



MIDDLESEX NOTES ON RFU COUNCIL MEETING

Hybrid meeting @ Twickenham Stadium on 25th February 2022 at 10.00 am.
Third Council meeting of the 2021/22 season

The meeting was chaired by the President, Jeff Blackett.

The President welcomed Roxroy Fearon, Yemi Gbajobi, Garnet Mackinder & Matthew Webb, who were co-opted to Council at the last meeting, to their first Council meeting.

1. **Chief Executive Officer's Report**

Bill Sweeney - Chief Executive Officer

1.1 **Community Game**

- a. The Community Game continues to be a top priority for the RFU.
- b. The number of matches being played is being closely monitored and it is encouraging to note that the declining trend that was evident before Christmas appears to be flattening out.
- c. Work continues on trying to understand the major challenges in the Community game and how best to address them.
- d. A campaign is being launched during the Six Nations to encourage players back to the game.

1.2 **Women's Rugby World Cup 2025**

- a. The Union has formally applied to host the Women's RWC 2025. The decision is due to be made at the World Rugby Council meeting in May.
- b. The business case for government funding will go the DCMS Finance Committee in early April.

1.3 **Women's Game**

- a. The review into the Premier 15s continues.
- b. The Terms of Reference for the **Adult Women's Competitions Review Group** have been approved and work is progressing in line with the agreed timetable
- c. A significant amount of work is ongoing across the strategic priorities within the Women's game.

1.4 **Autumn Internationals Debrief**

A comprehensive debrief took place with both the men's and women's senior coaching teams to review performance against expectations and take key learnings forwards to ensure that the Union produces consistently winning England teams. These sessions are held regularly after each major series of matches

1.5 **2022 Six Nations**

- a. Both home matches are now sold out.
- b. In line with Government advice, Covid passes are no longer a condition for attendance.
- c. The digital ticket roll-out continues. 85% of those attending the Twickenham games will gain entry with digital tickets.
- d. Following the Covid lockdowns, there has been an increase in anti-social behaviour both in society in general and at major sporting events –





Twickenham has not been immune to this. Due to the late kick offs for both the games at Twickenham, which exacerbates poor behaviour, changes have been introduced to the alcohol service in both the public and hospitality areas, including an earlier closure of the bars post-match.

1.6 **International Rugby**

- a. World Rugby continues to work on a new Global Calendar, which would support a new global competition (of which the Six Nations would form part) and support the development of the emerging nations
- b. In December 2021 South Africa applied to join the Six Nations. This has been declined as the Six Nations are focussing on the new global calendar.

1.7 **Player Welfare**

- a. The Head Impact Prevention and Management Group continues to meet regularly.
- b. Work to validate the use of Instrumented Mouthguards (IMGs) in both the men's and women's game continues. The Red Roses took part in a World Rugby IMG trial during the Autumn Internationals.
- c. The waist height tackle trial in age grade rugby will now take place during the 2022/23 season.
- d. The **Advanced BRAIN Health Clinic** for retired rugby players is open and has seen about 20 retired players to date.

1.8 **Executive Team Update**

- a. Kathryn Williamson has been promoted to the Executive Team as Director of Communications.
- b. The recruitment process is underway for a Director of Engagement and Business Growth.

1.9 **Department of Culture Media & Sport Cross (DCMS) Sport Forum**

- a. This group has been set up and is led by the DCMS.
- b. The group meets bi-monthly to discuss the key challenges facing sporting NGBs and assist the DCMS in formulating new Sports Strategy.
- c. The group is made up of CEOs from England's/the UK's major sporting National Governing Bodies (NGBs), including British Athletics, British Cycling, England Hockey, the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB), the Football Association, the Lawn Tennis Association and the Rugby Football League.

