MINUTES

RFL BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

Location	RFL, Gate 13, Rowsley Street, Etihad Campus, Manchester, M11 3FF	**Date & Time**	Monday 13th April 2026, 11.30 - 14:00
Present	Nigel Wood OBE (NJW), Dermot Power (DP), Lord Jonathan Caine (JC), Martin Coyd OBE (MC), Abi Ekoku (AE), Emma Rosewarne MBE (ER) (online), Sara Symington (SS)	**Chair**	Nigel Wood OBE
Observers	Ed Mallaburn (EM)		
In attendance	Robert Graham (RG), Rhodri Jones (RJ), Robert Hicks (RH) (agenda items 6.0 & 8.0), Alison O'Brien (AO) (Meeting Secretary)		
Apologies	Jo Drapier (JD)		

Item No		Agenda Item	Who
1.0		**WELCOME & APOLOGIES AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST** NJW welcomed everyone and started the meeting. Apologies received in advance from JD and ER No additional declarations of interest were raised beyond those already recorded.	
2.0		**MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETING AND ACTION TRACKER** The Board noted that draft minutes for meetings 3 March 2026 and 24 March 2026 were in circulation. Corrections to records of attendees and minor amends to be made by the meeting secretary. The Board discussed whether summarised minutes from Board meetings and Council meetings should be made available on the RFL website. AE confirmed there is no legal obligation to share minutes. Board stressed the importance of complying fully with all legal obligations, while also aspiring to operate at a gold-standard level of governance. Board asked AO to prepare summarised minutes for both Board and Council meetings to be shared on the website. The Board discussed DCMS and wider political context, recognising sensitivities and the importance of maintaining a measured and strategic approach to external communications.	**AO** **AO**
3.0		**GOVERNANCE & SPORT ENGLAND GAP AND CEO RECRUITMENT** AO shared a presentation updating on the actions completed since the last Board meeting and the remaining outstanding actions on the GAP.	

		AO advised latest communication with Sport England governance team had been positive and no further meetings were scheduled. Expectation is GAP will be signed off once the two remaining outstanding actions are completed.	
4.0		**FINANCE UPDATE** A detailed update on RFL financial performance was presented highlighting a variance to 2026 budget at the moment Board discussed adverse variance in community game income attributed to the planned Our League Active (OLA) price increases for 2026 not been achieved in full. This was due to a need to manage price increase against an implementation of changes in the community game. It was noted that membership price increase has not led to loss of registrations and that recent investment into the community game is expected to deliver returns in future periods. The Board discussed overspends within England men's and women's programmes and RG stated he is working with Marc Lovering and his team to get costs down and that they have made significant strides over the last couple of months which is helpful although there is still a bit of work to do. JC encouraged a close look at England performance budgets linked to the World Cup. The Board discussed in detail the performance of coach education which RG stated was the most concerning given it had historically been a break-even or profitable function. Current forecast is a loss Marc Lovering has picked up responsibility for this area and is working with AO as recent underperformance can be attributed to delivery inefficiencies and lack of commercial oversight. Work underway to re-commercialise courses, review pricing, and explore increased use of digital delivery. NJW asked AE if a 'big ask' of DCMS has been made. NW and JC agreed a meeting with the Chair of the Rugby League APPG, David Baines, would be helpful now the new Board of the RFL is in place. The Board received a comprehensive update on clubs in relation to club sustainability and special measures from RG. The board discussed the importance and effectiveness of special measures. NJW stated that the efficacy of special measures is important to the Board and NEDs in particular to make sure those measures have been appropriately implemented and overseen. The Board discussed whether existing special measures are sufficiently robust, noting: • Failures often emerge mid-season, creating severe disruption. • There may be a need for earlier sustainability testing and firmer controls before contracts are entered into.	**RG/ ML** **RG/ML/ AO** **JC/ NJW**

		• Salary controls and pre-season viability assessments were suggested areas for future reform. ER asked if anything was written into special measures to allow a spot check on employee pension contributions. RG confirmed that a Championship salary cap model was sent to RH last week. RH is turning that into a paper for the Regulatory meeting with Championship clubs next week.	**RG/RH**
5.0		**WRPL LICENCE AGREEMENT** AE and MC provided an update on progress of the WRPL initiative. The Board was supportive in principle, subject to receipt and review of full documentation.	**MC**
6.0		**RECAPITALISATION** The Board received a detailed update on recapitalisation activity from RJ and RH.	
7.0		**GRADING UPDATE** The Board received a report from AO and discussed implications of potential 2026 grading outcomes. AO summarised club rankings at the end of 2025, changes made to the model for 2026 and the reasons for those changes. It is expected there will be deflation in the grading model in 2026 because of the changes. AO reminded Board that 15 points and Grade A status is statistically achievable for a current Championship club. DP commented that grading has driven off-field improvements, was accepted when it was voted on by members and has provided a solid platform on which the game is built at the moment. Questions around how many teams in Super League and who plays in Super League are different to evaluating the success to date of grading. NJW suggested a conversation on grading at the RL Commercial Board would be appropriate.	**NJW/ DP**
8.0		**REGULATORY MEETING UPDATE** Regulatory meetings scheduled for Men’s Super League and Men’s Championship. RH took Board through slides detailing the agendas for both those meetings.	

		Meetings will focus on financial and operational sustainability to try and make life easier for clubs whilst not reducing standards around safety and certain obligations, and specifically for Super League to be broadcast ready for 2027.	
9.0		**INCLUSION BOARD** An update was provided on the Inclusion & Diversity Action Plan by ER. The current plan has concluded and requires updating to remain compliant in 2026. Marc Lovering and his team are working on this. The Board supported refreshing the plan for 2026 while undertaking a more fundamental strategic review for 2027. The importance of Board ownership and stakeholder engagement was emphasised by ER. ER reported that she had attended a recent RFL Inclusion & Diversity Board meeting.	
10.0		**INSIGHT REPORT** AO advised that the insight papers shared were for information.	
11.0		**RISKS** No new risks were recorded in this meeting.	
12.0		**ANY OTHER BUSINESS** A verbal update was provided on engagement with the International Rugby League (IRL). Formal thanks were recorded to AE attending his final meeting. DP confirmed the RFL renumeration committee is himself, SS & JC.	
13.0		**DATE OF NEXT MEETING** Monday 18th May 2026	