

**MINUTES OF THE COMMUNITY BOARD MEETING  
HELD AT CARRWOOD PARK ON WEDNESDAY, 10<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER 2012****Present:**

Maurice Watkins	Non-Executive Director, RFL Board and Meeting Chairman
Nigel Wood	RFL Chief Executive Officer
Stuart Prior	BARLA
Warrant Officer Damian Clayton MBE	Armed Forces Rugby League
Peter Moran	Independent Member
Charlie Bray	Tier 4 Youth & Junior Leagues
Ian Szwandt	English Schools Rugby League
Trevor Hunt	Tier 3 Leagues
Martin Coyd	Tier 4 Adult Leagues
Fred Baker	Independent Member
Gerard Keenan	Student Rugby League

**Apologies:**

John Piercy	Student Rugby League
Malcolm Sellers	BARLA

**In Attendance:**

Claire Morrow	Non-Executive Director, RFL Board
David Gent	Director of Participation & Strategic Partnerships
Jon Roberts (in part)	Director of Performance & Coaching
Chris Rostron	Head of Partnerships
Angela Adams	Personal Assistant

**ACTION****1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for their attendance today. Claire Morrow was welcomed to the meeting as a non-executive director of the RFL Board and the Chairman confirmed that, as part of the recent Governance Review, it was agreed to have a member of the RFL Board in attendance at such meetings.

Apologies were noted as above.

**2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM HELD ON 19<sup>th</sup> JULY 2012**

The minutes of the previous meeting were confirmed as an accurate record by the Board.

**3. MATTERS ARISING**

**3.1** The discussion relating to the Pennine League will be dealt with under Item 4.2

**3.2** Item 7.3 Proposed Tier 3 and 4 Cup Competitions 2013

Mr Gent confirmed to the Board that the proposed meetings to discuss the National Cup and the Public Services Cup had not taken place but would be held within the next month.

**D Gent**

**3.3** Item 7.5 RFL Website

At the last meeting, an agreed action was to look into the navigation of the RFL website. This was in hand but would take some time to correct.

**3.4** Item 8.1.3 Compensation

Mr Gent stated that details of payments made to clubs in relation to compensation would be circulated to members of the Board.

**K Barrett**

**3.5** Item 8.1.5 Insurance

During 2011 the RFL tendered the insurance brokering services for the period 2012 to 2014 inclusive. A number of companies were asked to submit tender documents and from this, Bartlett's were selected.

Mr Coyd asked for verification of differing premium rates if the policy commenced in September compared to one which commenced in January. It was believed to be a slightly cheaper premium. Mr Gent would seek clarification of this and confirm to the Board.

**Mr Gent**

Mr Gent stressed to the Board that having more than one provider of insurance for the community game would prove problematical and would look to have one, agreed provider only.

**4. GOVERNANCE & MANAGEMENT**

**4.1 Watkins Review and Governance Structures**

**4.1.1 Community Board Representation to RFL Council**

Mr Gent updated the Board in relation to proposed Community Board membership on the RFL Council which is proposed as one representative on the Council from each of the following Community Board members:

1. BARLA
2. English Schools Rugby League
3. Student Rugby League
4. Armed Forces
5. Tier 3 Conference Leagues
6. Tier 4 Adult Leagues (Men, Women, Wheelchair)
7. Tier 4 Youth and Junior Leagues

It should be noted that the RFL Chairman and CEO already attend Council meetings. The two Independent representatives on the Community Board would not be RFL Council members.

Mr Prior confirmed to the Board that BARLA object to the amendment to the level of representation on the RFL Council that was previously agreed at the unification of the RFL and BARLA that BARLA would have three representatives.

Mr Moran asked if it was due to members of BARLA who dispute the authorship of the Watkins Review. Mr Prior confirmed this was a factor also and the content appeared to be very much from a one-sided point of view. Mr Moran stated that that at the time of unification, there were no external activities of conflict; however since this time there has been considerable movement away from BARLA.

Community Board Members, with the exception of BARLA, agreed to the proposed membership of the Community Board on the RFL Council.

