



# Minutes

## Community Board meeting

<b>Location:</b>	Teams	<b>Date:</b>	Wednesday 16 <sup>th</sup> September 2020
		<b>Time:</b>	10.00am – 2.00 pm
<b>Invited to Attend:</b>	Sqn Ldr Damian Clayton MBE, Fred Baker, Neil Ashton, Peter Moran, Trevor Hunt, Stuart Prior, Sue Taylor, Jan Robinson, Lois Forsell, Neil Kelly, Steve Curtis	<b>Chairperson:</b>	Sandy Lindsay MBE
<b>RFL Officers in Attendance:</b>	Ralph Rimmer, Marc Lovering, Kelly Barrett, Dave Rotheram, Alison O'Brien (in part) Sarah-Jane Gray (in part)	<b>Invited Guests:</b>	Tracy Powers (in part)
<b>Apologies:</b>			

Item No.	Agenda Item	Action
1.0	<b>Welcomes &amp; Apologies</b>  Ms Lindsay MBE welcomed everyone to the meeting and requested that should people wish to ask a question during the meeting then they raise their hand (via teams). Community Board were also reminded that people would be muted during the meeting so they would need to unmute when asking questions.	
2.0	<b>Minutes of the June meeting</b>  The minutes were accepted as accurate.  Matters Arising  Item 1 - Mr Prior asked about the uptake by clubs on the £16million loan received by the RFL. Mr Rimmer stated that the uptake had been very positive, several clubs have stated that the loan has saved their lives in the short-term. Mr Rimmer emphasised the importance of ensuring that the support saves clubs in the medium to longer-term as well. Mr Rimmer said that the Government had requested specific numbers were withheld until 50% of the money had been	

	<p>distributed but that communications were being put together, with numbers attached, to be distributed when possible.</p> <p>Item 6 - Mr Hunt asked, regarding minute point 6.0 from the last meeting, if scrums are to be removed from any Community Game activity that get the go ahead. Ms Barrett confirmed that this would be the case.</p> <p>Mr Moran followed up a question regarding changing of the laws to speed up the game and concerns on how this will affect Tier 5 players. Mr Rotheram stated that the only law change for the Community Game would be the suspension of scrums, which is temporary. Any further changes would go through the usual process with the Laws Committee, whose next meeting is October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2020. Mr Rimmer is personally in favour of the Laws Committee looking at ways to slow down the Community Game to make it more accessible to all.</p> <p>Item 11 - Mr Hunt asked for any further information on the Euro 13s League. Mr Lovering stated that all seems to be quiet and, although nothing official has been released, feels that it is unlikely that the competition would be able to launch in early 2021, given the current Coronavirus situation. Ms O'Brien, RFL representative to the RLEF Board, added that the RLEF do not sanction the Euro 13s competition and had not discussed it further at the last meeting. With current restrictions, any club wishing to play would require governing body approval, which the RFL would not grant for this competition. If any further updates are received these will be communicated to the Community Board through Mr Lovering.</p> <p>Mr Moran asked about constitutional changes at the RLEF regarding the governance of club matters as well as national team matters. Ms O'Brien stated that the RLEF has agreed to review all its articles. Reiterated that the Euro 13s is unsanctioned so is not in RLEF discussions currently. Mr Moran clarified that his concerns were around the fact that other National Governing Bodies, including Wales and Scotland, do not control club activity constitutionally in the way that the RFL does. Mr Rimmer highlighted issues for Euro 13s in sourcing match officials and insurance and agreed to take the point about constitutions to the RLEF for consideration.</p> <p>Mr Baker asked were the Euro 13s to come to fruition what communication would the RFL send out to players concerning player welfare issues with the competition. Mr Rimmer stated that a clear communication would be sent out to all players highlighting concerns and issues around player welfare.</p> <p>No further questions were received.</p>	<p>ML</p> <p>RR</p>
<p><b>3.0</b></p>	<p><b>Review of the Action Tracker</b></p> <p>Ms Barrett talked through the Action Tracker with the updates provided within the Action tracked.</p> <p>Action 1 – Professional Game Board – Additional Community Game representative is being sought, particularly an individual from Cumbria. Ms Barrett to pick up with Rob Hicks, who is now back from furlough leave.</p> <p>Action 2 – Map out journey around offers and tools participants have to get</p>	<p>KB</p>

