



Hertfordshire Rugby Football Union



Hertfordshire Rugby Football Union's Purpose is *"To help our clubs and schools provide and grow enjoyable fully inclusive opportunities in rugby in Hertfordshire"*.

RFU COUNCIL MEETING

Held on the 11th April 2025

Presidential matters

1.1 Rob Udwin (President) welcomed Council members to what was a scheduled meeting of Council.

2. SGM update

2.1 Sir Bill Beaumont, as Chair, expressed gratitude to everyone who supported the SGM, acknowledging that the game has heeded its members' voices. He emphasised that now is the time for the Union to unite and engage with members on the Governance and Representation review.

2.2 Steve Grainger, as Executive Director of Rugby Development, provided an overview of the initiatives which had been set out in communications to the wider game since the roadshows, to enhance governance, financial sustainability, and community game growth. Key actions of which include launching a governance consultation, pausing the delivery system implementation, and increasing financial communications; noting the drive to accelerate school and college investments, expand the development officer network, and reduce administrative burden.

2.3 Additionally, Steve Grainger emphasised recent efforts on the exploration of simplified competition management, establishing a loan fund for community clubs, and forming partnerships. Improved communications have been planned with clear milestones and a long term strategy to engage members, aiming to strengthen the community game and ensure sustainable growth and effective governance.

3. CEO update

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

a. Council Members' engaging with over 800 representatives from 500+ organisations resulting in a strong mandate for change in governance and support, of which highlighted the need to work together to fulfil commitments and restore trust in the game.

b. The England Men's Senior Team's strong performances at the Men's Six Nations, while breaking records off the pitch with over six million followers on social media and increased video views. Men's U20s displayed promising talent despite narrowly missing the title and that the focus now shifts to the Red Roses' Six Nations campaign.

c. The IMPACT25 legacy programme continuing to benefit clubs and extend its impact as the Rugby World Cup approaches.

d. The efforts within the Stadium Masterplan project to secure more non-sporting events at Allianz Stadium.

e. The Six Nations Board securing a deal with the BBC and ITV to keep the tournament free to air.

f. 4. Sponsorship revenue growing through attracting premium brands, with new partnerships including Apple, AG1, and LG.

4. Interim Chair update

4.1 Sir Bill Beaumont provided an update on the recent work of the Board, noting that the meeting on 19 March 2025 focused on ticket pricing, the position regarding 20-minute red card proposal, updates on the men's and women's professional games, and reflections on the SGM. 4.2 Thanks were paid to Yasmin Diamond in her role as INED, who has made the decision to not renew for a further term on the RFU Board.

5. Approvals of Nominations

5.1 Council approved:

a. The appointment of the Presidential Team for 2025/2026

b. The re-appointment of Matt Webb on a one-year terms to complete his term as the I&D Working Group Chair.

c. The re-appointment of Jonathan Webb as Council Elected Director and as World Rugby Representative for a one-year term from 1 August 2025

d. The re-appointment James Cook as Council Elected Director for a three-year term from 1 August 2025

e. The reappointment of Paula Carter as Chair of the Governance Standing Committee for a three-year term from 1 August 2025

The appointments of the Presidential Team and directors will be put to the members for ratification at the AGM.

5.2 Polly Williams, Senior Independent Director, updated the Council on the process for the appointment of a permanent Chair of the Board, emphasising the involvement of both Board and Council Members on the interview panel.

5.3 The two "National Members" of Council, namely Maggie Alphonsi and Martin Corry, had reached the end of their nine years on Council. Given the Governance and Representation Review, these roles would not be replaced at this stage.

6. Regulation 15: Approval of proposed changes for the 2025/26 season

6.1 Nigel Orton, Chair of Age Grade Governance, presented the draft RFU Regulation 15 for Council's approval, articulating the intention to release this Regulation in May 2025 to accommodate the Summer Activity Framework and educational institutions' planning needs.

6.2 The proposal includes key changes such as extending playing up opportunities for younger players, clarifying regulations for girls-only rugby, and addressing recruitment practices for playing down.

6.3 Additionally, a wholesale review of Regulation 15 was suggested to ensure certainty and understanding, to include a wide-ranging consultation of clubs, schools, colleges, other unions, and sports. The regulation review strategy will be reassessed at the end of Season 2024/25.

6.4 Council approved the proposed draft of Regulation 15 for Season 2025/26 and delegated any final drafting to the Governance Standing Committee.

7. Governance and Representation Review

7.1 Malcolm Wharton gave an update on the Governance and Representation Consultation process, stating that the consultation paper, of which is to be shared with Council and the wider game on 30 of April, will not be final proposals but rather high-level options for the game to help shape any changes.

7.2 Council will also be involved during the consultation process, and in order to have the most effective engagement with members and other participants, there would be specific sessions for different sections of the game. NB Documents have been sent out to all Herts clubs regarding the review and the need for input into the review. Two calls will be set up with Herts clubs to allow for any questions etc.

8. Finance Update

8.1 Francesca Pierce, CFO, provided a financial update, highlighting that the organisation is tracking in line financially for the first year of the new cycle, with good liquidity and improving underlying profitability. The finance team is preparing for year-end, evaluating impacts of new accounting standards, and finalizing the FY26 budget.

8.2 Furthermore, it was noted that progress had been made in potential financing options for the first phase of stadium redevelopment are being assessed.

9. Core Values

9.1 Terry Burwell provided an update on the Core Values and Spirit of Rugby review, noting that despite recent distractions, the timeline remains on track for a final statement in August.

9.2 Feedback emphasised the importance of prioritising core values in discussions, with four key issues identified for investigation: defining rugby's uniqueness, enhancing inclusivity (especially for women and girls), assessing rugby's relevance (particularly TREDS for youth engagement), and improving avenues of communication of core values within the sport.

10. AGM Update

10.1 Angus Bujalski, as Executive Director of Legal and Governance, noted that the 2025 AGM is currently scheduled for 30 June and will be held in a hybrid format to allow members to attend in person or online. Routine agenda items include the election of the Presidential Team, ratification of Board Directors, and the approval of auditors. He noted that in addition to routine business, members had put forward proposed Rule changes, and the AGM would also be an opportunity for members to discuss the Governance and Representation Review consultation document. Further details of the AGM would be released in due course, but there was a consensus that the AGM should be used to engage with members more than had been the case in recent years.

11. Actions from Freshfields Report

11.1 Paula Carter, Chair of the Governance Standing Committee presented the process for taking forward recommendations from Freshfields' report into the Long-Term Incentive Plan.

12. Rugby World Cup 2025 Update

12.1 Alex Teasdale, Executive Director of the Women's Game, outlined the organisational structure and roles for the Rugby World Cup 2025, detailing regional and national ways of working, and providing various activation guides for clubs to prepare for the event. Key guides cover topics such as social media, volunteer recruitment, adult and age-grade engagement, coaching, and event hosting. Emphasis was placed on preparation and activation to ensure successful participation and engagement throughout the Rugby World Cup.

13. Reports

13.1 Council received reports from the following groups and the opportunity to question their authors: Community Game Board, Men's Professional Rugby Board, Council Nominations Committee, Inclusive Leadership Delivery Group, Governance Standing Committee, Commercial, and HIPM Subcommittee.

David Roberts

RFU Hertfordshire Council Member

24th February Jan 2025

In the meantime if there anymore questions please contact me on my mobile 07734 959295
