

# LANCASHIRE COUNTY RUGBY FOOTBALL UNION

## Minutes of the Board Meeting

Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2026

Present: Mr D. Clarke in the Chair, & Messrs, C.A. Baker, , G.A. Burns MBE, A.N. Crabtree, P. Deakin, C. Gaffey, H. Hughes & M. Downs.

In Attendance: Messrs, B.H. Stott, R. Jones, D. Westhead, C. Hall & I. Spivey.

Apologies: Messrs, K. Bennetta, A. Soutar.

### CB Relationship Managers Report.

1. DW – Bulak Dale role is still vacant and John Foster is still working of the WRWC Impact. Still not sure how the local staff will be structured.
2. Womens World Cup trophy tour had gone well.
3. CH – Currently a feel of high energy in the Womens and Girls game.
4. CG – Eccles have lost 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> XV recently.
5. CH – Working with clubs and the schools games organisers on a summer program to build links.

### Minutes of the last meeting.

The minutes of the Board meeting held on Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> February 2026, (previously circulated) were accepted and signed per procuracionem as a correct record.

### Matters arising.

There were no matters arising.

### Finance.

See Report (Appendix 1).

1. PD – recent highlight was Catherine Jones securing a further £20k for continuance of the Rugby United project.

### RFU.

See Report (Appendix 2.)

DC & PD had attended the recent Council meeting.

1. David Roberts (Chair Community game Board) has been successfully nominated for the post of Junior Vice President.
2. The meeting voted to ring fence the Mens Premiership with the hope over time clubs will be elevated to it who meet the criteria. There will be no relegation which removes the jeopardy and will hopefully bring in bigger sponsors.
3. The Council voted 36-19 in favour of the GRR2 recommendations. DC & PD voted against. This will now go to an RFU SGM where it will need a 2/3s majority to pass, and be voted on by clubs. The vote in favour means the Council will lose its vote and have limited power to check the main Board.
4. We now need to focus on how we ask our voting clubs to vote against at the SGM. MD – we should explain the issue with just a few bullet points and not over complicate things. PD – has a list of points which are the outcomes to the regulations that will be implemented.

#### Club & Community.

1. CG – will try to obtain more detail on the increased number of lower teams dropping from the game.
2. DC – noted that De la Salle had been removed from ADM 2 due to unfulfilled fixtures.
3. CH – Ruskin Park have set up a mixed touch rugby section which is proving successful.
4. CH – an approach made from Liverpool City Council to make all council pitches smoke and vape free zones.

#### Discipline.

No Report.

#### Mens & Boys Rugby.

HH reported:

1. The U20s had won their second game against Cheshire.
2. U17s trial process will start early.

#### Mini, Junior & Schools.

IS reported:

1. A change of venue for one of the festival days from Ormskirk who had pulled out to Leigh.
2. Will arrange a call with Sale Sharks to discuss a clash on the playing Calander.

RJ reported:

3. Age grade regulations impact based. Minimum impact will be introduced in 26-27 season, mid impact in 27-28 and high impact need further discussion.  
U16s not being able to play up to U18s will have a big impact in Lancashire.

#### Safeguarding.

CAB reported:

1. Cath Jones received 12 responses to the impact of fasting during Ramadan on youth players.

#### Volunteering.

GAB reported:

1. VOTY - Lancs clubs have 103 nominations. This will meane hopefully 1 event but may need 2.

#### Womens and Girls.

IS Reported:

1. He is working with Matthew Dent on a series of girls festivals.

#### Correspondence.

There was none appertaining to this meeting.

#### New Members.

No membership applications.

#### 50:50 Draw

<u>Mar 2026</u>	Value
BH Stott	£39.00
S Knowles	£6.50
R Brookes	£6.50
G Spenglar	£6.50
DN Herriman	£6.50

Date of next meeting.

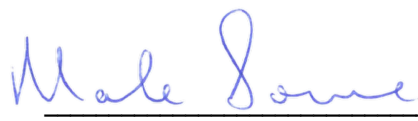
Next Meeting: 6:30 pm on Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> April 2026 by Teams.

Any other business.

BHS – a CB warning has been given to Aspull U14s due to behavioural issues.

IS – a meeting has been arranged at Sale with Noel Speed and also includes HH & RJ to discuss age grade clashes.

