



Community Game

Governance Guidance



Foreword

Most Rugby League Clubs are community based not-for-profit Clubs and rely upon the time given by volunteers to function. However, they are still required to comply with numerous legal, regulatory, and statutory requirements. Failure to adopt good governance and good financial management not only puts the Clubs at risk but also negatively impacts the integrity of our sport, whether in the local community or beyond. It is therefore vital for the future of our sport that the integrity of rugby league is always protected and upheld by all Clubs.

The purpose of this guidance is to assist Clubs with these issues through raising awareness of legal, regulatory, tax and other statutory requirements and to improve Club sustainability by encouraging good management and governance. It is not intended to provide detailed commentary on every matter but to set out the key considerations in one place and to function as a checklist that will point Clubs in the right direction of these key issues upon which they need to focus. This in turn will enable Clubs to better identify areas where they need to act and to seek further information and advice where necessary.

This document sets out the 13 principles of good governance approved by the RFL and can be used as a blueprint for Clubs to follow.

The **13** principles are:

- 1** Structure
- 2** People
- 3** Recording of Structure & Decision Making
- 4** Strategic Planning
- 5** Values, Vision, and Mission
- 6** Financial Management
- 7** Policies
- 8** Processes
- 9** Risk Management
- 10** Inclusivity
- 11** Integrity
- 12** External Communication
- 13** Internal Communication

An introduction to Governance

Good governance helps Clubs to work effectively, meet the needs of their people and be sustainable.

Governance refers to the way a Club is run and makes decisions including:

- The systems, processes, policies, controls, and authorities they have in place.
- How the people that lead the Club are held to account about the direction they set and the decisions they make.

Who is responsible for governance?

Every Club is governed in a slightly different way. How your Club might be governed depends on the legal and management structures you have in place.

Governance is usually the responsibility of:

- Management Group members and trustees.
- Committee members.
- Senior volunteers or staff.
- Professional advisors such as an accountant or bookkeeper.

However, achieving good governance requires the input of everyone involved in running your Club and delivering its activities.

What are the benefits of having good governance?

There are lots of benefits of having good governance, including:

Creating a welcoming and inclusive offer that meets people's needs.

- Meeting your legal responsibilities.
- Having robust and reliable systems, processes, and policies in place.
- Managing and controlling risks.
- Making confident, timely, good decisions and effectively implementing them.
- Improving your efficiency, giving you more time to focus on additional priorities.
- Making the best use of available resources.
- Having open and transparent decision making and reporting processes.
- Improving the confidence of your people and investors.

Principle 1 – Structure

It's important for your Club to have a clear and appropriate governance structure which is led by a formally constituted decision-making body, like a Management Group or Committee. This body should take responsibility for governance and have the power and authority to lead your Club effectively. The structure of a Club and its decision-making processes are usually set out in a governing document such as a constitution or Articles of Association.

Having the right structure provides a solid foundation for development, growth, and sustainability. It ensures that you can make decisions in the best interests of your Club and its people, in line with your values. It also gives confidence to internal and external stakeholders that the Club is well run and trustworthy.

It is also important that your Club is structured, from a legal perspective, in a way that best suits your needs now and in the future.

There are a number of reasons to get your Club structure correct including:

- **It determines whether your Club is a separate legal entity or not.**
- **It has an impact on members' liability.**
- **There are different rules and legal requirements depending on how your Club is structured.**
- **It can have financial implications.**
- **It can influence how your Club is viewed by others (e.g., banks, funding providers, the public).**

The legal structure of your Club is how it is constituted in the eyes of the law. Clubs will take different legal forms depending on their structure and size, along with decisions taken historically.

- **incorporated by Guarantee;**
- **unincorporated;**
- **registered society;**
- **registered charity;**
- **incorporated charity.**

Whatever the size of your Club, you should consider the possibility of incorporating. Clubs are highly advised to incorporate to get the benefits of limited liability, especially if they employ staff and hold any land.

Why should a Club incorporate?

Many Clubs are run by volunteers who give their time and effort. However, they may not be aware of the potential legal action they are exposed to if their Club is unincorporated.

The Club constitution should provide the Club officers with an indemnity from the members and appropriate insurance should be put in place. However, there are likely to be incidents potentially not covered by insurance and Clubs should consider incorporation to gain the benefit of limited liability. No officer will want to be in the position of having to take legal action against members to recover liabilities they have personally had to bear. The advantages and disadvantages of incorporation versus unincorporated Clubs are outlined below.

Advantages include simple administration. Unincorporated (unless also a charity) do not have the same legal and administrative requirements that companies have (e.g., the requirement to file accounts or an annual return). Flexible. The rules of an unincorporated association can be whatever they choose, provided they are lawful and can be easily updated. Remember that the rules the RFL, or the requirements for grant funding may need your constitution to contain certain clauses.