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

Tom Ilube – Chair of the Board of Directors

- 2.1 The third scheduled Board meeting of the season took place on 19th January at Twickenham. The meeting covered a broad range of key and strategically critical issues as well as receiving a presentation from Eddie Jones on the performance of the Men's team in the Autumn Internationals and the preparation for the 2022 Six Nations.
- 2.2 Simon Middleton will present to the Board ahead of the women's Rugby World Cup, which is taking place in New Zealand later in the year (postponed from 2021 due to Covid restrictions).
- 2.3 The next Board meeting will be offsite at a club in the Bristol area.
- 2.4 The annual Board Strategy Day took place at Twickenham on 8th December 2021 and focussed on long term trends in society and sport and the impact, the challenges, and opportunities that these may present to the Union and the clubs.
- 2.5 Polly Williams (INED) has been appointed as RFU Whistleblowing and Speak-up Champion as well as the RFU Safeguarding Champion. This will ensure that welfare



and safety continues to be given appropriate consideration during Board discussions.

- 2.6 The Board continues to receive comprehensive financial reports (which include long term forecasts) to ensure that the Union remains financially stable. To assist with this, a Board task and finish group has been established to collaborate closely with the Executive Team on the financial decisions that will need to be made in the coming months as the Union and the clubs come out of COVID.

3. **Professional Game Board (PGB) Report**

Phil de Glanville - RFU Representative on the PGB

3.1 **Meetings**

- a. The last PGB scheduled meeting was held on 13th February.
- b. The PGB also met on 10th February to consider outcome of the Minimum Standards Criteria audits of those Championship clubs aspiring to join the Premiership. Based on these audits, the PGB has made recommendations to the Board.

3.2 **Professional Game Match Officials Group**

- a. Phil Winstanley (PRL) has taken over the chair of this group from David Barnes (RFU).
- b. Development plans for each individual match official are now in place.
- c. Communication with the Premiership clubs is good.
- d. There is now consistency between match officials on yellow/red cards and head impacts.
- e. Concern has been expressed that TMOs are intervening too much.
- f. Paul Hull has replaced Tony Spreadbury as the RFU's new Head of Match Officials.

3.3 **Season Structure**

- a. There will be no Premiership Cup in 2022/23 as this is a condensed season due to the men's Rugby World Cup. This does however mean, that there will be no competition for developing players during 2022/23.
- b. The playing time/rest protocols, which were agreed in 2018, are being reviewed by the PGB's Sports Science Advisory Group to ensure that they are still fit for purpose.

3.4 **Covid**

- a. Covid testing and prevention protocols for the Premiership, Championship and AP15s, continue to be kept under review in line with Government guidelines.
- b. The England squad is larger than usual due to the need for those players not selected for the match day squad to remain with the squad for the whole week rather than being released back to their clubs on the Tuesday as previously. The flexibility from PRL was noted and appreciated.

4. **Championship Strategic Review**

Conor O'Shea - Performance Director

- 4.1 Conor O'Shea updated Council the work on the Championship Strategic Review and outlined the preferred direction of travel, although further work is needed before a final recommendation can be brought back to Council for consideration.
- 4.2 The review group was set up in August 2021 with a view to reviewing the future role, purpose, and structure of the Championship
- 4.3 The first thing that the group did was identify the role and purpose of the Championship and it decided that it needs to fulfil three roles:



a. **Development**

It needs to provide development opportunities for players, coaches, and match officials

b. **Progression**

For the Championship to be a successful part of the professional eco-system, it needs clubs in the National Leagues to aspire to be part of it, and clubs in the Championship with genuine opportunity to progress into the Premiership with a realistic prospect of staying there.

c. **Attractive**

The Championship needs to attract fans, sponsors or broadcasters to the level required for it to be financially sustainable. The current format is not commercially viable.

4.4 Based on the above defined role of the Championship, three sub-groups were formed to explore:

- a. the competition structure,
- b. commerciality, and
- c. governance of the competition.

4.5 **Recommended Direction of Travel**

a. **Season 2022/23**

- i. The Championship League returns to a 12-team competition as this is required to meet the minimum number of games required by clubs for commercial reasons. Discussions are continuing on how best to achieve this.
- ii. This is a restricted season due to RWC 2023 which means it is not possible to introduce a new cup competition, but we would look to introduce play-offs at the end of the season to add excitement to the season finale.

b. **Season 2023/24**

- i. The Championship League continues as a 12-team competition.
- ii. A 'proof of concept' cup competition is introduced, which would include:
 - o Existing aspirational Championship clubs
 - o Premiership A teams
 - o Championship clubs with links to Premiership A teams
 - o Premiership and/or Championship clubs with links to universities.

c. **Season 2024/25**

Provided there is appetite from Championship and Premiership A sides, season 2024/25 could see the cup competition transition into a league format replacing the current Championship or remain as a cup competition alongside the existing league.