Meeting ended at 8:05pm

  
Chairman  
pp

Date: 8<sup>th</sup> April 2026

## Lancashire County RFU Spend and Funding Report 2025/26

<u>Funding</u>	<u>Month</u>	<u>Supplier</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Spend (Net Of VAT)</u>		<u>Monthly Spend</u>
<b><u>PFR Core Funding - £34,521</u></b>						
<b><u>Budget Holder - Mark Downs</u></b>	<b><u>July</u></b>	Brian Stott	Meeting with Cheshire	£	125.00	
<b><u>RFU Funded</u></b>		Brian Stott	Replacement Printer	£	61.89	
		Preston City Council	Small Society Lottery Fee	£	20.00	
		Catherine Ryan	Accounts Admin - July 25	£	200.00	
		Wooden Spoon	Merseyside Womens Shirt Donation	£	300.00	
		Acorn Wellbeing	Counselling	£	40.00	
		Alexander Hough	Storage Rental	£	120.00	
		ERC Accountants	Change to Directors	£	140.00	
		ADM Leisurewear	Dave Clark - Various	£	146.00	£ 1,152.89
	<b><u>August</u></b>	Collins & Darwell	Prints/Programmes Unknown	£	342.00	
		Brian Stott	Meeting Room 30/08/25	£	125.00	
		Brian Stott	Stationery, cable & cartridges	£	39.45	
		Brian Stott	Software Update	£	119.79	
		Brian Stott	Presentation Expenses	£	35.00	
		Alexander Hough	Storage Rental	£	120.00	£ 781.24
	<b><u>September</u></b>	Brian Stott	Zoom Upgrade	£	98.62	
		Brian Stott	Zoom Upgrade	£	155.88	
		Brian Stott	Meeting Room 23/09/25	£	62.50	
		Catherine Ryan	Accounts Admin - September 25	£	200.00	
		Acorn Wellbeing	Counselling	£	120.00	
		Alexander Hough	Storage Rental + Agreement Fee	£	140.00	
		ADM Leisurewear	Howard Hughes - Various	£	38.98	
		Brian Stott	Red Card Income x 11	-£	545.00	£ 270.98

<b><u>October</u></b>	Brian Stott	Meeting Room - 09/10/25	£	125.00		
	Brian Stott	PDF Upgrade	£	37.90		
	Brian Stott	Stationery & Cartridges	£	28.56		
	Brian Stott	Presentation Expenses	£	35.00		
	Catherine Ryan	Accounts Admin - September 25	£	100.00		
	Alexander Hough	Storage Rental	£	120.00		
	Canva	Subscription: Canva Pro Solo	£	83.33		
	Brian Stott	Red Card Income x 17	-£	850.00	-£	<b>320.21</b>
<b><u>November</u></b>	LSH RUFC	Hire Of Clubroom - Lancs GM	£	75.00		
	Acorn Wellbeing	Counselling	£	160.00		
	Alexander Hough	Storage Rental	£	120.00		
	Brian Stott	Computer Cables	£	34.45		
	Brian Stott	Meeting Room 24-11-25	£	125.00		
	Brian Stott	Red Card Income x 15	-£	745.00	-£	<b>230.55</b>
<b><u>December</u></b>	Gary Don	Insurance Valuation Trophies	£	200.00		
	Alister Reid Ties	Caps, Badges etc	£	939.50		
	Alister Reid Ties	Various Ties x 106	£	782.00		
	Catherine Ryan	Accounts Admin - December 2025	£	200.00		
	Acorn Wellbeing	Counselling	£	200.00		
	Alexander Hough	Storage Rental	£	120.00		
	Brian Stott	Red Card Income x 7	-£	350.00	£	<b>2,091.50</b>
<b><u>January</u></b>	England RFU	Presidents Lunch vs Australia	£	105.00		
	Catherine Ryan	Accounts Admin - January 2025	£	200.00		
	Acorn Wellbeing	Counselling	£	480.00		
	Alexander Hough	Storage Rental - January	£	120.00		
	Alexander Hough	Storage Rental - February	£	120.00		
	Brian Stott	Meeting Room	£	125.00		
	Brian Stott	New Monitor	£	87.00		
	Brian Stott	Red Card Income x 18	-£	900.00	£	<b>337.00</b>



<b><u>February</u></b>	Blackley RUFC	Pitch Hire	£	360.00	£	<b>360.00</b>		
						Total Spend	£	<b>1,758.00</b>
						Remaining Fund	£	<b>6,366.00</b>