Disadvantages include there being no separate legal identity. An unincorporated association is not separated from its members in the eyes of the law. This means that committee members or trustees will have to enter into contracts, or hold assets, on behalf of the Club rather than the Club itself. In the event of a claim against the Club or breach of contract, members of the committee or trustees, or wider Club could be personally liable. Transfer of assets. As assets are held by individuals on behalf of the Club, rather than the Club itself, they must be transferred if that person leaves the Club.

Incorporated Associations

Like an unincorporated association, a Club set up as a company limited by guarantee will be owned by its members. The main difference is that the Club will have a separate legal identity allowing it to enter into contracts in its own right and it therefore offers protection for Club members. This structure is well suited to Clubs operating on a non-profit making basis where membership changes regularly. Members agree to pay a minimal amount if the Club becomes insolvent, limiting their liability. Advantages include separate Legal Entity. This allows the Club to enter into contracts and hold assets or investments in its own name. Limited Liability. Members are protected and only required to pay an agreed sum (typically £1) if the Club becomes insolvent. Having limited liability will protect the directors (of the company) and members against a claim, provided the directors have been compliant with company law requirements.

Disadvantages include additional administrative work needed to comply with legal requirements. These include filing annual accounts, annual returns and providing directors' information to Companies House. There are fines for missing deadlines - including filing annual accounts, annual returns and providing directors' information to Companies House (public authority responsible for managing a register of all companies across the UK).

Companies House has more information on starting a company and the ongoing requirements. Directors must also ensure they and the Club adhere to the governance obligations set out in the Companies Act (2006).

Charitable Status

Adopting charitable status may benefit your Club, but it also brings with it additional requirements.

You will need to meet certain rules to be eligible to become a charity and meet ongoing annual reporting requirements.

Most Clubs including those set up as unincorporated associations companies limited by guarantee and community benefit societies can be charities. A Community Interest Company (CIC) and non-charitable community benefit societies cannot be a charity but exist to benefit the wider community by trading to make a profit. As the name suggests, a Charitable Incorporated Club (CIO) must be a charity.

Setting up a charity

In order to become a charity, a Club must be able to demonstrate it is set up with aims that are charitable, and that these aims are conducted for the benefit of the public. This may mean the Club has to update its constitution to include the charitable and public benefit purpose. If you set up your Club as a charity and have income of more than £5,000 per year you must register with the Charity Commission. This doesn't apply to a charitable community benefit society which is registered by the FCA, with HMRC granting tax exemption. If the Club has charitable purposes but intends to trade, for instance to sell tickets, merchandise, food, or drink for a profit, it may have to consider a trading subsidiary. The Charities Commission has guidance to help Clubs understand their obligations as a charity and what to do to meet these.

Advantages of charitable status

- **Tax reliefs.** Charities attract considerable tax advantages on charitable expenditure including trading profits, rental income, on profits if you sell an asset and when you buy property. A Club will also benefit from 80% relief from [Business Rates](#).
- **Fundraising.** People may view you differently as a charity. Charities often enjoy considerable support from funders and other potential supporters and can claim [Gift Aid](#) on donations. In addition, charities can run certain fundraising activities that may be banned or require a license for non-charities.

Disadvantages of charitable status

- **Status.** Once registered as a charity a Club cannot stop being a charity.
- **Administration.** Regulation by the Charity Commission can involve an additional administrative burden.

The Community Amateur Sports Club (CASC)

The Community Amateur Sports Club (CASC) scheme provides a number of charity-type tax reliefs to support local sports Clubs.

The CASC scheme can offer important financial benefits to Clubs including significantly reducing business rates charges and allowing Clubs to generate additional income through Gift Aid. On 1 April 2015, significant changes were introduced to the CASC scheme. The Government introduced the new rules to encourage more Clubs to sign up to the CASC scheme enabling them to generate more tax-free income and to make the rules easier to understand for existing CASCs

Benefits

The key benefits of being a CASC include:

- mandatory 80% relief from business rates
- the ability to generate income through the gift aid scheme
- exemptions from corporation tax

CASC Clubs need to meet certain conditions including:

- Being open to the whole community
- Setting limits on the costs for members
- Being organised on an amateur basis
- Requirements on participation and income generation

Considering applying for CASC status?

If your Club already has CASC status, or you are interested in becoming a Community Amateur Sports Club, you'll need to make sure your Club fits the requirements outlined by HMRC. To help you navigate this complex topic, HMRC have detailed [guidance notes](#) available to help guide you through the process.

Principle 2 – People

Having people with a diverse range of experience, skills and backgrounds involved in your Club leads to more effective decision-making. By encouraging independence and diversity of thought, and creating constructive and open debate, Clubs can make better decisions that will help them achieve their goals.

Recruiting and engaging a diverse range of people also helps to ensure your Club understands and can cater for the needs of different groups from within your local community. For more on effective recruitment click [here](#). You can also visit the Club matters 'Reaching different audiences' section, which explores how you can create an inclusive environment and engage people from a range of backgrounds.