#### **4.1.2 Community Game Governance**

Mr Gent advised the Board that as the community game now received a significant level of Government funding, it had a duty to ensure good governance and this was in fact a condition of Sport England funding. Mr Gent confirmed that Community Board minutes were now published on the RFL website and this had been welcomed by Sport England.

Sport England had requested that reporting of targets be more widely published throughout the game.

Mr Gent confirmed that the Board agreed to adopt the SRA Guidelines of Good Governance at a previous Community Board meeting. A requirement of this was for all members of the board to be CRB checked and the forms were distributed for those who had not done this to complete.

Another condition is that the Board needs to have more knowledge of the factors related to Equity and Diversity and therefore the RFL Equity and Diversity Officer, Sarah Williams, will be invited to present on this item at the next meeting

**D Gent**

The RFL Anti-Doping booklet was distributed to the Board. It was confirmed that the RFL Safeguarding Report which will now be published every 6-months to the Board to seek their approval.

The Board then considered the Second Principle of the SRA Good Governance code. Mr Gent confirmed that this has 15 considerations. The Board were asked to consider the three most pertinent of these which are:

1. Having clarity on the role of the Board overall and the various functions it will fulfill. Mr Gent confirmed he would circulate a copy of the Community Board Terms of Reference.
2. Clear roles and divisions of responsibility of the Board members. It was agreed that clear guidelines be produced for the Board at its next meeting.
3. Each Board member has appropriate information on all aspects of the organisation. It was agreed that each Board member would contact Mr Gent as a first point of contact if they require further information on aspects of the organisation.

**D Gent**

WO Clayton asked if, in relation to the Community Board Terms of Reference, there was anything set down to determine what would be the consequences of members of this Board, or constituent they represent, not adhering to any areas agreed to or required of them by this Board.

Mr Gent confirmed that the Terms of Reference set out very clear guidance on how a member can discipline another member.

#### **4.2 Operational and Competition Rules**

Item 2.0 of this paper was in relation to the Primary Player policy and Mr Gent confirmed the guidelines set down for clubs needed to be reviewed.

Mr Hunt stated that there was a general feeling that this process had not worked as it had not been administered effectively and this had impacted on Tier Three clubs in this new playing season.

Mr Gent confirmed that a primary and secondary registration confirmation on the form was the only way of dealing with this issue. However, it was clear that this did require further clarification with the leagues to ensure players were completing this element of the form.

The Board agreed in general that the policy was correct and did not require amending. It was the problems caused when it was not adhered to which were the issue. The Board confirmed the recommended action of a meeting between representatives of Tier Three, the RFL and the Pennine League in order to address this. It was clear that this policy needs to be in place and there should be some form of sanction to use if this was not accepted by a club or league.

**D Gent**

A discussion took place in relation to management committees of leagues and the game itself and it was generally felt that when decisions were made at Community Board meetings they must be adhered to within the game. The positive progress in relation to all leagues and bodies accepting the Operational and Competition rules had been significant. Mr Gent confirmed he had received a letter from BARLA which confirmed they were in support of the process on the whole, although there were some caveats which they wished to discuss further.

In summary of this item, Mr Gent advised the Board that it was now unrealistic to expect to have everyone on board for the start of the March 2013 season due to the various issues outlined above. The Board agreed with this and the timeframe for one unified set of rules within the Community Game in place was therefore put back to March 2014.

#### **4.3 BARLA**

The issue was that BARLA, in attempting to establish youth and junior leagues at ages 12 to 18 in both the North West and Yorkshire during the winter months, was in contravention of the agreement at the Community Board. That is, no new leagues or competitions will be established without first being approved at the Community Board. Secondly, that the existing leagues are the organisations all should operate through. The existing Youth and Junior leagues have retained the right to run a junior league in the winter if this was required.

Mr Bray confirmed this action was taken without consultation with the North West Counties Youth and Junior Leagues.

Mr Prior confirmed that one league for Open Age was muted at a Community Board meeting in 2011 – this was formally minuted. He further clarified that BARLA had received indications that some clubs were not happy with the move to summer. Mr Prior also confirmed that apologies were made to the North West Counties for not initially including them in the consultation.