**U23s Funding - £2,000**

**Budget Holder - Howard Hughes**

**RFU Funded 24/25 carried forward**

Total Spend	£	-
Remaining Fund	£	<b>2,000.00</b>

**Playing Opportunities - £1,852**

**Budget Holder - Chris Gaffey**

**RFU Funded**

Total Spend	£	-
Remaining Fund	£	<b>1,852.00</b>

**Volunteer Recognition - £2,223**

**Budget Holder - Gill Burns**

**RFU Funded**

<b><u>January</u></b>	Adforce UK Ltd	Pin Badges x 100	£	405.00	£	<b>405.00</b>		
						Total Spend	£	<b>405.00</b>
						Remaining Fund	£	<b>1,818.00</b>

**Age Grade Player Pathway U17s/18s Boys - £5,900**

**Budget Holder - Howard Hughes**

**RFU Funded**

<b><u>October</u></b>	Chloe Hull	U18s Trial Physio	£	120.00	£	<b>120.00</b>
<b><u>November</u></b>	ADM Leisurewear	Under 18s Essential Kit	£	2,097.00		
	ADM Leisurewear	Under 18s Playing Kit	£	718.75	£	<b>2,815.75</b>
<b><u>December</u></b>	Preston Grasshoppers	Under 18s Catering	£	466.67		

	Players	Players Kit Contribution	-£	1,150.00	-£	<b>683.33</b>
					Total Spend	£ <b>2,252.42</b>
<b>Essential Kit to be offset by players contribution.</b>					Remaining Fund	£ <b>3,647.58</b>

#### **Age Grade Player Pathway U18s Girls - £2,000**

<b>Budget Holder - Kate Bennetta</b>	<b>December</b>	Players	Players Kit Contribution	-£	900.00	-£	<b>900.00</b>
<b>RFU Funded</b>							
					Total Spend	-£	<b>900.00</b>
					Remaining Fund	£	<b>2,900.00</b>

#### **Girls U16s Player Development - £10,000**

<b>Budget Holder - Kate Bennetta</b>	<b>October</b>	ADM Leisurewear	Various Kit & Balls	£	1,494.75		
<b>RFU Funded</b>							
		ADM Leisurewear	Various Kit & Equipment	£	661.30	£	<b>2,156.05</b>
	<b>November</b>	ADM Leisurewear	Essential Kit	£	3,142.70		
		ADM Leisurewear	Coaches Kit	£	371.74	£	<b>3,514.44</b>
	<b>December</b>	Sarah Bailey	Physio vs NLD	£	113.49		
		ADM Leisurewear	Various Kit x 8	£	566.00		
		Players	Players Kit Contribution	-£	1,845.00	-£	<b>1,165.51</b>
	<b>January</b>	ABC Coach Ltd	Travel to Rockcliffe RFC	£	995.00		
		Stephen Brice	U16s Food	£	200.00	£	<b>1,195.00</b>
	<b>February</b>	Sarah Bailey	Physio x 5, plus first aid materials	£	709.00	£	<b>709.00</b>
					Total Spend	£	<b>6,408.98</b>
<b>Essential Kit to be offset by players contribution.</b>					Remaining Fund	£	<b>3,591.02</b>

#### **Lancashire Royals - £3,000**

<b>Budget Holder - Howard Hughes</b>	<b>December</b>	Samuel Dunn	Match Day 1st Aid	£	70.00	£	<b>70.00</b>
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<b><u>Lancashire Funded</u></b>	Samuel Dunn	Trial 1st Aid	£	50.00	£	<b>50.00</b>
	ADM Leisurewear Ltd	Essential Kit	£	1,839.75	£	<b>1,839.75</b>
				Total Spend	£	<b>1,959.75</b>
				Remaining Fund	£	<b>1,040.25</b>

