MINUTES

RFL BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

Location	Boardroom, RL HQ, House of Sport, Gate 13, Rowsley Street, Manchester, M11 3FF	**Date & Time**	Tuesday 3rd March 2026 1000hrs till 1400hrs
Present	Abi Ekoku (AE), Rob Graham (RG), Lord Jonathan Caine (LJC), Martin Coyd OBE (MC), Emma Rosewarne (ER), Dermot Power (DP)	**Chair**	Nigel Wood OBE
In attendance	Jo Drapier (JD), Graeme Sarjeant Acting Company Secretary Rhodri Jones (RL Commercial) Alison O'Brien (RFL) – agenda item 9		
Apologies received	Jo Coates (JC), Ed Mallaburn		

Item No		Agenda Item	Who
1.0		**WELCOME AND APOLOGIES** Apologies received from Jo Coates and Ed Mallaburn.	**Chair**
2.0		**Declarations of Interest** None	**Chair**
3.0	3.1 3.2	Minutes from the previous meeting and Action Tracker Draft Board Meeting minutes – 13 January 2026 approved. Action Tracker from the meeting – 13 January 2026 reviewed. Board members reviewed the updated action tracker and discussed need for ongoing review. Update to diversity and inclusion action plans were noted as a requirement following staff changes.	**Chair**
4.0		**People Matters**	
	4.1	With input from Fran Costello paper (HR consultant), ongoing HR review and organisational resilience plans were outlined. It was noted that there was a comprehensive review of HR practices, contracts, and job descriptions underway to identify and address staffing gaps. The review will update policies in line with upcoming legislation changes and see improved operational efficiency.	

		agreed to consider these opportunities and to continue monitoring staff engagement and morale. Ongoing HR cases were discussed. The board sought clarity on potential liabilities and costs. AE confirmed that insurance protocols were being adhered to and that any settlement discussions were being managed appropriately.	
5.0		**Finance Update** A comprehensive review of the 2025 year-end financial results for RFL Limited was presented, with 2026 budget key assumptions and anticipated challenges outlined – incl. group consolidation and audit. Board noted the significant work undertaken by the Finance Team to deliver a break-even position (unaudited), especially where sizeable overspend had been incurred in several areas. Board was appraised of the risks for 2026, in the absence of Ashes revenues, and the need for new revenue streams to underpin SL 14-Club funding in 2027. Specific reference to managing England programme budgets, community game membership fees and better navigation of avoidable legal disputes were referenced by Board as areas to focus on.	**RG**
6.0		**Club Matters** Board unanimously agreed to approve Halifax's new membership and readmission to the Betfred Championship. After comprehensive review, and the rationale for penalty (against other club insolvency events), a 12-point deduction was agreed. Board suggested a review of insolvency penalties to allow for greater flexibility if needed for future cases.	**AE/RG**
7.0		**Projects & Updates**	
	7.1	**IRL** Board agreed that RGL should move to exercise its right to attend IRL meetings moving forward.	**AE**
	7.2	**Facilities Acquisition Proposal:** Board agreed to negotiations advancing, subject to further due diligence, with the Executive authorised to manage the process. Final approval would depend on satisfactory risk mitigation and full stakeholder alignment.	
8.0		**King’s Honours** Board discussed RFL ‘Honours’ processes - Hall of Fame and King's Honours - and	

		highlighted the need for improved ceremony and record-keeping to preserve goodwill and promote RL values. A subcommittee to oversee these matters would be created.	**All**
9.0 10.0.		**Sport England GAP Review & Update** Board was appraised of the latest Sport England GAP status – addressing compliance, board composition, executive director roles and the ongoing recruitment to key positions. AO outlined advice received from Pinsents, and that decisions on future exec board roles would be made [by the new board] after Council approval. Board discussed the impending departure of Pinsents as RFL Company Secretary and the need for additional governance support. Action tracker noted it as outstanding but plan to resolve by 1 April required. Recruitment of a permanent CEO remained an outstanding matter, with the process ongoing and a shortlisting meeting scheduled. Board agreed that while the original target was end-March 2026, the process should not be rushed, and timelines would be clarified after meeting with McBrides Sport. Board reviewed requirements for board size, diversity, and appointment of a Senior Independent Director. All actions were dependent on outcome of the upcoming Council meeting, with plan to finalise appointments and communicate outcomes to Sport England by 1 April. **England Rugby League** Board discussed the process and timing for appointing the new England RL (men's) head coach. Implications for World Cup preparation and importance of aligning appointment with broader organisational changes were outlined. Debate addressed whether new head coach should be appointed solely for the World Cup or for a longer term. The process aimed for a formal announcement by start of June, allowing a new coaching team to begin preparations. Concerns about the lack of warm-up games or training windows before the World Cup were voiced, but Board was advised that scheduling constraints and player release limitations issues would mean the next match would be the World Cup opener. The England RL women's team will play an international match against France in July, but preparation opportunities otherwise are limited.	**All** **AE/AO**
11.0		**Council Meeting Planning**	**All**
12.0		**Talent & Performance Report** Board received update on the positive, successful and strong media presence at the launch of the National Community Rugby League (NCRL), now with full integration of regional and national competitions. The new NCRL section on the RFL website was highlighted as an excellent resource. Board agreed to use of the Challenge Cup final as a mechanism to recognise and reward match officials and multiple other community contributors - aiming to increase engagement and registrations across the community game.	

13.0		**Commercial** Board received a summary of Super League participation in Las Vegas NRL event - which was deemed a success in terms of brand exposure, media coverage, and stakeholder engagement. NW reported on his conversations with the NRL. Board was advised that a valuation of RL Commercial had been commissioned.	
14.0		**Insight Report** *Paper for information by Alison O'Brien.*	
		Board Sub-Committee Minutes	
15.0		*Remuneration Committee – No meetings Performance Committee – No meetings* *Audit & Risk Committee – 19 February 2026 Brain Health Committee – No meetings* *Nominations Committee – 22 Jan 2026, 3 & 13 February 2026*	
16.0		**Risks** DP provided an update on the audit and risk committee, confirming that draft accounts are with auditors and the committee had identified club structures and governance as new risks in light of recent insolvency events at member clubs. The board discussed the need for clear guidance and signposting for players affected by club insolvencies, including links to debt advice and redundancy support, and for consideration to make knowledge of this to become a core requirement for licensed agents.	
17.0		**Date of Next Meeting – 24 March 2026**	