4.6 A great deal of work remains to be done, but Council **ENDORSED** the direction of travel without a vote.

5. **Women & Girls Update**

Lou Latter - Women & Girls Council Representative

5.1 **Premier 15s Salary Cap Review**

- a. Work continues on introducing a salary cap for the 2022/23 season.
- b. It is hoped to bring a recommendation to the April Council meeting.
- c. Whilst the principal of a salary cap has been agreed, concern has been raised as to how the Red Rose central contracts are addressed within the cap. This will be the subject of further work in 2022/23.



5.2 **Red Rose Autumn Review**

Conor O'Shea fed back to the Women's Performance Management Group regarding the positive debrief from a successful autumn series. Several areas for improvement were identified during the review and recommendations made going into the 2022 Six Nations, and into final preparations for the women's Rugby World Cup in New Zealand later in the year.

5.3 **Women's Competition Review Group**

- a. The role of the Group is to review the competition structures and playing opportunities in Level 2 and below in the female adult game and will be setting the vision for the women's competition landscape for the next 5-10 years to build playing offers fit for the future growth of the game.
- b. The group will focus on Structure, Administration and Enhancement.

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

David Roberts - Chair of the CGB

Steve Grainger - Rugby Development Director

6.1 Since the last Council meeting the CGB has met on 2nd December and 13th January

6.2 A task and finish group has been established to look at how the Union's non-contact offering can be expanded.

6.3 CGB endorsed the adoption of enhance pitch side care and is collaborating with Governance to ensure a timely implementation.

6.4 Work has commenced on the 2022/23 business plan.

6.5 **World Rugby Game on Global – Community Law Variations**

- a. World Rugby have approved the use of several Law variations for use in the Community game under the banner **GAME ON GLOBAL**
- b. Many of these variations have been based on the Game-on regulations introduced and refined by the Union in recent seasons.
- c. The adoption of the WR variations is at the discretion of the Unions, who will decide which, if any, to adopt. The Unions will also decide at what level to apply them.
- d. The WR variations cover:
 - i. Number of players
 - ii. Game duration
 - iii. Replacements (including rolling replacements)
 - iv. Tackle height
 - v. Ball size
 - vi. Number of players in the scrum
 - vii. Contested/uncontested lineout
 - viii. Kicking
 - ix. Weight based banding
 - x. Pitch size
- e. CGB has established a task and finish group to consider which of the proposals should be adopted in the game in England and whether they should be mandatory and if so at which levels.

6.6 **Club & CG Roadshow Report**

- a. A series of roadshows were held during the autumn of 2022. Steve Grainger and Alan Royer (National Club & CB Manager) were present at all events. In addition, members of the Club Developer and CB Relationship Manager teams attended, and, at some, members of the Executive Team (Bill Sweeney, Sue



Day, and Angus Bujalski) and Rugby Development Function Heads (Ben Lowe, John Lawn and Natasha Routledge) were present.

- b. Typically, each visit lasted 24 hours and included two deep dive visits to individual clubs, two lunch sessions with representatives from c.4-6 clubs at each and an evening dinner with CB representatives.
- c. At each interaction opened with a summary of the current trends across the country and sought validation/contradiction. Whilst there were local issues, common themes were that:
 - i. Clubs themselves are in good financial health thanks to access to grants, loans from HMG, Sport England, RFU and CBs and good management.
 - ii. Player return was an increasing concern in the male game (Colts and U16/U15 adult) and whilst return in the female game was good it was recognised that this needs to be closely monitored. Mini & Junior sections are strong
 - iii. Volunteers had been amazing through the pandemic however this was beginning to take its toll – particularly on more elderly volunteers and on match officials.
- d. **Follow-up actions**
 - i. Two early actions on Return to Rugby and Match Officials were actioned after the first three roadshows as these issues were quickly escalated to CGB and Council.
 - ii. Several additional issues have been identified for follow up work with CGB:
 - o **Game Management System (GMS)** – polarised views over ease of use/capability,
 - o **DPP/Academies** – confusion over purpose and language,
 - o **Schools** – reduction in desire to play contact sport and conflict with clubs over access to players,
 - o **Training courses** – concern/ lack of understanding over changes in training course provision for coaches and match officials,
 - o **Number of Replacements** – polarised views over whether number of replacements should be increased to increase playing opportunities or whether this would make it more difficult to field lower XV's, and
 - o **Decision making** – confusion over is and what is not regulated by the RFU.