<b><u>Rugby United - £28,112</u></b>						
<b><u>Budget Holder - Paul Deakin</u></b>	<b><u>July</u></b>	TryIt Rugby Academy	Rugby Delivery - MG25 Games	£	840.00	£ <b>840.00</b>
<b><u>RFU Funded - £20,000</u></b>						
<b><u>RFU Funded £8,112 carried forward</u></b>	<b><u>August</u></b>	TryIt Rugby Academy	Rugby Delivery T1 at Broughton Park	£	280.00	
		TryIt Rugby Academy	Rugby Delivery at Bolton RUFC	£	420.00	£ <b>700.00</b>
	<b><u>September</u></b>	TryIt Rugby Academy	Expenses	£	60.00	£ <b>60.00</b>
	<b><u>October</u></b>	Bolton RUFC	One Voice Blackburn Girls	£	49.99	£ <b>49.99</b>
	<b><u>December</u></b>	TryIt Rugby Academy	Rugby Delivery - Bolton RUFC	£	350.00	£ <b>350.00</b>
					Total Spend	£ <b>1,999.99</b>
					Remaining Fund	£ <b>26,112.01</b>

<b><u>Youth trust Fund - £20,000</u></b>						
<b><u>Budget Holder - Paul Deakin</u></b>	<b><u>July</u></b>	TryIt Rugby Academy	Schools T1 Delivery - Waterloo	£	560.00	
<b><u>YTF Funded - TBC</u></b>		TryIt Rugby Academy	Rugby Delivery - St Annes Primary	£	210.00	
		TryIt Rugby Academy	T1 Rugby Delivery - Leigh RUFC	£	280.00	
		TryIt Rugby Academy	T1 Rugby Delivery	£	210.00	£ <b>1,260.00</b>
	<b><u>August</u></b>	TryIt Rugby Academy	T1 Rugby Delivery - Eagle RUFC	£	350.00	£ <b>350.00</b>
	<b><u>December</u></b>	TryIt Rugby Academy	T1 Rugby - Cardinal Langley - Sedgley	£	350.00	
		TryIt Rugby Academy	T1 Rugby - Bewsey Lodge - Sedgley	£	420.00	
		TryIt Rugby Academy	T1 Rugby Rossendale	£	810.00	

	Blackburn RUFC	M&J Schools Programme	£	977.95	£	2,557.95
				Total Spend	£	4,167.95
				Remaining Fund	£	15,832.05

**General Reserve - £,000**

**Budget Holder - Paul Deakin**

**Lancashire Funded**

**These items relate to 24/25**

<b><u>July</u></b>	MG Catering	Pre Match Food Fylde v Yorks	£	280.00		
	Orion Travel	Womens Travel	£	795.00	£	1,075.00
<b><u>September</u></b>	Charlotte Purvis	Durham PDG U16s Physio	£	50.00		
	Ella Pye	Matchday Keswick U17s Boys	£	237.95		
	MADREFS	Travel Exp Royals v AA	£	60.00		
	MADREFS	Ref Team U20s v East Mids	£	120.00	£	467.95
<b><u>October</u></b>	Bolton RUFC	Mixed Ability Sessions Feb	£	135.00		
	Bolton RUFC	Mixed Ability Sessions Mar	£	135.00		
	Bolton RUFC	Mixed Ability Sessions Apr	£	101.50	£	371.50
<b><u>January</u></b>	West Park RUFC	U17s Vs Cheshire catering	£	186.67		
	West Park RUFC	Lancs Women Vs Yorks Catering & Drinks	£	973.51		
	West Park RUFC	Volunteers Awards Lunch	£	833.33	£	1,993.51
				Total Spend	£	3,907.96
				Remaining Fund	-£	3,907.96

**Total 2025/26 Budget - £120,713**

Total Spend	£	31,435.05
Total Budget Remaining	£	89,277.95

Current Account Bank Balance 1st July	£	52,799.00
Current Account Bank Balance 19th Feb	£	108,036.00



## **RFU COUNCIL MEETING**

27 February 2026

### **Post-Meeting Council Briefing Note**

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#### **1. Presidential matters**

1.1 Deborah Griffin (RFU President) welcomed Council members to the February Council meeting.

#### **2. RFU Junior Vice President 2026/2027**

2.1 Council approved the Council Nominations recommendation that David Roberts be appointed as RFU Junior Vice President for the 2026/27 season. This will be put to Members at the Annual General Meeting in June for ratification.

