



# AGENDA

## Community Board Meeting

<b>Location:</b>	Teams	<b>Date:</b>	Wednesday 9 <sup>th</sup> December 2020
		<b>Time:</b>	6.30pm – 8.00pm
<b>Invited to Attend:</b>	Fred Baker, Neil Ashton, Peter Moran, Trevor Hunt, Stuart Prior, Sue Taylor, Jan Robinson, Steve Curtis	<b>Chair Person:</b>	Sandy Lindsay MBE
<b>RFL Officers in Attendance:</b>	Marc Lovering, Kelly Barrett		
<b>Apologies:</b>	Lois Forsell, Neil Kelly, Sqn Ldr Damian Clayton MBE,		

Item No.	Agenda Item	ACTION
1.0	<b>Welcomes &amp; Apologies</b>  Ms Lindsay welcomed everyone to the meeting.  Apologies were received from Lois Forsell, Neil Kelly and Sqn Ldr Damian Clayton MBE.	
2.0	<b>Minutes of the September meeting</b> The minutes of the 16 <sup>th</sup> of September were agreed as a true record of the meeting.  Mr Hunt asked if the notes from the Membership working group could be recorded and shared. Ms Lindsay confirmed that bullet points of items could be circulated.  Mr Moran asked for an update on the 2021 registrations and impact that Coronavirus may have had on our numbers. Ms Barrett confirmed that we have not opened the registration window as yet. Clubs will be able to commence registering their participants week commencing 4 <sup>th</sup> January. Mr Lovering outlined that it is difficult to measure how far down on registrations we are due to the pandemic. Mid-year measures suggested around 25-30% down on 2019, which Sport England are sympathetic to. Went on to suggest that a measure taken in March 2021 will likely give a clearer picture of the impact as it can be compared to the March 2020 measure, taken the week before lockdown came into force.	K Barrett



	<p>agreed.</p> <p>4) Game Wide Review Tracker – All actions from the Game Wide Review have been picked up in Community Strategy Work for 2021 onwards and will be carried forward into next year.</p>	
<p><b>4.0</b></p>	<p><b>Post RLWC2021 Activity</b></p> <p>Ms Lindsay introduced the item and highlighted that the key focus is ensuring that we have mechanisms and offers in place to capitalise on and maximise the increased interest for Rugby League that is expected on the back of the World Cup. This item is to stimulate some thoughts and ideas from the members of Community Board and ask them to start thinking about this further. Floated the idea of forming a Working Group to focus on this area.</p> <p>Mr Prior would be interested in being involved in discussions and help come up with ideas. Would like to get people involved in face-to-face discussions as it is felt they would be more productive than a zoom meeting for brainstorming. Ms Lindsay agreed with this although pointed out that this would likely be after January if Covid cases rise again post-Christmas.</p> <p>Mr Hunt would be happy to get involved with the media aspect of this. Keen to get involved in discussions and help use connections with clubs to develop ideas.</p> <p>Mr Baker is anxious that we ensure that in the developing areas of the sport all stakeholders in the game are working together and coordinating their efforts. On the back of the fantastic work in the Community Game by staff and clubs, Mr Baker feels that themes should focus on family and community to highlight the fantastic work that is done around the game. Trying to ensure there are offers for all ages alongside each other to reflect the fact that the World Cups will be alongside each other.</p> <p>Mr Lovering highlighted the plans to create promotional videos focussing on the Community Game. The aim is to focus on the family and community aspects of the sport/clubs as well as the usual promotion of the on-field product.</p> <p>Mr Brindle outlined the preliminary plans for the video series in the early part of the year. The on-pitch action sells itself, so the focus is on the ‘special’ aspect of the sport, the family and community aspects of clubs and the sport. Focussing on how our sport helps each other and those in their local communities. Building in elements of the World Cup as well to promote the sport.</p> <p>Mr Hunt asked if there is budget for the World Cup to help brand the clubs such as linking a club badge with the World Cup logo to increase engagement and signposting to the community clubs.</p> <p>Mr Brindle outlined that the RLWC team will be rolling out the ‘Friends of the World Cup’ scheme in the New Year. Went on to state that the use of the logo may be difficult as the RLWC team are very careful with how and where the logo is being used but that there have been discussions, which are ongoing, around how the World Cup can work with Community Clubs to promote the tournament and the sport.</p> <p>Ms Lindsay said that Tracey Power will be invited to the next meeting to</p>	

discuss ideas and thoughts on this and legacy in general.

