**MINUTES**

**RFL BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING**

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| **Location** | LED Studio Lounge, Wakefield Trinity, Doncaster Road, Wakefield, WF1 5EY | **Date & Time** | Monday 21st July 2026, 13.00 - 14:30 |
| **Present** | Nigel Wood OBE (NJW), Dermot Power (DP), Lord Jonathan Caine (JC), Sara Symington (SS), Martin Coyd OBE (MC), Rhodri Jones (RJ), Emma Rosewarne MBE (ER) (online) | **Chair** | Nigel Wood OBE |
| **Observers** | Jo Drapier (JD) | | |
| **In attendance** | Alison O'Brien (AO) (Meeting Secretary and agenda item 5.0) | | |
| **Apologies** | Ed Mallaburn (Observer) | | |

| **Item No** | | **Agenda Item** | **Who** |
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| 1.0 | | **WELCOME & APOLOGIES**<br><br>NJW welcomed attendees and noted the meeting was quorate. No additional apologies were recorded. | |
| 2.0 | | **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**<br><br>NJW invited declarations of interest. No new declarations were made beyond those already recorded. | |
| 3.0 | | **MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETING AND ACTION TRACKER**<br><br>The minutes of the meeting held on 29 June 2026 were reviewed.<br><br>JD raised concerns that the previous meeting minutes could be misinterpreted to suggest that the proposed Articles updates were discussed at the Board meeting, when in fact they were handled on a separate Board call. It was agreed to add a clarifying sentence to the minutes to state that proposed Articles amendments were discussed on a separate board call, not at the board meeting itself.<br><br>DP and NJW explained to Board the background to an amendment to the minutes relating to section 8.0 to ensure discussions were accurately reflected.<br><br>Subject to the agreed amendments, the minutes were approved. | **AO** |

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| | | The Board received an update on progress against outstanding actions on the Board Action Tracker from RJ. Key updates included:<br><br>• Articles amendments completed.<br>• Meeting calendar circulated for the remainder of 2026 and into 2027.<br>• Confirmation that a 2027 Reserves Competition will proceed with commitments from at least eight Super League clubs, ensuring the competition will proceed with a similar framework as the current year<br>• RJ shared that a draft profit and loss account for the 2027 Kiwis Test Series has been sent to New Zealand Rugby League, with various venue scenarios under consideration and ongoing discussions with the new NZRL Chief Executive. Action for RJ to continue discussions with NZRL regarding the 2027 Test Series, including venue selection and financial modelling, and to provide an update to Board once the new Chief Executive has responded.<br>• RJ gave an update on the development of future arrangements with RL Cares relating to player welfare provision. RJ stated that both ER and SS had seen and had input to welfare policies. RJ confirmed that the RL Cares agreement regarding future player welfare provision is ready for Board review. Action for RJ to share the summary paper on the RL Cares agreement with the Board in advance of the next Board meeting where this will be on the agenda for discussion and sign-off.<br>• RJ updated on the commencement of planning for appointment of the next RFL President and Vice-Presidents and discussed the need to finalise candidates for the President and Vice President roles, with Adam Hill's tenure ending in December and a shortlist to be prepared for RFL Council consideration. Action for RJ to share the indicative shortlist of proposed candidates with the Board for review and input.<br>• Board discussed the strategy for the 'Big Ask' government funding application, emphasising the need for a comprehensive, collaborative approach potentially involving external experts and internal stakeholders to maximise impact and meet government requirements. DP highlighted the opportunity of first mover advantage and recommended engaging a firm like Deloitte alongside leveraging RL Cares bid writing expertise to assemble a compelling, composite funding application we can be proud of, with RJ confirming ongoing discussions with both parties. Board discussed the desire to produce a pack that was wide ranging to tick as many boxes as possible and offering a menu of choices to the reader. ER requested to be included in the idea-gathering process for the 'Big Ask,' and RJ committed to circulating existing ideas to all Board and invited further contributions to ensure a broad and inclusive proposal. RJ outlined the timeline for the funding application, JC noted that Parliament resumes in early September but full activity is not expected until mid-October, and NJW emphasised the importance of crossbench support. Action for RJ to circulate the current list of ideas for the Big Ask to all relevant parties and invite additional suggestions, then consolidate all input into a comprehensive proposal. | **RJ**<br><br>**RJ**<br><br>**RJ**<br><br>**RJ** |