	<p>involved – work continues, and Community Board will be updated as and when appropriate.</p> <p>Action 3 – Primary Rugby League Issues – Work on hold due to no activity taking place in 2020 because of Coronavirus. Agreed to roll this over to 2021 at the last meeting and need to now articulate to the leagues that the 2020 review will continue into 2021.</p> <p>Action 5 – Game wide Review – Working Groups in place and work continues.</p> <p>Action 9 – Suspension of Community Game during Festival of World Cups – Awaiting further information on the World Cups before proceeding with this. Mr Lovering highlighted that, except for PDRL, the Festival of World Cups is no longer going ahead as planned and requested that the action tracker is updated accordingly.</p> <p>Action 11 – Review of Match Officials Strategy – Ms Robinson has received feedback on the strategy and will pass this on to Liam Moore now that he has returned from furlough leave. Ms Robinson highlighted feedback from Mr Baker around not being totally inclusive in paperwork when referencing areas such as, the South West and Midlands.</p> <p>Action 12 – Protect Our People Intervention – Ms Barrett has received feedback on this and will follow this up. Ms Barrett requested any further feedback as soon as possible. Current plans are to proceed as previously presented.</p> <p>Action 13 – Capturing School Children Attendance within the Registration Process - Ms Barrett stated that LeagueNet does allow for the capture of school information on the registration form, although this is currently not a mandatory field. Looking to create an area on OurLearning Zone specifically for teachers. This area will be used to capture information on which schools are playing Rugby League and act as a vehicle to engage with teachers.</p> <p>Mr Hunt asked for feedback on the Professional Game Board. Mr Lovering stated that the group had not met since lockdown so there was no new information to feed back.</p> <p>Mr Baker asked for an update on the Whole Game Review and the Grow the Game Group. Mr Lovering stated that no meetings had been scheduled due to resources being focussed on returning to play, it is unlikely that the Development Team will have capacity to focus on the Whole Game Review groups until October at the earliest.</p>	<p>JR</p> <p>ALL</p> <p>ALL</p>
<p><b>4.0</b></p>	<p><b>RFL Participation Membership</b></p> <p>Ms O'Brien outlined the plans for a Participant Membership Scheme (slides 8-11). It was proposed that the scheme is to be introduced pre-2021 season in December and would be initially for Players, Coaches and Match Officials. The scheme would generate income to meet budgeted revenue in 2021. The focus of the messaging to be on enabling the RFL to continue to make a positive contribution to the growth of the sport, the protection of player services (a contribution towards the costs of services provided such as, DBS and staff support) and enabling the RFL to reach new communities. Participant</p>	

	<p>membership is the norm in most sports and the RFL proposal is at the lower end of what NGBs charge at £20 per adult and £15 per child.</p> <p>Ms O'Brien discussed the focus on benefits to participants and how this links into the existing OurLeague and OurLearning Zone offerings. The focus will be on three or four headline benefits to ensure that participants see and feel value. The proposed names for the scheme are OurLeague Active, OurLeague Play, and Our League Thirteen.</p> <p>Ms O'Brien then went on to outline the draft communications plan (slide 11). which included a series of Roadshows with the Community Board being kept updated with content and dates in advance. Launch Roadshows are aimed to go live in late October or early November followed by briefing to key media.</p> <p>A long debate ensued in which support for a membership scheme was unanimous as the Board recognised the need for it, however the timing of its introduction and also the shape / form of the scheme were questioned.</p> <p>After a healthy debate Mr Rimmer suggested that Ms O'Brien and Mr Lovering arrange a workshop with the Community Board aimed at discussing the nuances of the scheme and how these can be realistically developed and improved. He reminded the group that this concept had been to the Community Board many times over the last decade and re-iterated that a scheme now had to be produced due to its importance in future funding of the Community Game.</p> <p>Ms Robinson expressed support for a workshop to further develop details and felt that it is vitally important that we have a product that we are sure of and that people want to buy into if it is going to be a success.</p> <p>Ms Lindsay MBE summed up by requesting Ms Barrett coordinates with Ms O'Brien to arrange a workshop for everyone to discuss details further and put plans in place. Suggested some friendly and safe conversations take place with clubs beforehand to add some community views into the discussion.</p> <p>No further questions were received</p>	KB/AOB
5.0	<p><b>Return to Play Update</b></p> <p>Mr Lovering presented the Return to Play update. Now at Stage 4 of the action plan, allowing phased return to contract. This is medium-risk activity, with tackles below the waist and limited contact time within pods of players. Session plans have been provided to community clubs. The RFL Board have approved phased introduction of contract, further review to take place on the 21<sup>st</sup> September before full contact will be considered. RFL need to evidence that increase in activity is not causing an adverse reaction. Weekend of the 11<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup> October is the realistic start date for localised fixtures to begin.</p> <p>Mr Lovering went on to outline the ongoing challenges. Highlighted the impact of the wider public health situation on increases to activity. Similarly, local lockdowns may restrict which clubs are able to take part in games, Kirklees was highlighted as an example of local restrictions. Internal challenges also exist with increased positive tests in Super League having a potential impact on take</p>	