7. **Platform for Rugby Review Update**

Jon Conn - Technology Director

Ben Lowe - Head of Rugby Growth

- 7.1 Following a challenging return to rugby for clubs in 2021/22, through the course of the autumn, concerns have been raised about the Game Management System (GMS). A Task Force was established to provide oversight over several activities including communications and engagement, resourcing, alignment with player affiliation (Project Touchstone).
- 7.2 Following a tender process, Deloitte was engaged to conduct an independent review.
- 7.3 To gain a comprehensive overview of the current GMS system, affiliation and future requirements, Deloitte engaged with over 1500 stakeholders who provided feedback and input.



- 7.4 Deloitte's initial findings are summarised as follows:
- a. **INTERNAL**
 - i. **Insight Driven Organisation**

GMS is well positioned to be the sole source of truth for player, volunteer, and club data, to enable the RFU to understand data to make informed decisions.
 - ii. **Clear Role of GMS**

GMS is one of many Digital tools the game uses to fulfil their requirements. It will be important to clearly define the role that GMS will play within the digital ecosystem.
 - iii. **Simplified, User-Led Business Processes**

Technology has the potential to streamline business processes and reduce manual intervention (eg: Player Registration)
 - iv. **Clear Ownership**

Appointing a clear owner of GMS and associated data will clarify roles and responsibilities and set the foundation for driving continuous improvement
 - b. **EXTERNAL**
 - i. **Attractive Value Exchange**

Changing the perception from "having to use" GMS to "wanting to use" a future Platform for Rugby, underpinned by a clear set of incentives will be integral to the success of the platform.
 - ii. **Create a Narrative**

A clear common transformation narrative that players, volunteers, and clubs can buy-in to, and feel a part of, will help bring the users on a journey with the RFU
 - iii. **Customer Expectations**

The digital era has caused a shift in customer expectations within the player, volunteer, and club landscape.
 - iv. **People want choice**

Device choice for various aspects of GMS functionality needs to be considered. Most GMS users prefer using a laptop, but they also value a mobile-first match side approach (eg: for Electronic Match Cards).
- 7.5 The review includes a detailed assessment of the user experience of the different processes that users follow when accessing the current platform, and a method for the continuous improvement of this.
- 7.6 An initial vision has emerged of a future platform for rugby being 'an intuitive, user first platform that is the chosen destination to run and empower the game.
- 7.7 The ambition is to:
- a. Create a Platform for Rugby that is a wider 'ecosystem' than the current GMS that serves the needs for running the game,
 - b. Create and articulate a clear benefit ("value exchange") to encourage use,
 - c. Prioritise 'experience' to create simple, and efficient journeys,
 - d. Provide a single, reliable source of truth for player, volunteer, club and match official data,
 - e. Encourage the use of the Platform for Rugby by facilitating smooth interactions with other tools / solutions through automated links, and
 - f. Empower internal and external RFU users to effectively use the breadth and depth of the Platform for Rugby functionality.



- 7.8 The next steps are to develop recommendations based on the findings of the review and group these into outcomes by season. Recommendations are likely to fall into the following categories: • People (including ways of working) • Process • Technology (including user experience) • Data.
- 7.9 Whilst there is further consultation and socialising of the delivery plans with stakeholders, the aim is to update Council on the delivery plan and project governance at the June Council meeting.