#### **3. CEO Update**

3.1 Bill Sweeney (Chief Executive Officer) updated Council on the current matters facing the Game and the Union, including:

- a. Community Game Roadshows: Annual Roadshows were successful with 600 attending themed competitions roadshows, 398 attending January Club Surgeries, and regional congresses planned for the summer.
- b. World Rugby 'Shape of the Game Meetings': Topics included youth engagement, women's game growth, player welfare, officiating, and the global calendar.
- c. Nations Championship Update: Entitlement ticketing window had opened. As at 9 February, 60,000 tickets had been sold for England pool matches and 22,000 for the Finals weekend. A marketing plan was underway to boost awareness and sales.
- d. Women's Six Nations: 75% tickets sold for Red Roses v Wales (Bristol); 56,500+ for Red Roses v Ireland (Allianz Stadium, top tier opened for the first time).
- e. Stadium Master Plan: Efforts were ongoing to secure more non-sporting events. Planning application is due to be submitted in July for an October decision.

#### **4. Chair Update**

4.1 Sir James Wates (Chair of the RFU Board) updated on the priority matters of the Board.

4.2 He highlighted the recent Board Effectiveness Review as a success, noting succession planning, a focus on looking forward on strategic priorities and size of Board packs as key priorities to address the recommendations from this.

#### **5. Professional League Structures**

5.1 In October 2025 Council unanimously agreed that there was a need to change the current men's professional league structure to address challenges and take better advantage of opportunities to grow and stabilise the game.

5.2 Council asked the Men's Professional Rugby Board (MPRB) to develop a proposal that would address the needs of the English rugby system and bring it back to Council at the February meeting.

5.3 The proposal, which will deliver transformational change for the entire English rugby system, was presented by Bill Sweeney, Rory Price (Executive Director of Strategy and Transformation), Conor O'Shea (Executive Director of Performance Rugby) and Simon-Massie Taylor (Council Member for PRL and PREM Rugby Chief Executive Officer) and additional support was provided by Terry Burwell and Simon Gilham, on behalf of the Champ Rugby Board, and Genevieve Shore, on behalf of PWR. The Council voted overwhelmingly to support the long-term vision for the Prem with elevated standards including commitments to the community and women's game,

delivering benefits for the entire English rugby system including financial stability and competitive balance.

- 5.4 Council approved the change which will see a move from the current “one-up, one-down” model of promotion and relegation between the Prem and Champ to an accessible managed expansion model from the 2026/27 season. This will be supported by elevated standards in the Prem from the 2030/31 season and the introduction of a balanced score card approach to manage, and where appropriate, remove underperforming teams from the Prem.
- 5.5 The initial phase of expansion for the Prem is currently anticipated to involve an EOI/tender in the 2027/28 season and entry into the Prem in the 2029/30 season, following a successful season in the Champ.
- 5.6 The vision for expansion is uncapped and will be managed objectively to ensure that financial stability is maintained. The league structure would be adapted as required to accommodate additional Clubs who meet required standards. The Champ vision as “the proving ground” would align with and support the managed expansion model.
- 5.7 Support for Clubs across the system in achieving minimum standards and the development of plans for aspirational Clubs will be supported through the establishment of the “Club Office”. The Club Office will also link with an “Expansion Review Group” (ERG), which will be established by the MPRB. The ERG will be tasked with making recommendations on the readiness for league expansion and providing governance and oversight for the EOI/tender process for clubs to join the Prem. The ERG will report to the MPRB and include representation from the Prem, Champ, RFU, RPA as well as additional members if needed based on a skills matrix.
- 5.8 An expanded Prem will grow the footprint of rugby union across the country. The new model approved today will provide benefits to the wider system, including:
  - a. Commitments for Prem Clubs to continue to invest in their PWR team or make a meaningful contribution to the women’s game in their area other ways;
  - b. A minimum investment by each Prem Club in community initiatives and programmes that will align with local and regional objectives;
  - c. Broader improved experiences and the attraction of new fans to rugby, which will improve the narrative of the support and provide long-term sustainability;
  - d. Continued levels of access and management of England Senior Men’s Team players post 2032, together with continued commitments to player welfare and development; and
  - e. A reduction in central funding from the RFU to the Prem, linked to Prem financial performance.

## **6. Rugby World Cup Wrap-Up**

- 6.1 Alex Teasdale (Executive Director of Women's Game) presented the Rugby World Cup 2025 Wrap-Up Report, highlighting the Red Roses’ landmark win at Allianz Stadium, which drew the largest-ever crowd for a women’s rugby match. The report detailed achievements in accessibility, participation, visibility, and commercial viability, noting a significant rise in women and girls’ involvement, improved facilities, and expanded community engagement. Strong commercial results were recorded through merchandise sales and partnerships, while strategic governance reforms are proposed to modernise RFU representation and ensure transparency.
- 6.2 Looking ahead, the new Every Rose: Our Time Strategy for 2025-2030 was highlighted, iterating how integral Women’s Rugby is becoming within the landscape and how it is planned to ensure continuity of this. Overall, RWC25 set a new benchmark for women’s rugby and paved the way for ongoing improvements in governance and inclusivity.

