DORSET & WILTS RUGBY FOOTBALL UNION LIMTED

A meeting of the Dorset & Wilts. RFU Council wase held on Tuesday, 29th September 2026, from 7:00 pm via Zoom

MINUTES – ~~AGENDA~~

[*working assumption: papers sent with or referred to in this agenda will be taken as having been read*]

No Item **Lead/~~Action~~**

1. **This meeting was due to be held in person, but due to only three confirming their attendance, it will now be held via Zoom.**

2. **Attendance, Inc. apologies: co-options and any introductions**

Voting Members of Council

Jane Hart [JH]	**Apol**	**Nigel Mattravers [NM]**	**Atte**	**Gerald Burden [GB]**	**Atte**
Alison Hunter [AH]	**Apol**	**Chris Taylor [CT]**	**Apol**	**Alan Ottaway [AO]**	**Atte**
John Constable [JC]	**Atte**	**Michael Bamsey [MB]**	**Atte**	**Sean Macey [SM]**	**Apol**
Elena Notarbartolo [EN]	**Apol**	**Ed Taylor [ET]**		**David Wookey [DW]**	**Atte**
Duncan Souster [DS]	**Atte**				

Invited Attendees

Jason Yarwood [JY]	**Apol**	**Marcus Monier-Williams [MMW]**		**Nicola Vaughan [NV]**	**Atte**

Abbie Watkins attended on behalf of the RFU

3. **Minutes:**

To note the minutes of the Council meeting held on the 18th of August 2026. To view Please Click Here

Noted

4. **Reports**

- **Action List for Council Members**
  Updated list to be circulated
- **Administration**
- Can you all review and update your section of the D&W Website, info to admin@dwrugby.co.uk.

- Updates wanted for the pages below
  Page of Remembrance
  Honours

- Budget – Needs to be signed off, circulated on the 28th of August 2026 at 11.20.

Needs to be reviewed quarterly
As per RFU Regulation 5 – clubs should submit in some form of accounts to the D&W, this action needs to be reinforced.
Clubs should submit some form of their accounts by 31st of December (each year)

- Regional Growth Board.
  Email circulated
  NM updated the meeting following a telephone conversation with the RGB Chair, during the call NM stressed the need for extra funding to be made available for club facilities.

- D&W Priorities update
  Women & Girls Rugby
  Retention
  Coaching

- **CB Engagement Team**
- Your Year in Rugby – Dorset & Wilts
  NV updated the meeting about the RFU Data
  PowerPoint circulated
  NM and JC are the current Tableau licence holders
  NV to arrange a training meeting
  AB reported to the meeting on Club meetings held
- VP Membership – meeting arranged
- Sponsorship

- **Area Representatives**
- Previous period activity:
  East Dorset – the new ERL module causing most issues, primarily Christchurch. Hopefully between us we have sorted this,

  Nothing else at the moment owing to the late start to season

  West Dorset – Ed is trying to push Walking Rugby in W Dorset. Dorchester & Puddletown ready to go,

  North Dorset not far behind, all are engaged with Emily

  North Wiltshire – Pitch Status and fixture potential congestion (delayed season start and possible knock if we have a harsh winter) being the words from clubs in this area.

  South Wiltshire – Meeting held 7 Sept. 5 clubs represented as well as Abbie (the RFU Club Developer) who provided an RFU update on club support. Other clubs are encouraged to be welcomed back in, hopefully at the next meeting. Club representatives were pooling experiences and perspectives (what these meetings are about) Pitch conditions again a major talking point, but also some very useful debate, particularly around different approaches to membership fees, reducing barriers to participation and exploring alternative ways of bridging potential income gaps through grants, sponsorship, Vice Presidents and other opportunities.

  Generally we need to encourage the huddle meetings, as can be seen from Duncan's above, these are invaluable to us and the clubs.

  Clubs at risk:
  None made known to me.