8. **Player Affiliation (Project Touchstone)**

Ben Lowe - Head of Rugby Growth

Rory Price - Strategy & Transformation Director

- 8.1 Council was asked to reaffirm its decision to mandate player affiliation in the adult game, with the caveat that this would not be before July 2023.
- 8.2 This will enable the following outstanding issues to be resolved:
- Delivery of affiliation through GMS,
 - Connectivity of affiliation with registration,
 - Change management and particularly impact on volunteer workload/burden,
 - Affiliation enforcement and impact of not being affiliated, and
 - Implementation, Communication and Incentivisation of player affiliation.
- 8.3 Council will receive regular updates on progress.
- 8.4 Regulations required for implementation will be brought back to Council in due course.
- 8.5 Council **APPROVED** that all adult players will be required to affiliate annually from an effective date (July 2023) at the earliest. The exact date to be approved by Council in due course.

9. **Governance Standing Committee Report**

Chris Cuthbertson - Chair of Governance Standing Committee

9.1 Since the last Council meeting, Governance has met once, on 12th January 2022.

9.2 **Ongoing work** (not covered by other reports) includes:

a. **Global Law Trials**

The Laws Sub Committee is currently reviewing these and will make recommendations to the March Governance meeting, who will make recommendations to the Board as to what the RFU's position should be on each of them. World Rugby will decide which if any to include permanently in Law at their May Council meeting.

b. **Annual Club Safeguarding Audit**

The 2022 Annual Club Safeguarding audit has now closed, and the results are being reviewed. Only one club failed to submit its return by the due date, and they are being assisted by the Safeguarding Team. A report on the audit will be considered by Governance at either the March or April meeting, Council will then be updated.

c. **Mandatory Pitch-side Care**

Work continues as to how to improve pitch-side care without increasing the legal liability of administrators. A recommendation as to the way forward will probably be submitted to the April Council meeting.

d. **Premier 15's Salary Cap**

Governance received an initial presentation on this in January. Once consultation has been completed a final proposal will be considered at the March meeting and brought to the April Council meeting for approval.



e. **Transgender Policy**

Following review, it had been hoped to bring a revised transgender policy to the April Council meeting. As further consideration is required of this complex and sensitive issue, it will now come to Council in June.

f. **Annual Review of RFU Regulations**

This work has commenced, and changes will be brought to Council for approval in June.

9.3 **Amalgamation of Regulations 13 & 16 (Adult Competition Regulations)**

a. James Cook, who is leading on the amalgamation of the Men's & Women's Competition regulations, updated Council on this work.

b. The work has progressed well, and a new draft Regulation 16 (which incorporates Regulation 13) is available for review on request.

c. The draft has fewer words than the previous regulations, is presented in a more logical order and is easier to understand easing the burden on the volunteer administrators.

d. Extensive consultation has taken place (more is ongoing), but it is hoped that a final version will be presented to Council at the June meeting.

9.4 **Future Competition Structure Implementation Group**

a. Stephen Pearson, who is chair of the FCS Implementation Group, updated Council on progress:

b. Voting has taken place in several CBs, and some have elected to opt out of having lower XVs in their leagues.

c. The applications window for lower XVs to join the leagues has opened (it will close on 18th March). Applicants will be assessed by the RFU and their CB to ensure that they comply with the conditions for entry already determined.

d. Work is proceeding on finalising the league structure for the 2022/23 season. This will come back to Council in due course.

e. As part of the Regulation changes needed to accommodate lower XVs in the leagues Council **AGREED** to remove the 100-player limit for registrations at Level 3 and below with immediate effect.

9.5 **RFU Regulation 1 – Definition of Foreign Player**

a. Last year Council agreed to keep the pre-Brexit Foreign Player definition unchanged for the 2021/22 season.

b. Discussions are taking place at PGB on the cap on the number of foreign players, but they will probably not be concluded before a new Professional Game Agreement is agreed. The new PGA will come into effect in 2024.

c. Council therefore **AGREED** that the current definition should be maintained until the end of season 2023/24.

10. **Board Nominations Committee (Board Nomco) Report**

Dominic Proctor - Chair of Board Nominations Committee

10.1 Dominic Proctor updated Council on the work of the Board Nominations Committee and outlined recommendations regarding several senior appointments.