## **7. Governance & Representation Review**

- 7.1 James Cook (Chair of the GRR2 Group) provided context on the Governance & Representation Review (GRR) - set up by the RFU Council in December 2023, it aims to improve the organisational structures and decision-making processes of the Rugby Football Union (RFU). Its goal is to ensure that the Council, Board, and Executive better represent members in policy and decisions, noting that the current governance structure had not been revised in 25 years.
- 7.2 Key elements of the proposal, if accepted by Members, include transforming the current Council into a National Council, which will act as an advisory and representative body. The Board and its subcommittees will be required to consult the National Council on significant matters relating to the community game in advance of making decisions. The Community Game Board (CGB) will have decision making power delegated to it by the RFU Board and would be led by an independent Chair and populated by both members of National Council and persons from the wider game with relevant skills, knowledge and experience.. Information flows and consultation between members and decision-making bodies will be improved, with annual Board performance reports and enhanced digital platforms for feedback.
- 7.3 The recommendations stress proactive member engagement and ongoing two-way communication, reflecting input from Council members, Constituent Bodies, and stakeholders. Amendments put forward by James Cook on behalf of the GRR2 group include a guaranteed minimum of 5 National Council members on the CGB, better digital feedback tools for the Game, and rights of the National Council to be consulted by Board.
- 7.4 Support for the proposal was given by James Wates (Chair of the Board), who stressed the importance to the RFU Board of listening to the Game and RFU members.
- 7.5 Council discussed the proposals at length before considering a series of proposed amendments to Resolution 1 and the associated substantive resolutions.
- 7.6 Council approved all proposed amendments to Resolution 1 as presented during the meeting. These amendments related to:
- a. Recommendation 15 (composition and eligibility of the Community Game Board, including skills-based appointments and National Council representation thresholds);
  - b. Recommendation 2 (strengthening and modernising information flows and engagement between members, Council, the Board and its committees, including enhanced consultation, reporting and digital enablement); and
  - c. Recommendation 17 (the evolution of the current Council into a National Council with a clearly defined advisory, consultative and non-executive role in relation to matters affecting the community game).
- 7.7 Following approval of the individual amendments, Council endorsed Resolution 1 as amended, confirming its support for the recommendations set out in Appendix 1, subject to the changes agreed at this meeting.
- 7.8 Council also approved Resolution 2, agreeing to convene a Special General Meeting under Rule 9.1 to enable the proposed amendments to the Union's Rules to be put to the Membership.
- 7.9 In addition, Council approved Resolution 3, delegating authority to James Cook, as Chair of the GRR2 group, to:
- a. Agree the date of the Special General Meeting (SGM), in line with the requirement to provide Members with forty-five days' written notice;
  - b. Finalise the precise wording of the resolution to be put to Members;
  - c. Make any minor and necessary changes to the proposed Rule amendments prior to the Calling Notice being issued, to ensure alignment with endorsed recommendations, legislation and relevant Codes; and

- d. Establish a GRR3 group to plan and oversee implementation, should the proposed Rule changes be approved by the Membership.
- 7.10 These decisions concluded Council's consideration of the Governance & Representation Review and enables the proposed changes to be voted on by Members at an SGM to be convened in due course. If the proposal is accepted by Members, a phased transition is planned from August 2026 to 2029, with a new GRR group overseeing implementation.

## **Recommendations: Voice of the Game**

### **Recommendation 1**

Establish a simple consistent Communicate, Engage, Feedback & Feed-Forward (CEF) framework.

Purpose: Establish a clear process to be applied to decision-making within the RFU, ensuring appropriate consideration and planning to communicate, engage and feedback with relevant stakeholders in the game. Desired outcome: Listening to the voice of the game more effectively in making better decisions, with transparency and clarity for stakeholders on how their input was heard and considered.