  Club development requirements: •

A call was put out for volunteer clubs to engage in a review of men's competitions, I sent this to the 4 leads to see if their clubs would be interested, Dorchester and Amesbury have been put forward and Ian Renard will be in contact with them to give more detail on what is involved and invite their help.

As previously mentioned, there is still need more buy in and attendance from RFU at Huddle meetings to spread the RFU word to clubs as well as Area Reps spreading the CB words. Abbie is now on both Dorset WhatsApp groups

Problem issues:
(Ongoing standing identified concern) Player registration data (senior and AG) still needs attention – see Governance report, area reps are requested to ensure this is part of Meeting agendas as it is a regulatory requirement.

We do need a call for all 5 of us to consider what we can do to best serve the needs of the clubs and encourage better engagement by them with the CB. We still have 1 club in Dorset that won't engage with us, but as soon as they hit an issue, they expect us (well me in this case) to turn round and fix it quickly – works both ways

Other items for discussion
My main thought is a meeting to look at how we work and encourage the Wiltshire clubs to set up the WA groups, including Abbie, John Constable and myself as support for the reps. Some clubs are beginning to advise on role changes, hopefully rest will advise and ensure GMS is up to date.

- **Governance**

- Discipline

  GB updated the meeting about Discipline issues for week ending 26th September 2026. JC also updated the meeting about matches played.

- Data & Registrar

  JC suggested that we look at sending a letter to all clubs about GMS registration, maybe during October.

  Registrar:
  Season start is now a couple of weeks behind us – although not the competitive one – but clubs should be reminded that all senior players should be renewing their registrations before the first weekend of competition. I have a look at a couple and there are a lot of players yet to renew, this MUST be done by the players, not the club registrars. Those not renewing should be completely deregistered and where applicable remove from club – (GDPR issues, which would be covered by the GDPR rep)

  Age Grade players need reregistering by parents, likewise any non-returns removed – I always suggest end October for that work.

  GMS
  Post AGM role changes should be completed, if not we need to encourage clubs to do his ASAP – Area Reps can assist with this.

  General clean-up of GMS is a good thing to do between now and November Most clubs carrying information on people they have no legal right to hold.

  Help available from me or formally via the request for training link.
  https://help.rfu.com/support/solutions/articles/103000246628-how-do-i-receive-gms-support-and-training-

Registrations and Data Cleansing.

A bit earlier than I normally do this – I usually wait 'til second week October – I have circulated the spreadsheet (as promised) I've just pulled together (manually this season as normally I give the headings to Mario and he lets the system pull it, but he has left RFU and no replacement that I know)

Anyway, this gives us an idea where clubs are with registration and assignment of players to teams. Most don't seem to have assigned any women or AG (those that have them) one hasn't assigned any at all, and some assigned all players to all teams – Good luck with that for the league secretaries!)

In a couple of weeks I will do it again and then send out a direct mail via GMS to registrars and data officers regarding outstanding renewals/re-registrations and the suggestion that data officers start clearing the no returners from their club GMS – They won't do it, or some might but the big one's wont ill bet. Meanwhile as discussed, maybe a president's letter to clubs reminding them of AG regulation 15.2.5

> **5. When and how often should I register to play?**
>
> a. All Age Grade Club Players must be registered annually on the RFU's Game Management System:
>
> i. for new Age Grade Players at a Club, they must be registered within 45 days of them first joining the Club; and
>
> ii. for existing Age Grade Players at a Club, they must be registered within 45 days of the start of a new Season at the Club.

And the relevant part of Regulation 13 or 14 depending on level which the club plays at (13.2.4 & 14.5)

- Safeguarding – No Report filed

  Unconfirmed reports suggest that JF has stepped away from the role for the time being.

  Play it Safe courses remain an issue.