K Barrett

Ms Robinson highlighted the challenge of the World Cup ending at a time when the Rugby League season is over, and the Rugby Union season is building back up. Concerned that there needs to be plans in place to capitalise on the immediate upturn in interest and reduce the chance of people who want to try rugby ending up in Union clubs instead.

Mr Baker suggested that the 'Inspired by' branding for the World Cup could be expanded to be used by all clubs as a part of branding. Mr Brindle outlined that the 'Friends of the World Cup' branding is along those lines of thought. Went on to highlight the monetisation of the World Cup brand and the World Cup team trying to protect their brand to enhance the commercial benefits to the sport.

Mr Lovering highlighted that all host towns and cities have groups that are meeting regularly to discuss how to maximise the positive impact of the World Cup and steering people towards Rugby League. The only issue at the moment, is that council-led groups have been somewhat disrupted by furlough and re-deployments due to Covid. Mr Brindle highlighted that the work is due to step up in January and start making an impact in the lead up to the World Cup. Ideally, work would have started this year but has been disrupted by the pandemic.

Mr Moran suggested that we need to provide some form of winter offer to capitalise on the World Cup, in some form or another. Mr Lovering suggested working with Foundations, who already offer indoor activities during the winter months. Went on to highlight that we need to be careful with winter offers in order to maximise positive experiences, using the example of an eight year old's first experience of RL being on a snowbound pitch in December and the child being put off from trying again as a result of the experience.

Mr Moran suggested that forward planning is key with regards to facilities and central activities to ensure we don't miss out. Asked about activities before the tournament as well.

Mr Lovering highlighted that the World Cup Team are leading on pre-tournament activation and that activity for post-tournament in host areas will be planned in advance. Went on to highlight the need to map out delivery based on capacity, it is envisaged that the World Cup Team will be supported by the RFL staff in the running of the tournament so that needs to be taken into consideration when planning activity during and immediately after the tournament. Schools and Education will be in season so may be an area of focus.

Mr Prior echoed the message on schools and suggested that these discussions are what the Working Group can be set up to develop further.

Mr Ashton stated that the school game would be at the regional stages during the World Cup. Concerned that the focus on getting new participants involved on the back of the World Cup is potentially overshadowing the opportunity that the World Cup offers to celebrate some of the work/activity already going on in the sport. Asked if there is the opportunity for using the World Cup matches to provide a platform to showcase and celebrate the school and community games. Suggested schools playing showcase matches before the World Cup games and school children as flag bearers. Floated the idea of taking some of the stronger schools into the developing areas to showcase the game. September 2021 will be the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the re-launch of the