up for games. The 'turn up, play, go home' requirements are proving prohibitive to clubs and players, particularly at Open Age level. There are difficulties for clubs as they are required to provide a Covid-secure environment, including track and trace compliance, which could prove challenging for clubs that play on or close to public lands. The impact of Test and Trace, particularly on school isolations, will likely have a knock-on effect for player availability when we return to playing games.

As things stand, 12 positive cases have been recorded in the Community Game although none directly related to Rugby League activity. As levels of contact increase there are extra challenges in place, including the inability to trace close contacts at Community level the same way that we have done in Super League. The presumption will be that, if one player tests positive, all players in the game will be required to isolate.

Ms Robinson asked what the situation would be with first aid once the contact game comes back. Mr Lovering confirmed that first aid guidelines are up for review with the RFL Board and will be distributed once approved.

Sqn Ldr Clayton MBE asked about the guidelines and whether a synopsis could be provided for him to then distribute to the Single Services. Mr Lovering stated that there are several infographics breaking down the Action Plan that are being used for community clubs and he will happily make these available to Sqn Ldr Clayton MBE.

Ms Barrett provided an update on autumn games activity. 228 clubs expressed an interest to returning to play with 1314 teams. Internal competition group put together to work with Foundations and leagues to create appropriate groups for return to play. Women and Girls groups have been drafted although there are challenges surrounding the geographic spread of these teams and the need to keep fixtures localised where possible. Fixtures reviewed internally on 18<sup>th</sup> September before seeking approval from the RFL Board. Once approved fixtures will be distributed.

Ms Barrett went on to state that Autumn Activity rules and first aid standards have been developed to ensure the guidelines are clear around participants, environments, spectators and first aid coverage. Match official guidelines have been developed, currently around 200 officials have confirmed they are comfortable returning. Mike Smaill is returning from furlough to process match official appointments

Mr Moran asked about administrative capacity to run fixtures for 1314 teams and who will be responsible for appointing match officials and dealing with disciplinary cases. Ms Barrett confirmed there is capacity across Community Game and Development Teams, the match official appointments will be handled by Mike Smaill in conjunction with local associations, and existing Discipline Chairs will be asked to hear any disciplinary cases that arise, with all cases being heard remotely.

Sqn Ldr commended the vast amount of work going on behind the scenes and highlighted this as an example of why there is a need to look at a membership scheme to help fund these resources.