  NV to contact the CSO at Marlborough RFC

  NV to circulate lists (Courses undertaken and booked)

  Play it Safe Courses held

Start Date	Attendees Booked	Venue
23/08/2024	20	Swindon RFC
29/08/2024	4	Bradford-on-Avon RFC
04/09/2024	20	Bradford-on-Avon RFC
04/09/2024	20	Swanage & Wareham RFC
11/09/2024	19	Swanage & Wareham RFC
12/09/2024	19	Dorchester RFC
16/09/2024	4	Marlborough RFC
18/09/2024	8	Wimborne RFC
25/09/2024	11	Lytchett RFC
26/09/2024	20	Salisbury RFC
02/10/2024	20	Royal Wootton Bassett RFC
07/10/2024	23	Bournemouth RFC
14/10/2024	18	North Dorset Rugby Club
21/10/2024	12	Bridport RFC - Cancelled
04/11/2024	13	Bournemouth RFC

07/11/2024	16	Bradford-on-Avon RFC
07/11/2024	15	Salisbury RFC
04/12/2024	0	Salisbury RFC- Cancelled
30/01/2025	13	Dorchester RFC
12/02/2025	21	Trowbridge RFC
24/02/2025	16	Wimborne RFC
26/02/2025	19	Bournemouth RFC
06/03/2025	18	Bradford-on-Avon RFC
13/03/2025	5	Swindon Old Boys RFC - Cancelled
17/03/2025	20	Bridport RFC
19/03/2025	14	Sherborne RFC
31/03/2025	20	Salisbury RFC
02/04/2025	15	Devizes RFC
03/04/2025	9	Swindon Old Boys RFC
09/04/2025	11	East Dorset Dockers RFC
16/04/2025	10	Oakmeadians RFC - Cancelled
30/04/2025	14	Melksham Rugby Club
28/05/2025	13	Devizes RFC
10/09/2025	18	Swanage & Wareham RFC
25/09/2025	20	Salisbury RFC
29/09/2025	20	Wimborne RFC
30/09/2025	20	Corsham RFC
02/10/2025	19	Chippenham RFC
06/10/2025	20	Bournemouth RFC
20/10/2025	12	Sherborne RFC
10/11/2025	9	Supermarine RFC
10/12/2025	22	Minety RFC
13/01/2026	17	Weymouth & Portland RFC
20/01/2026	18	Weymouth & Portland RFC
16/03/2026	12	Wimborne RFC
30/03/2026	12	Salisbury RFC
21/04/2026	19	Dorchester RFC
28/04/2026	16	Trowbridge RFC

Upcoming Play it Safe Course

DATE/TIME	LOCATION
29/09/2026 18:30	Bournemouth RFC
05/10/2026 18:30	Amesbury RFC (Kings Arms)
06/10/2026 18:30	Frome RFC
07/10/2026 18:30	Frome RFC
08/10/2026 18:30	Trowbridge RFC
13/10/2026 18:30	Frome RFC
14/10/2026 18:30	Trowbridge RFC
29/10/2026 18:30	Bradford on Avon RFC
04/11/2026 18:30	Chippenham RFC
09/11/2026 18:30	Oakmeadians RFC
16/11/2026 18:30	Bridport RFC

Playing up question – re: England Rugby Schools, email circulated – NV to investigate

- GPDR – Nothing to report
- Anti-Doping & Illicit Drugs – No Report filed
- Inclusion & Diversity – No Report filed
- RugbySafe – No Report filed

- Festivals – No Report filed

- **Club Support**

NV and GB updated the meeting about ongoing issues at Pewsey Vale RFC, the club has accepted an offer of support from the D&W. Date to be arranged.

Vacancies – Update wanted

Senior Women's	Head Coach – Backs Coach – Forwards Coach. Interviews to be held next week.
Governance	Replacement Lead maybe needed.

Awards Evening – Volunteers wanted to run the awards event.

NM reported that a volunteer had been found to fulfil the role of CB Volunteer Co-Ordinator.

Season 26–27 – renewed opportunity for Club Support face-to-face workshops. One in Wiltshire and one in Dorset.

AO and GB to contact MW on his return from holiday.