	<p>Champion's Schools and Mr Ashton would like to be involved in conversations around celebrating the school game during the World Cup.</p> <p>Mr Lovering said that these discussions are ongoing, and the host areas are exploring ways to engage as many schools as possible into the tournament. Schools will be key to maximising ticket sales for the tournament. Mr Brindle highlighted the work being done on a 'Welcome to Rugby League' video that showcases the school game.</p> <p>Ms Lindsay stated that a member of the Netball World Cup Team has been invited to the January meeting in order to share ideas and best practice on this.</p>	
<p><b>5.0</b></p>	<p><b>Return to Play Update</b></p> <p>Mr Lovering briefly outlined the return to play. January is envisaged to be a return to training, with February and March hosting fixtures along the lines of the Autumn Activity offer, and the week after Easter being targeted as the return of formal competitions. Addressed that there has been a sense of moving backwards after the second lockdown due to increased Tier 3 restrictions and the work done internally with DCMS to ensure that some form of contact training can return in the new year. The rule adaptations and new regulations introduced have resulted in DCMS categorising RL as medium risk activity.</p> <p>At local level there are certain Public Health England Directors that are presenting some challenges, using Lancashire FA suspending football activity under pressure from said officials, against DCMS advice as an example. There is a risk to us that similar decisions may affect us. We are currently seeking clarification on travel restrictions and areas for the Tiers as this will affect the kind of fixtures that can be offered depending on how narrowly areas are interpreted. In order for Open Age competitions to run, we would require areas to be out of Tier 3 restrictions, hence the post-Easter start date.</p> <p>Clubs are currently unable to open and there remain severe restrictions on the use of changing facilities, which will inevitably affect the type and level of activity that can be offered. The first couple of months of 2021 will still be the 'turn up, play, go home' process but will hopefully ease by Easter. Current Government concerns are focussed on the off-pitch environment rather than the on-field activity. The RFL are required to put protocols in place for the off-field environment and ensure that there are consequences to those who fail to adhere to the protocols.</p> <p>The key is to reduce and prevent incidents in the early months of the year that could jeopardise the return of competitions and a semblance of normality.</p> <p>Mr Moran asked where community involvement in the Challenge Cup stands in 2021. Mr Lovering stated that Community Clubs have been informed that is highly unlikely that they will be involved in the 2021 Challenge Cup due to the timelines for such involvement and the impracticalities of delivering that in the current Tier system.</p> <p>Mr Moran asked about the Community Game returning after the Professional Game. Mr Lovering outlined that this was the case due to the differences</p>	

	<p>between sports/competitions returning under the Elite Framework and those returning under the Recreational Framework. The requirements and scrutiny under the Elite Framework allow for an earlier return but would not be feasible for the Community Game.</p> <p>Mr Hunt stated that he feels the Challenge Cup should not be a focus for Community Clubs in 2021 and the focus should be on getting back to week in week out rugby. Mr Lovering agrees and highlighted the later start of formal competitions as being aimed at that. The later start will increase the chances of fortnightly fixtures and reduce the chance of competitions being stop-start.</p> <p>Mr Prior followed on from that to suggest Leagues working together to run a competition that will start later but offer a robust and competitive environment in the lead up to the World Cup.</p> <p>Ms Barrett outlined the plans for Community Rugby in 2021. Phased introduction of contact training in January, followed by fortnightly friendly fixtures in February (12-18 then Primary/Open Age on an alternating week basis). A form will be circulated in January for clubs to opt-in to the Spring Activity friendly fixtures. Interest in Spring Activity is expected to be higher than the Autumn Activity as it is the usual pre-season period. There will be amended activity rules and protocols in place to comply with DCMS requirements and ensure that activity can happen. The registration form completed by players/parents will include a declaration to acknowledge the risks involved with participating in the current environment.</p> <p>All Spring Activity fixtures will be on LeagueNet and teams will be required to complete an online team sheet. There has been a change to the framework of compliance that now requires breaches of the protocols to be sufficiently dealt with by NGBs. As a result, there will be a mechanism in place on the online team sheet for clubs and Match Officials to report any breaches of protocol. These will then be followed up by the RFL.</p> <p>Youth and Junior fixtures will be coordinated in conjunction with the Junior Leagues and Open Age fixtures will be coordinated centrally, with communication with the leagues on how best to do so within the Tier system. It is hoped that weekly fixtures will return in April however, scenario planning is in progress to map the number of rounds that could be fulfilled in a range of situations in time for finishing before the World Cup. It is envisaged that some of the current protocols will still be in place upon the return of formalised fixtures. The oversight of these protocols upon return of formalised fixtures will likely be devolved to the Leagues.</p>	
<p><b>6.0</b></p>	<p><b>Financial Sustainability</b></p> <p>Ms Lindsay has been doing a lot of research and learning since the last meeting and feels that we have been looking at Membership in the wrong way. In recent times there has been a lot of focus on how the sport comes together to help each other as well as rumours around the negotiations with Sky. Ms Lindsay feels that the sport should not be beholden to anyone and should strive to become self-sufficient and that is the key part of what Membership is about. Not about raising X amount of revenue but about being self-sufficient as a sport. If we get this right, we could have a very positive impact across the whole game. Almost received permission to push the scheme launch back to</p>	