10.2 Council **APPROVED** the following Board:

a. the reappointment of **Phil de Glanville** as Senior PGB Representative for a term ending 31 July 2024,

b. the appointment of **Paula Carter** as Chair of the Governance Standing Committee for a term ending 31 July 2025 (replacing Chris Cuthbertson, who is retiring from Council at the end of the season),



- c. the reappointment of **Deborah Griffin** as World Rugby Representative for a term ending 31 July 2024, and
- d. the reappointment of **Jonathan Webb** as World Rugby Representative for a term ending 31 July 2023.

10.3 Paula Carter's appointment as Chair of the Governance Standing Committee means that there is a vacancy for a Council Elected Director. A recruitment process will commence shortly, and a recommendation will be made to Council in due course.

10.4 On the recommendation of Board Nomco, the Board has appointed **Garnet Mackinder** (co-opted member) to the **Women's Performance Management Group** for a term ending 31st July 2023.

11. **Council Nominations Committee (Council Nomco) Report**

Ken Andrews - Chair of Council Nominations Committee

11.1 Ken Andrews presented the Council Nomco report.

11.2 On the recommendation of the Council Nomco, Council **AGREED** that the nomination of **Rob Udwin** as Junior Vice President for the 2022/23 season. This will now be put to the 2022 Annual General meeting for ratification.

11.3 Council also **AGREED** that the terms of the recently appointed Co-opted Council members be extended to 31st July 2024.

11.4 Finally, Council **APPROVED** the establishment of the RFU Rose Award to recognise and reward a national contribution from a non-Council member. The award will be implemented immediately.

12. **D&I Implementation Working Group Update**

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

12.1 Genevieve Glover updated Council on the work of the Working Group and of the progress made,

12.2 Council was asked to consider, at a future meeting

- a. mandating that CBs & Clubs
 - i. appoint a D&I Lead, and
 - ii. formally adopt a suitable enforceable D&I policy.
- b. Making funding conditional on implementing the above.

12.3 The term of the D&I Implementation Working Group ends on 31st July 2022. Council will need to consider how to take the work forward.

12.4 **Presentation from Fantail Consultancy**

- a. Council received a presentation from Fantail on the work that they will be undertaking with Council and have already started with the Board.
- b. Fantail is a specialist inclusion consultancy which focuses on building bespoke solutions for their clients. Much of the work is spent working with leadership teams as they are pivotal to the development of an inclusive workplace culture.
- c. They will be holding several online sessions with Council over the coming months.

13. **International Relations Advisory Group (IRAG)**

Katie Dooling - Head of International Relations & Public Affairs & Chair of IRAG

13.1 Katie Dooling gave an oversight of the work of the recently reconstituted IRAG.

13.2 The role of IRAG is to support the delivery of the international relations objectives contained in the RFU's Strategic Plan.



- 13.3 Membership of IRAG includes the Union's representatives on World Rugby, Six Nations, Rugby Europe, European Professional Cup Rugby (EPCR) and the British & Irish Lions.
- 13.4 Further work is needed to align IRAG's work with that of the Union's Committees & Sub-committees, particularly with regards to the Community game.

14. **Finance Reports**

Sue Day - Chief Operating Officer

14.1 **2021/22 Q2 Finance Report**

- a. Sue Day presented the Q2 Finance Report.
- b. The finances have been boosted by the return to games being played in front of full houses, albeit the benefit is partially offset by higher payments to PRL under the revenue sharing arrangements within the Professional Game Agreement, increased utility & insurance costs, and the cancellation of the Barbarians game against Samoa.
- c. The outturn for the year remains positive, but still below what would have been anticipated pre Covid at this stage of the Rugby World Cup cycle.
- d. The improvement in the finances of the Union, enabled a new financing deal to be put in place with a new reduced credit facility. The Union anticipates being able to comfortably operate within the new facility and in fact is forecasting that net debt will continue to fall.
- e. Whilst the Union remains financially stable and professionally managed, funds available for investment in rugby will remain at a lower level than pre Covid for the near future.
- f. The Six Nations/CVC deal has been concluded, which will provide the Union with a financial uplift. The Board has agreed that this money will be used to (1) reduce debt, (2) provide funds to invest in increasing revenue generation and (3) provide finance for projects in the Community game, it will not be used to fund annual operating expenditure. Further work is required to determine how the funds will be used and when.
- g. The balance sheet has been strengthened by the debenture waiver scheme, by which debenture holders agreed to waive the repayment of their long-term loans (which form an integral part of the debenture income). Whilst this does not produce any cash in the short-term (other than the gift aid generated, which is being reinvested in the Community game), it does have a positive impact on the Union's reserves.