Mr Lovering outlined longer term issues. Until there is a working vaccine there

KB

	<p>will still be restrictions in place and an action plan to deal with these. Season is due to end on the 28<sup>th</sup> November and guidance is for no activity during December. Any setbacks or delays to the action plan or return to play will have an impact on the timelines for activity in 2021. There is a potential that 2021 league structures will be impacted depending on the public health situation.</p> <p>In terms of registration numbers, Mr Lovering projects that there will be approximately a 40% drop in player registrations due to Coronavirus. Spring and summer schools' activities, many social offers, and the shorter season competitions have been unable to run, resulting in those players not registering. Core activity is not expected to be as badly hit, as many players will have registered pre-lockdown or will be registering for the return to play in the Autumn. Mid-term Sport England reporting is being submitted in September. Mr Lovering went on to highlight concerns around club sustainability. The RFL are working with Sport England to lobby Government to provide further funding to assist clubs whilst also working to support clubs with reviewing their business models and improving sustainability.</p> <p>Mr Baker asked if a strategy is in place to deal with increased demand for coach education and training. Mr Rotheram has confirmed with course provider, First4Sport, that guided learning elements of coaching courses can be offered online. The plan is to have a base in Lancashire and Yorkshire to assist in practical elements moving forward. Mr Lovering stated that volunteer courses are mostly moving online, and this will help handle demand. Ms Barrett stated that DBS processes are up and running. Mr Baker pointed out that the initial Safeguarding and Protecting Children course is in-person only and asked if this could be looked at.</p> <p>No further questions received.</p> <p><b>The meeting took a 15-minute break.</b></p>	
<p><b>6.0</b></p>	<p><b>Community Game Update</b></p> <p>Mr Lovering presented a community game update (slides 15-23). Reviewed the Sport England Update agenda item from the last Community Board meeting. Mr Rimmer highlighted the positive feedback from the Sport England End of Year Review meeting. Mr Lovering stated that mid-year reporting will be slightly delayed due to Coronavirus and that Sport England are very understanding of the situation and the expected drop in registration figures. Expected that it may take until 2022 to recover to pre-Covid numbers.</p> <p>Mr Lovering reviewed the contractual targets and reiterated the strong position of Year 3 and the mitigating circumstances for Year 4 targets. Mr Hunt asked whether Sport England have discussed the targets for Year 4 and how that will affect Year 5. Mr Lovering confirmed that Sport England have provided written confirmation that the Year 4 level of funding will be the same for Year 5. In terms of Key Indicators, Mr Lovering highlighted that, apart from Touch, the other indicators are positive. Explained that the Touch model is changing and that the method for counting Open Age registrations was modified after the baseline was set, providing context to the lower Open Age numbers in the years after the Baseline. Working to be more accurate on retention to discover where people are leaving the game and why they are leaving so that we can work on</p>	

	<p>improving that.</p> <p>Mr Lovering referred to a question from Mr Hunt last meeting, around women’s registration numbers masking a drop in men’s, and confirmed that online registrations show that the majority of competitions have seen an increase in registrations in the last year.</p> <p>Mr Lovering discussed the new RFL Community Game Strategy, the process behind it, and the fact that it links in with the new Sport England strategy that is due in March 2021 (slides 21-23). Mr Rotheram provided an update on the progress of the Inclusion &amp; Diversity Action Plan and confirmed that it has been submitted to the RFL Board. Highlighted the process of re-purposing a couple of roles within the Talent team to focus on talent inclusion. Mr Lovering highlighted the increased focus on improving diversity and supporting underrepresented groups and there are likely to be roles targeting these areas. Mr Lovering stated the intent to bring the draft Community Strategy to the next Community Board meeting on December 9<sup>th</sup>.</p>	
<p><b>7.0</b></p>	<p><b>World Cup Update</b></p> <p>Ms Power introduced and outlined the overview of the current timeline for the World Cup (slide 25). Ms Power went on to provide an overview of the Legacy programme (slides 26-38). Outlined the initiatives on slide 26. The Created By programme is tracking ahead of their ‘matching pound for pound’ target (slide 27). Went on to outline the Mental Fitness programme (Slides 28-29) aimed at participants within host cities along with volunteers and competing participants come tournament time.</p> <p>Mr Hunt asked about contingency planning for time lost due to lockdown. Ms Power stated that there are several contingency plans in place to mitigate for delays due to the pandemic. One of these is extending the timescale for the delivery of programmes due to end before the tournament begins to now end in March 2022. There is capacity to bring on board extra trainers to ensure that all areas receive the planned Mental Fitness training sessions.</p> <p>Ms Power continued discussing the Legacy programmes, outlining the partnership with Mental Health UK and Rugby League Cares on Your Resilience programme (slide 30). Ms Power went on to outline the programmes and partnerships in slides (31-38). When discussing the Power Squad volunteers (slide 36), Ms Power highlighted that 85% of volunteer applications they have received are from people who do not currently volunteer in the sport. Of these, a significant number have expressed an interest in volunteering in the Community Game and the World Cup team are looking at ways to help facilitate this transition as part of the Retention project.</p> <p>Sqn Ldr Clayton MBE requested, via email, an update on the Armed Forces World Cup following the cancellation of the Festival of World Cups. Ms Power stated that the organisation of this tournament is now in the hands of the IRL due to the World Cup team being scheduled to disband in March 2022. Mr Rimmer provided an update that the IRL have discussed the tournament and have set an agenda item to discuss plans further at a meeting in October.</p>	<p>KB</p>