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| | | NJW asked that any actions captured in the earlier RL Council meeting be added to the Board Action Tracker.<br><br>The Board discussed the potential for offering instalment payment options for major event tickets as a way to increase accessibility and market appeal, with RJ agreeing to explore this further. | **AO**<br><br>**RJ** |
| 4.0 | | **MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES**<br><br>No additional matters arising were raised that had not been addressed elsewhere on the agenda. | |
| 5.0 | | **SPORT ENGLAND GAP & GOVERNANCE MATTERS**<br><br>The Board received an update regarding governance matters and the Sport England Governance Action Plan. The following was noted:<br><br>• Governance requirements had been satisfied and NJW was in receipt of a letter from Phil Smith at Sport England confirming.<br>• Funding payments were up to date.<br>• Positive feedback had been received from Sport England on progress made.<br><br>JD asked that her thanks to the Board and AO be recorded for all the work done and meetings taken with the Sport England governance team to reach this position. In response the Board formally recorded its appreciation to AO and all involved for their work in achieving compliance and maintaining constructive engagement with Sport England.<br><br>The Board also received an update from JD on the upcoming transition funding for NGBs, which will last one year, and ongoing efforts to develop a future investment model that accounts for the varied needs and capacities of different NGBs, including support for underserved communities. JD confirmed that the process will start soon with NGBs and that some work was ongoing via the NGB coalition. SS asked if there was an ambition to fund a greater number of NGBs and JD stated Sport England are looking at low-cost support options to a broader range of NGBs. | |
| 6.0 | | **FINANCIAL MATTERS**<br><br>NJW stressed the importance of financial projections and planning for the 2027 season for all clubs including setting expectations around January 2027 distributions. He highlighted clubs' tolerance and patience on this matter at the current time.<br><br>RJ provided updates on ongoing broadcast negotiations with the NRL and the potential impact on club revenues and league structure. RJ confirmed that the | |

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| | | Executive are working to finalise club distribution figures for January and further refinement will be needed to align with broadcast and recapitalisation negotiations. There was recognition that clubs would shortly require certainty to support budgeting and banking discussions.<br><br>The Board agreed this work should remain a high priority with NJW requesting it is completed within the next six weeks. Action for the Executive to finalise and communicate the 2027 distribution figures to clubs, ensuring alignment with broadcast and recapitalisation outcomes. | **RJ** |
| 7.0 | | **RECAPITALISATION, BROADCAST UPDATE & STRATEGIC PARTNER**<br><br>RJ provided an update regarding recapitalisation discussions and broadcast negotiations. JD highlighted the need to consider fan reaction and cost to fans of the different options under consideration.<br><br>The Board noted that discussions remain ongoing and that further updates are expected in the coming weeks.<br><br>It was noted that broadcast sign off would be a SLE matter and that recapitalisation was game-wide and so likely a matter for all Boards. Any proposed broadcast deal or strategic partnership with the NRL will require approval from the clubs, with the possibility of an emergency Board meeting if a proposal is ready before the next scheduled session. | |
| 8.0 | | **CALENDAR, SEASON STRUCUTRE & EVENTS**<br><br>The Board held a discussion on the future structure of the Super League, the current status of several clubs and implications were discussed.<br><br>It was agreed that discussions with relevant clubs would continue regarding future strategic plans and sustainability.<br><br>The Board reviewed the challenges of the current grading system and the voting requirements for structural changes, noting the reputational risks and the need for clear criteria for elevation and removal from the Super League. Board discussed the need for clarity on the future of grading for the 2028 season and beyond. Update will be required for December Council ahead of the start of the 2027 Season. | **RJ/AO** |
| 9.0 | | **REGULATORY UPDATE & CLUB MATTERS** | |

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| | | RJ provided updates on the new Championship salary cap of £250,000, with the possibility to increase to £500,000 if justified by club revenues. Board noted early indications suggest the framework has been positively received by clubs.<br><br>The Board noted that the new Championship distribution model will provide a higher base payment to all clubs, with additional rewards for play-off qualification and non-central revenue generation will be communicated to clubs following the meeting.<br><br>Updates were received on the several clubs.<br><br>The Board discussed the need for innovation in the game, focusing on contest rules, injury management, and enhancing the marketing appeal of rugby league. NJW asked for an on-filed regulatory update to be included on the agenda of the next Board meeting to cover; game innovation discussions, insight into what currently adds value and does not, data on time taken for on-field challenges and an analysis of complex vs cheap wins. | **AO** |
| 10.0 | | **REPORTS**<br><br>The Board noted the Management Accounts had been circulated. No significant changes had occurred since the previous Board meeting. | |
| 11.0 | | **BOARD SUB-COMMITTEE MINUTES**<br><br>The Board noted that no meetings of sub-committees had taken place since the previous Board meeting.<br><br>The Board received an update from MC on the newly formed Community Game Strategic Advisory Group (CGSAG) its structure and proposed Terms of Reference. Formal approval of the CGSAG TOR was deferred until the next Board meeting. | **AO** |
| 12.0 | | **RISKS**<br><br>The Board discussed strategic risks arising from:<br><br>• Future competition structure<br>• Impacts on the credibility and future evolution of grading.<br><br>These risks will be incorporated into ongoing risk register reviews. | |
| 13.0 | | **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**<br><br>MC highlighted Wheelchair CCF on Saturday at Robin Park will be shown on BBC Red Button. MC highlighted women's development session taking place before the Final. | |

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| 14.0 | | **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**<br><br>Monday 17th August 2026 | |