### **Recommendation 2**

The way information flows to and from the members to the Board and other decision making bodies should be clarified, modernised and improved. The way in which this is proposed to be achieved is through:

- A formal consultation policy with members;
- Formal engagement with a National Council prior to decision-making. This would include major decisions relating to the game, but acknowledging there would be confidential commercial matters that could not be shared;
- Formal reporting of Board performance annually to members;
- A structured way in which issues raised by members are recorded and reported to appropriate bodies (and included on meeting agendas) such as National Council and the CGB (via the application of the CEF framework); and
- Forums set up as required to inform the CGB and any other relevant bodies. This could include local, regional forums and national forums.

## **Board: Role**

### **Recommendation 3**

The members of the RFU retain the responsibility to determine the RFU Rules and remove directors.

### **Recommendation 4**

The Board should retain overall responsibility for the management of the RFU and be accountable to the members. All members of the Board should have equal voting rights, and members of the Board should have the same fiduciary duties (and not, for example, to act in the interests of any particular group).

### **Recommendation 5**

The Board should put in place a scheme of formal delegation to the CGB and the Governance Standing Committee. Below the Board, matters of policy in the community game should be for the CGB to determine.

### **Recommendation 6**

The responsibilities of the Governance Standing Committee should focus on regulations and governance of the game. Corporate governance should be a responsibility of the Board.

### **Recommendation 7**

Where the Board delegates powers to other bodies (including the CGB and the Governance Standing Committee, the MPRB, PWR, the Champ Board), 1. those bodies should regularly report to the Board as to how they are discharging their responsibilities; and 2. the Board should regularly review what powers it delegates to those bodies.

### **Board: Information and decision-making**

#### **Recommendation 8**

The RFU Rules should continue to allow members to call Special General Meetings, and to put resolutions to Annual General Meetings. There should be a higher threshold for members to put resolutions to Annual General Meetings to prevent smaller unaccountable groups from disrupting the governance of the RFU, and it is suggested that this is 50 members. There should also be a minimum level of support required for member-proposed resolutions.

### **Board: Composition**

#### **Recommendation 9**

The Board remains at a maximum of 12, made up of:

- Independent Chair
- Chair of the CGB • Chair of the Governance Standing Committee
- 4 “Rugby Non-Executive Directors”. This would likely include at least one person with relevant professional rugby knowledge and experience who would likely become a member of the MPRB and/or the PWR Board.
- 3 Independent Non-Executive Directors (one of whom will be the Senior Independent Director)
- CEO and one other Executive (usually the CFO) The roles of Rugby Non-Executive Directors, the Chair of the CGB and the Chair of the Governance Standing Committee should be open to anyone to apply should they meet the qualifying criteria (see recommendation 10). The roles of Chair and Independent Non-Executive Directors should be open to anyone to apply should they meet the required independence criteria.

#### **Recommendation 10**

There should continue to be a non-executive voice of the game on the Board. The current Council Elected Directors (and Senior PRB Representative) should be replaced by “Rugby Non-Executive Directors”. These should be open to public application, but there should be appropriate qualifying conditions around their skills and experience in the game. They may, but need not, meet the independence criteria set out in the Code for Sports Governance.

#### **Recommendation 11**

Recruitment to the Board should be on an open and transparent basis and based on a skills matrix to ensure a full balance of skills and experience across the community and professional games, with business experience. Independence criteria should exist for the Chair and Independent Non-Executive Directors. It may be possible for a person to meet the criteria for both a Rugby Non-Executive Director and an Independent Non Executive Director.

### **Recommendation 12**

Members should retain the responsibility of ratifying the appointment of all Non Executive Directors, and the ability to remove them at a General Meeting.

### **Recommendation 13**

Non-Executive Board Members should continue to be subject to term limits. Given that there may be new members without experience of RFU governance, the maximum limits should be extended in line with the Governance Code to nine years rather than 103/297 six, which could be 3x3, or 2x3 years plus rolling approval on an annual basis up to nine years in aggregate.

### **CGB: Role**

#### **Recommendation 14**

The purpose of the CGB should be to oversee the implementation of the RFU strategy for community rugby in England under delegated authority from the Board of Directors. It should have ownership of performance across the community game with clear KPIs. It should be responsible for allocating resources to support community rugby (namely rugby other than Prem, Champ, PWR and the international game), ensuring alignment with the RFU's strategic objectives, and fostering the growth and sustainability of the community game. Budget responsibility should be held by CGB subject to any safeguards, and the Board having ultimate legal responsibility.

