

RFL COMMUNITY BOARD SUMMARY – 12TH MARCH 2025

Dear Community Game Colleagues,

The Community Board met yesterday for the first meeting of 2025. We met at the impressive new facilities at Wakefield Trinity RLFC where we will be holding some of our community finals throughout the year.

As you may be aware Sandy Lindsay MBE, Chair of the Community Board resigned from her position as RFL Non-Executive Director (and Community Board Chair) last week.

Sandy acknowledged that she had limited knowledge of the community game when she first became Chair. However, she quickly became involved by attending matches and events across the country, fully immersing herself in the sport. She served as Chair for four years, and both the Community Board and the wider community game deeply appreciate her significant contributions to advancing the Community Strategy. We want to take this opportunity to express our gratitude for her dedication and commitment to the sport and our communities.

Although the RFL Council meeting scheduled for yesterday morning was postponed, the Community Board met as planned and had a full agenda. As is customary, we believe it is important to provide a summary to keep everyone informed. Business is continuing as usual across the community game.

We were joined remotely at the beginning of the meeting by RFL CEO Tony Sutton who was able to provide members with an update on the recent events surrounding the postponement of the RFL Council Meeting. Mr Sutton confirmed that the RFL had written to all members of the Council the previous afternoon to confirm that the four resolutions proposed by members had been passed by proxy. These included the removal of RFL Chair Simon Johnson and the appointment of a Chair of an Implementation Committee. The Implementation Committee will conduct a review of the sport with the findings to be reported at the next scheduled Council meeting in July 2025. The Implementation Committee will constitute Club Representatives alongside RFL Board Representation.

Whilst The Community Board respects the rights of clubs in the professional tiers of the sport to seek a review, if the scope of that review extends to or has an impact on the community game then the members were united in agreeing that the community game must have appropriate representation and voice in those discussions. The Community Board expressed full support for Mr Sutton and his ability to represent the community elements of the sport although depending on the nature and scope of the review further community representation may be required.

The manner of the imposition of an interim Chair was of great concern to the Community Board. However, members were able to take some comfort from assurances given that a fully transparent process to appoint a new independent Chair would begin after the 3-month review period maintaining compliance with the Code for Sports Governance. Such compliance is essential in protecting the Sport England funding which is of such great significance to the sport.

Turning to other agenda items Kelly Barrett and I provided an update on the work undertaken by the RFL Development Team throughout 2024. These updates are provided through the 'More Than a Sport' Community Rugby League Reports which are produced twice yearly. As was anticipated and reported previously there was no significant growth across the community game in 2024. The Women and Girls' section of the sport continues to see growth whilst we continue to face challenges with men's open age.

To access the full More Than A Sport Review in full please [click here](#).

Given that a substantial part of the agenda was taken up by discussions relating to the various resolutions and outcomes it was decided to roll over the planned discussion around competition structure/pyramid until the next meeting.

We did however have time to consider the male player pathway proposals. The male talent pathway within licensed academies is one of the most contentious issues within the sport and has the potential to cause harm to the community game if not managed appropriately. An outline of the proposals for the future of the male pathway post-2027 was given to Community Board Members who were asked to feedback views in advance of a meeting with Heads of Youth from various professional clubs which is taking place next week.

In closing, the Community Board remains steadfast in its commitment to supporting and growing the community game. As we navigate ongoing changes within the professional game, our focus will remain on protecting the interests of the community, ensuring that grassroots Rugby League continues to thrive and evolve. We thank all those involved in our game — from players and coaches to volunteers and partners — for their continued dedication. We look forward to working together to deliver an inclusive, sustainable, and impactful future for Rugby League.

Marc Lovering
On behalf of the RFL Community Board