The Board expressed their clear dissatisfaction with BARLA in failing to comply with the agreed Community Board policy:

“That no Community Board member will propose or establish competition without the matter having been first referred to the Board for consideration. Secondly, the existing leagues and competition structures are recognised as the existing providers and must be formally consulted about the running of any new league or competition which will directly affect their league or competition.”

It was agreed that the RFL formally write to BARLA for a full and complete written explanation of their actions.

**D Gent**

## **5. COMMUNITY STRATEGY**

### **5.1 Quarter 3 2012 Results**

Mr Rostron presented the results of Quarter 3 2012 of the Community Strategy.

Mr Prior referred to the Talent section of the report which referred to Focus Development Clubs. Mr Gent confirmed this was the amendment agreed with Sport England from the original reference to Talent Development Clubs. Mr Moran stated a concern that these clubs would appear to have advantages over other clubs. Mr Gent clarified that their progress was in relation to developing coaches at these clubs and not about developing the players. Mr Moran asked if the list of these clubs could be given to the members of the Board.

**BJ Mather**

The Board noted the results and positive progress made of the Quarter 3 2012 Community Strategy results.

### **5.2 2012/13 Bridging Plan**

Mr Rostron presented to the Board on the Bridging Plan for the remaining six months of the Community Strategy 2010/12 and the Whole Sport Plan 2009/13 which would end on the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2013. As outlined in the paper, there were six national priorities which required continued support:

- Community Game competition management and support
- Delivery of Play Touch Rugby League programmes
- Education competition management and support
- 109,000 registered 16+ participants on the RFL database
- Business as usual items
- Prepare for and realign to the 2013/17 strategy

It should also be noted that there would be a level of transition with the move from the current strategy into the new 2013-17 period.

The Board agreed with the implementation of the 2012/13 Bridging Plan.

### **5.3 Sport England Funding Submission**

Mr Gent updated the Board on the funding submission and the presentations made to Sport England. Part of the presentation was to confirm to Sport England that the RFL accepts the need to retain current participants, whilst at the same time, making the experience more enjoyable for all, as well as looking to encourage those who do

not currently play the sport to experience the game.

The Whole Sport Plan submission for 2013-17 included nine programmes and Sport England have advised the RFL to reduce this to the following five programmes:

1. Tier 3 Conference Leagues *to include Modified Contact as a retention intervention*
2. Tier 4 Regional Leagues *to include Social Leagues*
3. Play Touch Rugby League *combining Competitive Leagues and Turn Up & Play*
4. Rugby League in FE & HE
5. Talent Development

Although Sport England are not prepared to fund the Women and Girls and Wheelchair programme as this will not affect the Active People target when awarding funding.

Mr Gent updated the Board in respect of the 40 Month Review meeting with Sport England which took place in September and confirmed this meeting was successful.

In summary, Sport England have asked that the Whole Sport Plan 2013/17 focus on the following:

- Where you will geographically focus your delivery (and the rationale for the selection of these locations)
- Which programmes you will deliver in each location (including any plans for facility development)
- How you plan to deliver the work (i.e. who will deliver this, detail of your workforce requirements)
- The feedback mechanisms and monitoring that will be built into programme delivery
- The cost of delivery
- The key risks to achieving success

Mr Gent confirmed that the next meeting with Sport England as part of the 2013/17 funding submission was scheduled to take place on 16<sup>th</sup> October.

The Board noted the progress made on the RFL Whole Sport Plan Submission 2013/17.

#### **5.4 Community Game Strategy 2013/17**

Mr Gent proposed that the Community Game Strategy 2013/17 should now consist of 6 elements

- 1 Tier 3 Conference Leagues
- 2 Tier 4 Regional Leagues
- 3 Play Touch RL
- 4 Rugby League in FE and HE
- 5 Rugby League in Secondary Schools
- 6 Primary Rugby League

Mr Gent confirmed that the Talent element of the development of the game will not be part of the Community Game Strategy 2013/17 but

will form part of the RFL Performance Strategy.