Women's Leadership Development Programme

Applications are now open for the Women's Leadership Development Programme. This programme is aimed at women in leadership roles at clubs, CBs, or referee societies, including committee and board positions. The programme is designed to help develop and amplify participants strengths and build resilience and confidence to make a positive difference in their rugby environment.

Please share the **Women's Leadership Development Programme application pack** with anyone who may be interested.

We've attached an image that can be used to promote the programme on social media.

Applications close: Sunday 8th November.

Young Leadership Programme: Lead the Game

Applications are also open for a Young Leadership Programme for 16–25-year-olds.

This programme is for young volunteers who are keen to take on wider leadership opportunities outside of their club/organisation and are ready to take the next step in their leadership journey. Co-delivered by the National Youth Council, the programme, will help participants build the skills, confidence and networks needed to take on leadership roles and make a positive impact across the game. Participants will have access to online learning, hear from young leaders during an online session, and attend an in-person day on 5 December.

Please share the **Young Leadership Programme: Lead the Game application pack** with anyone who may be interested.

We've attached an image that can be used to promote the programme on social media.

Applications close: Sunday 4th October

Online Learning

In addition to the launch of England Rugby Learning, we also have a series of workshops and webinars available to support volunteers across various topics.

Information on upcoming workshops & webinars can be found here: Online Learning | Rugby Football Union

- **Director of Rugby**

- Full list of coaches, physios and managers wanted for the coming season for the following
  Under 17-18's boys
  PDGFP Girls Under 16's

  PDG North Centre
  Manager – Graeme Morrison — gmorrison3107@gmail.com
  Lead Coach – Gareth Wheatley — Gareth.Wheatley@outlook.com
  Assistant Coach – Ben Shuker — cletus151@hotmail.com
  George Jones – Assistant Coach — jonesgw02@gmail.com

  PDG South Centre
  Manager – Caroline Durston — ERDPPSouth@gmail.com
  Lead Coach – Kevin Moggridge — kev.moggridge@gmail.com
  Assistant Coach – Richard Dent — richarddent74@icloud.com
  Assistant Coach – Danny Jones — dannyjohnjones1977@hotmail.com

  Under 18's Girls
  Manager – Leanne Brock — leannerbrock@gmail.com
  Head Coach – Lia Gingell — Liagingell@outlook.com
  Coach – Sam Knott
  Assistant Coach – Lara Debenham — laradebbenham@yahoo.co.uk

  Following successful U16 Girls assessments, 32 Girls were selected to join the PDGFP Girls U16's programme….

  PDGFP South Centre

  Following successful U16 Girls assessments 32 Girls were selected to join the PDGFP Girls U16's programme….

  The draft PDGFP Girls U16 RACI will be submitted to D&W's and the RFU, on 30th September, this document will be updated during the season as required

  Senior Women's – No Report filed
- Senior Mens Review of the Men's Representative Game
- Representative Rugby – Senior Mens – Senior Women's – Under 18's Boys – Under 18's Girls
  JC updated the meeting at the County Championships
- Community
  Men's Competition's Research Survey
  Detail circulated
  JC reported that the RFU are looking at setting up a group to review the impact of climate change on the game.
- Age Grade

  Abbie Watkin RFU Club Developer has set up a D&W's Age Grade on-line meeting forum with CB clubs.

  Rational - Running regular forums allows clubs to connect to other volunteers managing the age-grade section at their club which in-turn can create opportunities for sharing of best practice and community

support. Also, it allows for RFU and CB updates and opportunities to be easily communicated with a space for questions and feedback, with club voice at the heart of the sessions.

The first online TEAMS meeting is on 12/10/2026

What will be covered on the 12th of October?

