

**MINUTES OF A GENERAL MEETING AND
FINANCIAL AGM OF
LANCASHIRECOUNTY RUGBY FOOTBALL UNION LTD
HELD AT PRESTON GRASSHOPPERS RFC ON 22ND NOVEMBER 2017**

President Steve Blackburn welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1. **Apologies:**

Mark Downs, Noel Atkinson, David Todd, Phil Mahon, Maurice Parker, Dennis Woodcock, John Bradbury, Ernie Neely, John Heald, Joe James, Ken Andrews, Allen Bower, Brian Minor, Bill Lowe, John Jeskins, John Huyton.

2. **Minutes of the General Meeting held on Wednesday 21st June at Tyldesley RUFC**

These were on the County website.

3. **Matters arising**

No matters arising.

4. **Financial AGM and Presentation of Accounts for 2016 -2017**

Paul Deakin welcomed everyone and explained that in an attempt to bring everyone into the 21st Century the accounts would be presented by himself with copies available electronically for those who required them.

Paul then went on to explain the accounts. He explained that the aim was not to make money per se but to make money that could then be invested back into the Community Game.

Extra money had been spent this year on the following:

- The cost of the success of our two Senior teams winning at Twickenham
- Lancashire Academy was being invested in.
- Lancashire Roses (1st XV and 2nd XV)
- Lancashire Royals (26 clubs represented)
- U15 Girls Rugby
- U16 Boys Development Rugby

The aim of the above was to keep children involved in rugby. The balance sheet shows a loss of £3.000.00 but in effect that is where we want to be as it shows we are investing in the rugby.

PD then went through the Balance sheet. He emphasised that Lancashire will continue with the investment in the rugby and that Lancashire need to be seen to be investing in rugby.

The next 'aim' is to spend approximately £15K in developing coaching reserves , looking at 2 people from each club going towards a Level 2 Coaching Award.

HD queried whether that would also be open to Ladies Coaches and she was assured that there would be opportunities for all. TF also commented that the aim was to help coaches progress and to develop their skills.

PFR for next year. There was a need to mirror the RFU Strategy. Lancashire's plan does currently 'dovetail' into the RFU Strategy.

PD then presented the Lancashire Spending Plan(see accounts) but the focus is very much on investing in the future of rugby and will involve all aspects eg Volunteers , Club Management, Cluster Meetings, Integration in the Community, Representative Rugby etc.

Steve Blackburn then recorded his thanks to Paul for all the hard work he had done.

Carol Baker also thanked him for his clear explanation of how things worked.

5. **RFU Representatives Report**

There were no questions from the floor , however RTB highlighted the following points:

- New CEO in place , Steve Brown and the consensus was he was a 'safe pair of hands' who understood the game.
- East Stand Project , costing £65M was progressing well. 61% of the money had already been spent. It would raise money for the RFU and the game in general.
- World Cup Bid. France would be the hosts in 2023. There had been some controversy as South Africa had been perceived to have the best bid . Council did not agree.
- Governance Code. There was an SGM on Friday to hopefully agree to the recommendations. There had been a slight change in emphasis but Council remains as the backdrop and they will still maintain a lot of the powers that they already have.
- Working Group for Diversity and Inclusion. When the AGM approves the Governance code then Genevieve Glover will start the work she has been appointed to do. This group will look at how the game is managed throughout including CBs and Clubs to ensure Diversity and Inclusion.
- Tickets. The RFU is looking at a new ticket allocation model , more focus on how many teams/games are being played. However this is still in the consultation phase and will be looked at the end of this season by Council.
- RFU held it's first Board meeting outside Twickenham. The meeting was held at PGH. The Board had found it useful as it had helped them to understand a little more about the rugby involved. There were plans to hold the next meeting at Hinckley in December.
- Player Tracking in the Community Game . At the moment there is no way of tracking players who move from the Junior Game to the Adult game. There will be a cost involved but it should be of benefit in the long term.
- U19 Commission Report. There is to be a presentation to Council on Friday which has identified 10 key areas which may be of help in retaining players. Looking at incentives for clubs to run 16/17/18 year old teams.

BS referred back to the tracking players by saying that GMS didn't automatically move Junior to Seniors and that may be a way forward and it was currently under consideration.

6. **Committee Reports**

a) **Management Board**

No matters arising.

b) **Finance and Funding Committee**

Covered earlier

c) **Disciplinary Committee**

- BS reported that it had been a hectic start to the season with 82 cases so far, that number had only been reached in January last season.
- Concerns about the incidences of Racial abuse , 3 U16 had been dealt with at club level and these cases do have to be referred to the RFU.
- Referee Abuse had also been a factor in a lot of cases , this was a potential disaster as referees were now not taking up the game. There had been no new referees signed to the Society in Summer and referees were refusing to referee Sunday games because of the abuse that they got from parents of the children they were refereeing.
- All players who had been sent off had been red cards apart from two yellow cards. BS felt that the message needed to be sent back to clubs that Referees would not tolerate abuse from anyone.
- Graham Bancroft then added that the Referees Society are looking to form a working party going towards zero tolerance for Ref Abuse. Last year there had been 24 new referees , this year there had been none. They were losing refs to age/ injury /ref abuse and some referees moving away. The working party would work with clubs that had problems with referee abuse.