### **CGB: Composition/structure**

#### **Recommendation 15**

The CGB should have no more than 12 members. Membership of the CGB should be open to the whole game, with appointments made based on a skills matrix. Representation on the CGB should, as far as possible, reflect the depth and breadth of the community game, recognising that the smaller the size of the CGB, the more difficult that will be. There should be a broad range of skills, including experience of finance, marketing, digital, safeguarding and assurance/compliance.

Specific knowledge and lived experience should be sought to align with addressing the strategic objectives for the community game.

#### **Recommendation 16**

The CGB need not have a permanently fixed sub-committee structure, but rather the flexibility to determine what is needed to best deliver the RFU strategy and meet the needs of the game.

### **Council: Role**

#### **Recommendation 17**

The current Council should be referred to as the National Council and should evolve, with the principal responsibility to provide input to the Board and its committees (especially CGB) before decisions are made. This can include input to a specific list of decisions (such as the RFU strategy, the annual approval of regulations or large-scale competition decisions, material changes to policy relating to the distribution of tickets), and wider decisions that affect the game. The National Council should not be restricted by Board agendas and should be able to give advice or raise issues unprompted by the Board. It should be entirely non-executive and not have decision-making responsibility.

## **National Council: Composition**

### **Recommendation 18**

The composition of the National Council should evolve over a three-year period, from the current model to the model detailed in Appendix 2. This should also be in line with the transition plan outline referenced in this paper and included as Appendices 4a and 4b. Clarity in skills and experience required should be defined through a skills matrix.

### **Recommendation 19**

Members of the National Council should be subject to term limits in compliance with the Code for Sports Governance. This is up to three terms of three years (i.e. nine years in total).

### **Recommendation 20**

There should be no overlap between the Board and the National Council. If a member of the National Council is appointed to the Board, they should leave the National Council.

### **Recommendation 21**

Former employees of the RFU should be eligible to be members of the National Council, the Board, the CGB and other committees, unless otherwise prevented by a requirement for the role to be Independent for the purposes of the Code for Sports Governance. That said, when assessing suitability for appointment, the relevant appointing body should consider a four-year gap between the cessation of an individual's employment with the RFU and the taking up of a role on the aforementioned bodies.

## **National Council: Relationship with committees.**

### **Recommendation 22**

Members of the National Council should be eligible to be members of committees of the Board and any working groups. They would be of equal standing to other members of those groups and not have any specific responsibilities to "represent" the National Council, or to make specific reports to it.

### **Recommendation 23**

Changes to roles and responsibilities of bodies within the structure should come into effect from August 2026. The composition of the Board, CGB, Governance Standing Committee and Nominations Committee will, in the main, evolve over a longer period as current terms come to an end, though their composition should start to change from the 2026-27 season. The composition model of the National Council should not begin to change until the 2027-28 season (i.e. to coincide with election processes in early 2027).

### **Recommendation 24**

The President of the RFU should continue to be elected by the members each year at the AGM. The role should continue to comprise 2 principal duties: to manage and chair meetings of the National Council and the Members; and to perform ceremonial and ambassadorial duties on behalf of the RFU. The President should be supported by two Vice Presidents. A Vice President should normally expect to serve 2 years before becoming President in their third year. The Immediate Past President position should be disestablished.

## **Nominations Committee**

### **Recommendation 25**

There should be one Nominations Committee, which formally reports to the Board. It should operate in an open and transparent manner, ensuring open and inclusive recruitment processes. It must also ensure that any appointments are made with a view of ensuring diversity of thought and avoiding “group think” within bodies. The Chair of the Board should be the chair of this committee.

### **Recommendation 26**

The Nominations Committee should be supported by a small Talent Team, comprising professional HR expertise and experienced National Council Members. The Talent Team would report to the Nominations Committee and help develop consistent, transparent processes for identifying, developing and preparing future National Council Members and the Presidential Team, as well as members of the CGB, Governance Standing Committee and other RFU committees.

## **Representation and Skills**

### **Recommendation 27**

As a principle, where people are elected for roles, there should be clear transparency on the requirements for the role and the Talent Team should support with guidance, planning and advise where skills gaps exist. Where people are selected for roles, where possible this should be competency-based and should consider including broad representation from across the game. Applications for these roles should be open to all.

### **Recommendation 28**

A more structured approach should be taken to recruitment of volunteers to roles within the national RFU governance structure with the support of the proposed Talent Team.