- Introduction to Abbie as RFU Club Developer and Gordon as CB Age grade lead
- D&W Updates
- Safe-guarding updates and introduction to Kirsty Phillips as the new SW Safe Guarding Development Officer
- What is T1 Rugby and how can you use it to grow your age grade
- Reg 15 review and update
- Introduction to School Rugby Managers
- Breakout rooms to discuss age grade retention and sharing of best practice
- Questions and feedback / AOB

All plans in place for the 2026/27 Season Age Grade Cup Competitions. BoA could not get enough players to have an U15's team, so withdrew from the cup comp. Melksham U15's has replaced BoA in the cup comp. The U15's clubs registered to play in the cup comp have been notified and change in the draw for teams participating have been made accordingly by the comps team

- Walking Rugby – No Report filed
- Women's Rugby – No Report filed

- **RFU Council Representative**

Please see below a note sent this evening to our Club Chairs, Secretaries and Treasurers, along with the attached report.

Please find attached some notes I made following last Friday's RFU Council meeting which I hope you will find of interest.

Can I also take this opportunity to request that clubs make their best effort to look after and support referees. Across the Twin Counties, be it Saturday or Sunday, there can be games that end up with no referee allocated. This becomes a problem, especially on Sundays with Age grade games.

Referees are volunteers just like anyone else and if they end up getting abuse both on field and from the touchline, they will just give up or stop referring at clubs- so it's in all our hands to work to ensure referees continue and thus more games can go ahead.

This report is based on personal recollections and should not be treated as full minutes

The first meeting of the RFU Council took place on Friday 25th Sept 2026.

The President (Sir Bill Beaumont) welcomed everyone to the meeting, especially the new Council Reps.

CEO Report (Bill Sweeney) was first, and he started by referencing he had visited several clubs hearing first hand from the volunteers helping to run the game in clubs, their success and challenges. The impact from Covid is still lingering in the game with players playing less and not wanting to travel far. Rugby clubs need to be more than just a 'Rugby club' nowadays- a community focus point etc. He also mentioned Bore holes with the long dry summer having passed again this year. The Regional Rugby Growth Boards Chairs are now in place and the rest of the 'teams' being identified and in place.

Focus of these is to grow the game helping with gaining finance. Alongside this the Chairs are building regional networks and relationships with CB's and Professional clubs. The delay to the start of the season was touched on with most of the coverage being supportive and understanding of why the move was made. Work continues to look at how the Premiership will be expanded. This also includes working with Prem clubs to improve the Performance of the National side. Discussions have taken place with the French to see how they turned things around/ combined the development of their top tiers along with the National side. Reference was made to the WXV currently underway along with the up-and-coming Nations Championship games coming up in November. Work around the Stadium Masterplan continues with on-going discussions with Richmond Council. Finaly an update on the Head Injury lawsuit was given.

Chair's Report (Sir James Wates)- The Board met in July and discussed Financial Sustainability, Strategic Targets and Risk Management. It also met on 8th Sept discussing Long-term financing & liquidity, Board Effectiveness Review along with looking at the longer term. Player retention is a key issue for the game.

Financial Report (Francesca Pierce)-CFO- we are early in the new financial year, but financial matters are looking favourable. This is year 3 of the current cycle which should be a strong year due to the extra home games this time around. FY27 budgeted rugby investment of £97m across professional clubs, the community game and England teams represent another year of strong investment.

Variations in revenue and spend across the years were discussed, especially in relation to the differing match profiles. All key metrics were brought onto one page, showing a targeted cumulative underlying profit across the first 3 years of the cycle, supporting investment in strategic growth initiatives in all years and the upcoming significant loss expected in the final year, in line with historic trends due to the men's RWC.

Community Game Board Report- (David Roberts & Steve Grainger)- The CGB as approved the 26/27 Investment Summary & operational Plan, along with the release of funding to CBs. Governance Committee has been asked to look at Reg 3. It has also agreed the delayed start to the season and is looking into 2 groups to review the future of volunteering and its impact on Rugby along with looking into the impact/implications of Climate Change on Rugby Union and make recommendations on how we might need to change. Clubs are asked to sign up to the CRISP programme

Governance Standing Committee- (Paula Carter)- the workplan for the Committee was shared with Council for any comment. This includes reviews into various regulations plus usual items covered across the season.