WO Clayton sought clarification on the influence this Board would have on the development of talent if this was taken out of the Community Game Strategy. Mr Gent confirmed that this would remain with the Community Board and Mr Roberts and/or BJ Mather would continue to attend the meetings to discuss and seek approval for the community talent aspects of the RFL Performance Strategy.

Mr Gent confirmed he was today seeking Board approval to form the Community Strategy 2013/17 on the basis of the six programmes outlined above.

The Board agreed to the RFL Community Game Strategy 2013/17 be based on the six programmes of activity.

### **5.5 Community Game Financial Strategy**

The RFL cost of running the community game had been reviewed and audited and equates to an approximate figure of £5.8m p.a. The breakdown of this in relation to administration, support services and development was presented to the Board.

Mr Rostron referred to the funding solutions discussed at the last meeting in terms of sponsorship, membership fees and earned income such as the Community Game Raffle. Mr Rostron then demonstrated how these areas of income could fund the game as the Sport England funding in future is unlikely to be used to support some elements of the game such as Safeguarding and RESPECT.

The Sport England decision on the funding award to the RFL would be given in December. Mr Rostron proposed discussions with Community Board members individually with a view to receiving suggestions and for the RFL to look at the budget and whether there would be a way to reduce some of these costs and come back to the meeting in January with a more formal proposal.

A discussion took place in relation to membership fees and Mr Gent confirmed whilst there are many costs which the RFL had to undertake to cover on behalf of community clubs, it did not have a significant amount of income into the community game to cover these.

The Board agreed with the proposal to set out a more detailed analysis of the RFL costs of the community game and that this transparency would assist the RFL in demonstrating the services it provides to clubs.

**C Rostron  
/D Gent**

### **5.6 Geographical Expansion**

As outlined earlier this would be an element of the next Community Game Strategy 2013/17. Mr Gent presented on this and confirmed that it would be necessary to form a strategic plan for this.

Members of the Community Board discussed how, in their experience, growth had been achieved by the enthusiasm of an individual moving to a new area where the game was not in place, and had then set it up in that area.

Mr Baker stated he felt it was most important to note that people who were looking to set up a club in expansion areas are fundamental as they have the drive and determination to make this happen and it was not “one model fits all” in our sport as it differed from area to area.

Mr Keenan made the suggestion that any published criteria, similar to that set out in the presentation, should become public to ensure individuals could identify with this and be encouraged to come forward and seek support with this.

The Board noted the progress to establish a robust geographical expansion policy. It was also agreed Board members, as necessary, would help to develop the policy in preparation for the next meeting.

**Board  
Members**

## **6. CLUBS**

### **6.1 Primary Rugby League**

Mr Gent referred the Board to the progress made in this area which was outlined in the paper. The pilot schemes for this had been running very successfully and upon completion of the research a full review would be produced and presented to the January Community Board.

**D Gent**

### **6.2 2012 Season Review**

Mr Gent advised the Board that the purpose of a 2012 Season Review was necessary as outlined earlier in this meeting. Whilst there had been lots of success and many areas had worked well, there was still a need to ensure feedback was sought and any recommendations were acted upon. The timetable for this would be on the following basis:

- 10<sup>th</sup> October - 16<sup>th</sup> November - Consultation
- 19<sup>th</sup> November – 1<sup>st</sup> December - Analysis and group findings
- 3<sup>rd</sup> December – 17<sup>th</sup> December - Produce first draft
- 4<sup>th</sup> January – Produce paper for Community Board

Early findings of the feedback appeared to be around the consistency of fixtures and that scholarship games had caused problems. It was accepted that the competition was still not fully aligned and there was still work to be done on this. It was felt that the competition for the 16-18 year old leagues had not worked well and this would require a major review to enable the RFL to then set out the best possible structure. A sub-group of the Board was proposed to manage the review on behalf of the Board consisting of:

Peter Moran  
Fred Baker  
Charlie Bray  
Jon Piercy  
And the RFL Director of Participation

The findings from the review group would then be brought to the Community Board for approval before communicating to the leagues etc.

Mr Wood took this opportunity to ask Mr Hunt and Mr Bray for their analysis of the first summer playing season. From a junior point of



view, Mr Bray felt it had been a fantastic season but it still needed buy-in in terms of playing games midweek.

