffirmed the purpose of the Laws Committee was to make the game fair, safe and entertaining.</p> <p>Mr Lovering and Ms Barrett suggested they would keep the Community Board updated on government guidelines.</p> <p>Meeting closed 13.10</p> | Marc Lovering |
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