Inclusive Leadership Group (Matt Webb)- advised of up-and-coming CB I&D drop-in sessions and schedule for future calls. Also advised on the Inclusion framework which is being trialled in several CBs. The report also mentioned the launch of the Anti-Sexism and Misogyny project.

Other standing reports were noted from Men's Professional Rugby Board, Champ Rugby Board, Head Impact Prevention Committee. Council also received an update on Commercial activity, noting the recent agreement with Lloyds Bank and Charles Tyrwhitt.

Council Nominations Committee then asked Council to agree revised TOR for the Committee. Agreed unanimously. Council was then asked to agree the Chair of the National Youth Council sits as their representative on Council – again agreed totally.

County Championship Regulations 26/27- Council was asked to agree these to reflect changes after a recent review around structure, player eligibility etc. for the coming season after feedback from CBs. Again, this was passed unanimously.

Bill Beaumont provided an update following the first meeting of the Governance Oversight Group formed of members of Board, Council and the Executive. The group has set two areas to review and identify opportunities to improve - firstly, the role of the Board, Council and the Community Game Board

and secondly, corporate governance and modernisation of the Union's Rules. These workstreams will be taken forward with the aim of ensuring the Union has clear, timely and transparent decision-making structures (in line with best practice) in which Member views continue to be represented, and decision-makers are accountable to Members.

Finally, a paper was presented for info on the outcomes of the strategic targets for season 25/26 and outlined the 26/27 targets. For season 25/26 the targets under Play, Perform, Follow, Fund & people were all met bar the targets on Adult Player and Girls registrations were not quite reached, the later was set quite high to build on RWC2025- both targets were however higher than for season 24/25.

The targets for 26/27 have been suggested by the Executive and were challenged by the board before sign-off.

The afternoon session was spent on the following items:-

Community Game Update - Steve Grainger (Executive Director of Rugby Development) shared a positive trend in registration and team league numbers.

John Lawn (Game Development Director), David Fraser (Training Workforce Manager) and Matt Watts (Area Training Manager) introduced England Rugby Learning, the mobile-first platform launched in July 2026, highlighting that the first eight weeks delivered 45,723 active users and 108,607 completions. Overall feedback on the platform had been strong, and the next steps include campaigning phase two, Salesforce integration, and reporting language changes to remove minimum standards and distinguish free content from paid content.

David Roberts (Junior Vice President and Interim Chair of the Community Game Board) reflected on the decision to delay the start of the season in the community game and the communication of this decision. Council members provided feedback on the process.

Terry Burwell (Council Member for Hampshire) confirmed the Competition Landscape Steerco as a time-limited CGB group owning a 12-month roadmap for the Competition Landscape Plan, with recommendations to be evidence-led. Emerging recommendations from the Steerco included travel and league size, match completion at lower tiers, volunteer capacity and education/club clashes. Terry outlined that consultation should run through autumn, with recommendations and delivery plans due in the new year.

Finally, Steve Grainger reminded Council that although all Chairs had been recruited, recruitment of new members for the Regional Growth Partnership Boards remained ongoing. The purpose of the Boards is to grow incremental revenue of rugby in new places and strengthen regional partnerships

Invited Attendees

- **Referees** – No Report filed
- **Schools** – No Report filed
  South Somerset SRM, working in the North Dorset area
- **CBRM**

5. **AOB:**

Dates

Online meetings

29th of September 2026	(In-person meeting planned) – due to only 3 people confirming attendance was held via Zoom
10th of November 2026	
15th of December 2026	

26th of January 2027
9th of March 2027
~~20th of April 2027~~ **New date – 13th of April 2027**
8th of June 2027

In-person meetings
13th of July 2027
21st of July 2027 (AGM)

RugbySafe Audit to be completed by 30th of September 2026
Safeguarding Audit to be completed by 25th of October 2026
Age Grade consultation current under way

Gerald Burden - Gen Sec