BS reiterated that the message need to be sent out to clubs that Referees would not tolerate abuse and neither would the Disciplinary Committee.

d) **Governance**

- There had been a very successful Safeguarding Conference in September with 38 delegates. 24 clubs had been represented and 15 clubs had sent their apologies. The conference had been held at half term which may have had some impact but will look at doing at a different date next year.
- Lancashire now had a Social Media Policy which would be rolled out in the near future.
- CB had been invited to a CSE (Child Sexual Exploitation) conference to look at how rugby compares to other sports. Rugby had come out very well and had been described as a 'safe sport'. The RFU had set up a helpline for any children with concerns and had had 2 reports but there had been no criminal charges.
- The RFU was currently running a 'Lift the Weight' campaign which is a focus on Mental Health and CB encouraged clubs to have a look at the website to see what they could do to help/support their own clubs.

e) **Rugby Development Committee**

- The focus was on the retention of players.
- Currently running a project with Universities of Liverpool and Manchester where coaches were going into clubs. This was helping to boost numbers and Waterloo , Southport and Liverpool had all picked up players as a result. The programme would continue.

f) **Marketing and Communications Committee**

- Twitter and Facebook are working well in promoting Lancashire .Data shows that it is being used and people are communicating with Lancashire through this media.

g) **Club and Community Rugby Committee**

- Diverse goings on with the committee with several members acting as mentors , Andy Kerboas, Carol Baker, Gary Morgan and Anne Clarke. The people on the Community Committee are involved in the community.
- Helen Duggan has just presented us with the Lancashire Survey results which will be looked at in detail.

- Stuart Kohler is trying to produce a brochure in an attempt to get some sponsors for Lancashire RFU
- Jayne Dolloway continues to work on the 'Mum's Blog'.
- A series of meeting would be set up and Malcolm asked for suggestions about what the clubs may like as a theme. He asked that anyone with any suggestions should e mail himself , Carol ,Andy or Steve.

h) **Competitions**

- The minutes of the meetings are on the website.
- Concern about the lack of interest from the clubs. Only 28 clubs 'applied'
- The Trophy is up to the Final Stage
- The Plate is at the Semi Final Stage
- The Bowl is being played as a round robin and the SF and F should be sorted soon.

i) **Coaching Committee**

- There is a coaching mentor scheme running , proving popular but there are limited resources.
- Lancashire does have coach mentors available.
- Referral back to PD and the money available for Level 2 coaches but clubs need to be aware of it.
- Lancashire Academy. Lancashire are leading the way. Felt there was a gap between the DPP and the next level. Proving to be popular with another intake of 17/18 year olds.
- Coaching Workshops. These have been well received , work with coached using the clubs 1st XV and 2nd XV.
- New programme will be developed after Christmas.
- End of Season Conference planned in June.
- Any clubs have any questions then please contact Tom Fitzgerald.

j) **Rugby Development Officer**

- No one attended.

7. **Playing**

Seniors:

The group will meet up shortly. Coaches have been out and about observing players to see the players who may be part of this group.

U20

Trials had taken place in October with 41 players being nominated from clubs. Training was ongoing ready for the games that would take place later in the season.

Lancashire Royals

The Lancashire Royals had played their first game earlier in November when they had played the Cheshire Harvesters. The game had been lost but there had been a difference in playing strength with Cheshire playing many players from Level 5 and 6.

The next game would be played at Blackburn on December 30th . HH stated that they were looking for clubs to send in nominations, and would be looking to see if clubs who had not previously sent in nominations might now do so. TF said that as it was a squad rather than a team then all players would get a game.

U18

After completing a successful season with the U17 at the end of the last season , most of that squad now made up the bulk of this season's U18's.

Two regional trials were held in various parts of the County, a squad of about 25 players selected and several training sessions conducted.

As it is well known the idea of running an 18's squad is to put on show the best of our 18's players to compete in a 3 County Representative games to allow selectors to choose a squad to represent the North and hopefully England.

These games are played on a festival basis at various venues in the North which allows the selectors to see the talent on show.

The first festival was held in Durham at the end of October at Darlington Mowden Park where we played Cumbria in a very entertaining game winning the game 41 -10.

The next scheduled fixture is against Yorkshire on the 3rd December at Bishop Burden which is apparently east of Hull !!! . TH said his geography was not good but it was possibly nearer to Holland than Lancashire !!

The final fixture is due to be played on the 17th December at Sedgeley Pk where Lancashire will entertain Cheshire.

U17

Nothing to report other than trials would be held in the next couple of weeks at a venue to be confirmed.

U16

Ian Spivey attended the meeting and said that raising the team was difficult at the moment. The M and J Committee were currently looking at organising next season. There were now more members on the Junior committee which was helpful.

Schools

Junior and Senior competitions were being run and all seemed to be going smoothly.