Mr Hunt confirmed there was an element of fine-tuning required to ensure fixtures were not lost. Mr Hunt had met with two clubs, Leigh East and Oulton Raiders, as they felt it was not working for them, and assisted them with any issues they felt needed resolving. The most successful clubs were those which had embraced the move to summer and having only five points separating the top seven clubs in Tier Three showed the high quality level of this year's competition.

A key element of Men's Rugby League was having an U18 competition and this had failed due to lack of fixtures and scholarship days. Mr Hunt stated he would like to recommend to all 48 Conference League clubs to have both an U18 and an Open Age team going forward.

### **6.3 2013 Calendar**

The draft 2013 Calendar was confirmed and that it was still a work in progress. A meeting to consult with the junior leagues is due to take place on the 17<sup>th</sup> October and Board Members were invited to feed in their ideas/dates to Andy Harland, the RFL Competitions Manager.

**Board  
Members**

### **6.4 RESPECT**

Regular meetings to discuss RESPECT within the game are taking place at the RFL. A launch of the revised approach is planned to start at the beginning of the 2013 season for all levels of the game. The Board noted the progress made in the report.

Mr Coyd asked if the RFL had any guidelines in place for problems associated with social media. Mr Gent confirmed that he is in receipt of a standard terms and conditions of a social media policy and he would look to publish this along with a code of recourse which could be followed if required to ensure issues could be dealt with or discipline taken.

## **7. PLAYER DEVELOPMENT**

### **7.1 Academies and Scholarships**

Mr Roberts joined the meeting to update the Board on this item.

Mr Roberts stated his belief that fundamentally this element of the game needs to be player-centred and allow players to be able to play at the highest level they can and to reach their full potential. It was possible to estimate the numbers of players available to supply the professional clubs and it was clear the key issue is the low numbers playing at U14-16 This means that there are not enough players in the current system.

Mr Roberts confirmed that Service Area and Regional Player Development Centres would be replaced by a programme called Embed the Pathway. Amendments as part of this change of process would be on the following basis:

- Merger of U15 and U16 and implement a U16 Scholarship from 2013.
- Change the U18 Academy to an U19 Academy from 2013 with a full programme of competitive games.

- Removal of the 2<sup>nd</sup> tier (U20) competition
- Enhanced Dual Registration

Mr Roberts referred to the success of the RFL regional academies and scholarship in areas such as Cumbria, the North East and the Midlands and how these were attracting players to the game especially in the midlands and northeast, as the player can now see a full pathway.

Mr Roberts went onto state that it was clear from the player tracking that the issue is not the players leaving the community game at U17 as these players remain in the game. The issue to investigate is the players that remain in the clubs at U17 and U18 being able to field teams. Further auditing can be undertaken to identify how professional clubs manage the exit at each level and ensure, where necessary, ensure they are tracked back into the community game. The issue that must be address is the lack of players in community clubs at 12-16 years old as this is when the dropout starts. An approach to address this would be to encourage Super League clubs to work in strategically different markets to assist in the development of these areas. Mr Roberts noted that the RFL is undertaking independent audits of Super League clubs' academies that will be published to highlight good practice.

Going forward, Mr Roberts advised the Board that funding for talent development will not be at previous levels and this should be borne in mind. Mr Roberts set out the challenges for player development as:

- Small player pool
- Geographical spread
- Quality of club environments
- Conversion rate
- Culture on performance now
- Competition framework and focus

Whilst aware of the challenges, it was proposed for a working group, with representatives from Super League, Championship and Community levels in order to enable discussions from all perspectives and to ensure clarity and solutions can be sought.

**J Roberts**

Mr Wood stated that this was a very significant discussion and there was a further differentiation between traditional and development areas and how they operate in respect of this. The RFL was aware of the challenges faced by all and would continue to work with all involved to find solutions. The Board agreed with the working group and looked forward to receiving further information in relation to a strategy as it was developed.

**8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

*Nothing noted*

**11 DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS:**

Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> January 2013  
Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> April 2013  
Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> July 2013

Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> October 2013

**There being no further business, the meeting closed at 2.30 p.m.**