2022, however, if we do push it back, we need to ensure that we launch it well and get behind it to maximise the positive impact on the sport. Spend the next six and twelve months to get things right and get everyone on board.

Mr Prior feels that if the Membership Scheme is presented and delivered in the right way, with a complete and well put together package it will receive support across the game. People understand the need to be self-sufficient, but we need to ensure that the message and package is right.

Mr Hunt highlighted the need to ensure that we have the right packages and benefits, so people feel they are getting more than they currently receive for free. Can fully get behind the idea of this scheme launching in twelve months' time. One issue that arose from the full Council meeting was regarding the funding for the women's game and expressed concerns about Women's Super League teams taking players away from Community Clubs and undermining the work they are doing.

Ms Lindsay agrees and highlights that money has always been a problem in enabling the sport to execute some of the more exciting ideas that have been proposed. If we can find new and greater sources of revenue, there is a better opportunity to push on with the ideas and help promote and grow the sport at Community level.

Mr Brindle agrees that there needs to be greater connectivity between Women's Super League and the greater women's and girls' games, and this is something currently being worked on. Suggested that the WSL was introduced to help grow the overall female game, and the increase in teams and participants since inception shows that, broadly speaking, the WSL has been a success. Accepts that there is still work to be done to further the positive impact the WSL can have on the female game as a whole.

Mr Hunt responded that with a bit more investment in the Community clubs they can be act as a great hub for developing talent. Concerned that currently, when a women's or girls' team starts to have success, they tend to lose their main talent to WSL, Championship or League 1 clubs, which essentially leads to the Community team being enveloped by the other club. Feels that, if WSL clubs invested some resources into Community Clubs, they would have a greater pool of resources to pick from, rather than selecting from the same, limited pool recurringly and limiting the ability of Community Clubs to grow. Something to consider as the Membership plan is developed.

Mr Baker asked if Ms Lindsay has come across any NGBs that have a hardship fund in place. Ms Lindsay outlined that she had not come across any and this will be something to look at in part of the planning for the Membership Scheme. There have been technical developments that suggest Membership could be paid on a monthly basis to reduce the initial cost and it could be possible to include contributions to a hardship fund – or maybe RL Cares - as part of that payment structure. From the learning gathered so far, it is felt that a Membership Scheme could have a huge, game changing impact on the sport providing the package and delivery are right. The only way to get it right is to continue to talk and to listen and to work together.

Mr Baker agrees with Ms Lindsay and feels that we need to seize the moment. Talks have been had in the past and issues raised have prevented them going further. We need to ensure we address these issues but not let them stop us any longer.

Ms Lindsay agrees and suggested the possibility of offering a voluntary Membership in 2021 to act as a soft launch and allow further input and

	<p>development for the full launch in 2022.</p> <p>Mr Prior feels this needs to be a meeting of minds in person and not on Zoom. This has the potential to raise a similar amount of money as Kevin Sinfield has raised for Rob Burrow (circa £2m at time of meeting) and some of this money could be invested back into the Community Game.</p> <p>Ms Lindsay agrees that there is a need and desire to get into a room together as soon as possible to discuss all the ideas and start putting them down on paper.</p>	
<b>7.0</b>	<p><b>Any Other Business</b></p> <p>Ms Lindsay asked everyone to feed back to Ms Barrett as to preferences of days and times for meetings in 2021. Feels that getting back to physical meetings should be a priority as there are important discussions to be had around the World Cup Legacy and the Membership plans.</p>	ALL
<b>8.0</b>	<p><b>Meeting Close</b></p>	