14.2 **Business Planning Update**

- a. For the benefit of new Council members, Sue Day outlined the Union's financial model and how the revenue materially changed with the men's international calendar. Revenues fall in years when there are only two home Six Nations games and during RWC years when there are no Autumn internationals.
- b. Work has started on the 2022/23 business planning and there will be some tough decisions to make. There is undoubtedly a pent-up desire to reinstate a number of initiatives, but resources (both financial & people) mean that this is unlikely to be possible.



15. **Men's International Ticket Pricing 2022/23**

Ansell Henry - Director of Sales & Marketing Services

- 15.1 Ansell Henry presented the recommended international ticket prices for the 2022/23 season to Council and invited discussion. The final decision rests with the Board. The recommendation had been discussed and approved by the International Rugby Ticket Sub-committee (IRTSC).
- 15.2 Ticket prices vary according to category of ticket and category of game.
- 15.3 It is recognised that increasing price lowers demand, but it is believed that there is sufficient latent demand to attend matches that this will not result in a drop in attendance.
- 15.4 As it is planned to raise £32m from debenture sales over the next two years, the impact on debenture holders has been carefully considered.
- 15.5 Following discussion Council agreed to support the recommendation to the Board that:
 - a. Ticket prices should increase by 4% (inflation),
 - b. An additional £5 should be added to all tickets (except Premium) for all matches except Cat C, and
 - c. The £2 compulsory donation to the Injured Players Fund should be retained.
- 15.6 The impact of the price increase will be to raise the average price of a ticket from £84 to £92 and increase the percentage of tickets costing more than £100 from 54% to 68%.
- 15.7 The recommendation will now be considered by the Board at the March Board meeting.

16. **National Governing Body (NGB) Review Group - Update**

Mike Waplington - Chair of NGB Review Group

- 16.1 Mike Waplington reminded Council that the primary aim of the group was to make recommendations that would ensure that the Union remained fit for purpose in the long term.
- 16.2 The group had started work and had recognised that any recommendations would fall into one of three categories:
 - a. Uncontentious changes that could be implemented quickly – low hanging fruit.
 - b. Changes to the RFU Regulations that would require Council approval and therefore further consultation and discussion, and
 - c. Those structural changes that would require approval from the game at a General Meeting to implement. These would require wider consultation and debate.
- 16.3 The group has recognised that their work may take three years to complete, with changes recognised and implemented along the way. It is more important to get this right than to do it quickly.
- 16.4 As part of its consultation, the group has used the National Rugby Survey, which clearly states that there is a lack of understanding as to how decisions are made in the Union and a feeling that the voice of stakeholders is not being heard.
- 16.5 Consultation with Council will start with an informal virtual Council meeting on 8th March, and this will be followed by a questionnaire.
- 16.6 Regular updates will be given to Council as the work progresses.



17. **Any Other Business – Jack Jeffrey**

Jeff Blackett - President

- 17.1 The President noted the sad death of Jack Jeffrey of Evesham RFC following an injury sustained during a game on 12th February and informed Council that Jack's family would be present at the Wales game as guests of the Union.
- 17.2 The family, and the players of both teams involved in the game, are being supported by the IPF welfare team.
- 17.3 Both the family and the club have been overwhelmed by the support that they have received from all around the world.
- 17.4 A minute's applause will be held in Jack's memory before the Wales game.

The meeting closed at 4.35 pm.

The next Council meeting is on 22nd April 2022.

Chris Cuthbertson & Eddie Keal

4th March 2022

These notes are our personal recollections of the meeting and include those matters of interest to Middlesex Clubs. No attempt has been made to convey all the opinions expressed during the debates.