Women and Girls

HD reported that this section continue to go from strength to strength. Several Lancashire players had achieved Representative honours amongst the various squads including the Barbarians, U20's and the Army team.

In the current Youth programme there were approximately 90 U18's which while being very good news was presenting its own problem eg if run two training sessions at one time then problems with finding a ground big enough.

Both the U15 and U18 had won against Cheshire with the U15 in particular being a much stronger side than the Cheshire Team.

Both teams lost against Yorkshire.

The next game was on December 3rd at Rochdale and HD invited everyone to attend who could.

HD felt that the North was becoming a centre of Excellence. The U15 did not have a programme after Christmas as that programme had been 'scrapped' so would look at what could be put in place. TF said that that had been an RFU decision and so care need to be taken on the 'next steps'. HD and TF to discuss this at another time.

8. League Report

Start with good news that the number of offences are down.

Electronic Match Cards had been rolled out, but had not been an unqualified success!. There was a problem when using iphone/ipad app. The RFU are trying to solve the problem for this Saturday.

Any problems should be referred to Ken Potter as he is the contact for League Secretaries.

9. The North

The ongoing saga of the League Structure was then explained with an update on the background to the situation with the problems of clubs not wanting to travel to Cumbria and the Raging Bull Leagues. DC handed out a suggestion of what might be available in the future.

There then followed a very lengthy discussion about how things should move forward and what needs to be done. There were some queries about what had been done up to now .

- There had been a meeting of Level 7,8 and 9 clubs who said they didn't want to play in Lancashire at the meeting that was called but they then declined to commit to the suggested structure at that meeting.
- An invitation had been issued to Cumbria and Cheshire following a meeting of the North DOC but Cumbria had declined to attend.
- The structure given out this evening had been sent to Cheshire who when asked for commitment stated that some clubs agree and some do not.
- Cheshire had asked what would Lancashire do if they didn't get permission from the North DOC ?
- There had been a meeting with Cheshire , the RFU and Fred from the Raging Bull Leagues to discuss the way forward but in effect the meeting was not as productive as had been hoped.

PH thought that at the meeting earlier this year that there was a feeling that Lancashire clubs wanted competitive rugby. TH asked why were the RFU not stepping into help but DC replied that the RFU see it as a 'local problem' to be sorted by the DOC , however the situation had not changed despite all that had gone on. TF suggested that perhaps the time had come to 'bite the bullet' and make a stand.

It was agreed that DC, BS and ISB would work together to come up with a common format of letter/information to send to the clubs in our Leagues. BS would do SLC2, DC would do SLC1 and ISB would do SLC3. There needed to be a common format and thought given to who to contact in the clubs eg a committee man may give a different to a player so important all club members would be asked for their views.

RTB reiterated that it needed to be put to clubs and ask them directly what do they want .

The RFU had proposed changes to the format of the Cup Competitions, increasing the number of clubs from 1 to 4 it couldn't make any difference to our competitions. More information would follow.

There had been a query at the Competitions meetings about clubs being paid their RFU Travel expenses but there had been a problem with the system at the RFU and clubs' bank details had been lost resulting in a delay. This was currently being looked at.

There had been a discussion at the Competitions meeting about the number of replacements allowed. The discussion centred around the fact that if 5 subs then need 2 props which was having a detrimental effect on games at lower levels. There was no solution and it would be discussed at another time.

10. **ERCA**

DLH reported that he had been to 2 meetings where there had been rumblings that Area 5 was not quite right.

People at the meeting were not happy that all meetings were at Twickenham.

There had been an increase in funding for Women/Girls Rugby but this funding increase did not apply to developing the facilities such as changing rooms etc.

Cheshire had resigned from ERCA.

11. **AOB**

No comments from the floor.

Mr Steve Blackburn thanked everyone for attending and the meeting closed at 9.15pm.

Attendees:

Peter Hughes	Past President
Mick Nichols	Burnley
Tony Ingham	Chorley
Tommy Hughes	Past President/U18 Chairman
Dave Clarke	Wigan
Ken Potter	RFUNCC
Brian Hurst	Littleboro'
Alan James	Lostock/Colts
Howard Hughes	U20's/Royals
T Harper	Manchester
H. Duggan	Firwood Waterloo
G Burns	Firwood Waterloo

David Mathews	Past President
I Crosley	Preston Grasshoppers
I Spivey	Aldwinians
K. Bennatta	Sale Sharks/Littleboro
Carol Baker	Governance Director/CBSM
Graham Bancroft	Blackburn/MADREF Soc
John Morgan	Lancashire Schools
Mel Whittle	Fylde/Former Vice President
Roly Heptonstall	Oldham
Tim Stirk	Past President
Ian Grogan?	NLC
Steve Blackburn	Rochdale/President
Brian Stott	North Manchester
Mike Cornelia	Warrington
Dave Herriman	Board
B Belcher	Tyldesley
Rob Briers	Lancashire

Also present but didn't sign

Malcolm Worsley	Past President/Chairman CCG
Tom Fitzgerald	Past President/Director of Rugby
Paul Deakin	Treasurer
Anne Clarke	Minutes