	<p>Mr Ashton requested to be put in touch with the Education lead at the World Cup team. Ms Power is happy to do so.</p> <p>Mr Hunt asked what contingency plans are in place given the current pandemic situation and the impact this may have on the World Cup. Ms Power stated that this has been reviewed and different options have been explored, including postponement, a socially distanced or behind closed doors tournament. The team is in regular dialogue with DCMS and has full Government backing to go ahead with on sale dates, with tickets holding a 100% money back guarantee. Difficult to put a date on when a decision will be made regarding any postponement as the focus is currently on getting through the autumn and winter periods and seeing how things are from a public health perspective heading into the spring.</p> <p>No further questions received.</p>	TP
8.0	<p><b>OurLeague Life</b></p> <p>Ms Gray began by recapping the OurLeague Life project. The ambition of the project was born out of a proposal to link the work of the RFL and Foundations together in the areas of social mobility and skills gap in the north. The project promotes the possibility of a centre for social mobility around Rugby League that is co-located on the Etihad Campus that is for people from Manchester and the surrounding area to help upskill themselves. These conversations have gained significant momentum with Manchester City Council who feel that the project fills a gap on the Etihad Campus that no other partners currently offer.</p> <p>Ms Gray went on to outline the ambitions for the courses that would be on offer. These are currently being developed in conjunction with Education experts and would include apprenticeships, digital skills through sport, alternative provision, and return to work/education courses. The education links in with the core work of Foundations in the Rugby League community. Ms Gray introduced some mock-ups (subject to change) of what the OurLeague Life is envisaged to look like on the Beswick Campus. Mr Rimmer emphasised how this legacy project is very exciting growth opportunity for the sport and the RFL as an organisation. The project ties-in with a longer-term strategy to grow and reshape as an organisation whilst helping upskill the sport.</p> <p>Mr Prior asked for an idea on timelines for the project. Ms Gray indicated 2022. Ms Lindsay MBE followed up by asking if there would be a potential to bring in a virtual element earlier, given the current pandemic situation and the effect it is having on employment, in order to cement the project before the physical building is ready. Mr Lovering responded that the curriculum is currently in the process of being developed and the intention is to start introducing the branding and concept to the public attention. Ms Lindsay MBE raised the possibility of accessing return to work funding to aid in virtual provision in 2021.</p> <p>Mr Moran asked about the projected capacity for the stadium and what kind of activity is it expected to host. Mr Lovering outlined that it is likely to be a stand of under 1000 as the aim is not to build another stadium on the Etihad Campus, rather a educational institution that can utilise the facilities to maximise its impact on the community. It is envisaged that the facilities would be used in conjunction with the Community Game to host festivals, England Community</p>	ALL

	<p>Lions and England Universities training and games, as well as the potential to host Community Cup Finals. Mr Lovering went on to explain how the facilities will be used to enhance the learning experience and provide a special experience for Community players by providing a platform for students to gain practical experience in areas such as sports presentation. The aim is for the facility to 'feel' like a much larger stadium than it will be physically.</p> <p>Mr Hunt asked if there was potential to increase the capacity to diversify the use of the facility. Mr Lovering outlined that the capacity of the stand may be less than 1000 however, the standing room will likely push capacity to just over 2000. There is potential scope for temporary stands to increase capacity although space on the site is limited. The wider Etihad Campus has a range of facilities that the RFL could also look to tap into longer-term for events such as Champion's Schools.</p> <p>Mr Moran asked if there have been conversations with other NGBs that will be based at the Etihad Campus about sharing facilities and working together. Ms Gray outlined that these conversations have and do take place and that the overarching narrative of the Etihad Campus is to be a sport city where the separate bodies have a good working relationship with each other. The RFL will be one of the biggest NGBs on the campus so are in a strong position with regards to developing these relationships. Mr Rimmer went on to emphasise that the facility will be owned by the RFL and will be a learning facility. The project has come about on the back of strong support for the Dividend report and it is through that the RFL have been able to gain support for this proposal.</p> <p>Mr Prior asked if there is a possibility to make the facility a national training centre or a centre for excellence alongside the learning facility. Ms Gray highlighted the key that the facility is primarily a learning centre to secure funding. However, the use of facilities by national teams is an important part of providing inspiration to learners along with opportunities for learners to practice their craft.</p> <p>No further questions received.</p>	
<p><b>9.0</b></p>	<p><b>Any Other Business</b></p> <p>No other business raised.</p> <p>Ms Lindsay MBE closed by stating that a meeting will be put in the diary to discuss and develop plans for membership in the next week or two. Mr Prior requested that the meeting is held in the evening as not all Board members would be able to attend during the day.</p> <p>Meeting Closed.</p>	