Getting the right people into the right roles is critical to your Club's success. Planning for the recruitment of members on to your Management Group is therefore time well spent. Recruitment is not without its challenges. Some members may be reluctant to join the Club because of concerns over the time it will take, the responsibilities involved and the challenges they will face. However, these concerns can be alleviated through good recruitment practice and by implementing good governance procedures. By recruiting high quality volunteers with the right skillsets, operating with effective governance practices, it will become considerably easier to attract the right volunteers in the future.

A visibly diverse Management Group can improve the perception of the Club in the community. Creating a diverse Management Group will not happen overnight as people from under-represented groups may need to be encouraged and empowered to get involved. Consider what strategies you can employ to make a difference in this area. A good starting point is to evaluate if your current Management Group reflects the balance of your Club membership - age, gender, ability, social background – or, if you are seeking to increase membership in your Club, the targeted demographics. We recommend that in order to demonstrate you are a truly democratic Club, there should be representation of at least 30% of both genders.

To help identify the best candidate for the position there should be a role description which lists the technical abilities, experience and knowledge required. In addition, each representative, regardless of role, should demonstrate complementary 'soft' skills such as:

- **Listening** – to understand each other's perspectives and promote healthy debate.
- **Communication** – oral and written, enabling clear, concise, and constructive communication, especially in meetings.
- **Analysis** – the ability to prepare for meetings by understanding the key issues and asking constructive questions.
- **Demonstration of Club values** – lead by example with the values and leadership behaviour visible to staff, members, and visitors.
- **Integrity and confidentiality** - keep in confidence the issues, discussions, and actions of the Management Group. The role descriptions should include the term of office, who the person reports into and sets out clearly the roles and responsibility of the Club.

When recruiting new people for committees it is important that they have a common set of values and attributes, so decisions are made in the best interest of the Club. They also need skills and knowledge to help the Club reach its strategic ambitions and objectives.

Samples of role descriptions can be found [HERE](#).

Principle 3 – Recording of Structure & Decision Making

The responsibility for decision making should always be with the Management Group. Where sub-committees or other groups are formed then it should clearly set out that they ultimately report into the Management Group. They should always be chaired by someone from the Management Group.

The Management Group should implement a Terms of Reference. The purpose of these should be to create a clear, transparent, and effective structure. They should clarify the Management Groups purpose and activities. Setting out who sits on the group, how they are appointed and for how long. In addition, they should clarify the limit as to what the Management Group can achieve, decide upon and this should include any budgetary restraints, as well as confirming each member's role and responsibility. It should set out how and when it meets, who it reports into and the limits of its decision-making powers. They must also not conflict with the Club's constitution or articles of association.

An effective Management Group will ensure it has clearly set out ways of working. It should ensure minutes of meetings are recorded and published to members. There should be a clear strategic framework and plan that includes financial planning for the long-term effectiveness of the Club. Goal setting and evaluating the performance of members should take place annually and be reflective of the realistic opportunities that the Club faces. Conflicts of interest should be noted at all meetings.

The Management Group

The Management Group is the primary strategic decision-making committee. It is the most high-profile of the committees in a Club, but it is unlikely to be the only one. In all but the smallest of Clubs, the range of activities, scale of operations, and delivery of specific projects will necessitate other committees to complement the Management Group and deliver their strategic decisions.

Composition of Management Group - The ideal number of members on a Club's Management Group is often discussed. The simple way is to ask how many key roles exist at the Club that are fundamental to its success and should come together on a regular basis. There are many examples of Club committees that have grown over time to a dozen or more representatives. This makes for unwieldy and lengthy meetings that often fail to focus on the key strategic decisions facing the Club.

Club Sub-Committees

The Management Group should create sub-committees to assist them in performing their duties. The primary purpose of sub-committees is to focus on specific areas of the Club and make recommendations to the Management Group for approval. Sub-committees will usually include members of the Management Group as well as people invited to join for their specific expertise. Whilst sub-committees might have some clearly defined delegated authority, they should be accountable to the Management Group and should be chaired by a Management Group member to ensure continuity. Sub-committee members should understand that they do not have authority over the management of staff. The terms of reference for the group should also highlight the importance of working to an established strategy.

An Effective Committee

Establishing or developing committees (Management Group, sub-committees, operational or working groups) that are as effective as possible is of the utmost importance. It is the foundation that allows good work to happen. An effective committee:

Has an appointed chairperson.

- Empowers the chairperson to enforce agreed meeting rules created annually by the committee to increase effectiveness.
- Implements a mandatory induction programme and offers educational opportunities.
- Works from a well-documented strategic plan, with supporting financial information.
- Embraces its responsibility to achieve the SMART goals established at the start of each year within the overall strategic plan.
- Documents and implements a clear set of core policies and procedures.
- Embraces a set of job or role descriptions that clearly establish accountability and authority.
- Is clear on the different responsibilities of paid staff and appointed volunteers.
- Schedules a minimum of four committee meetings a year, including one dedicated to the review of the strategic plan and goals of the Club. Meetings should be conducted in an environment and atmosphere that recognises the contribution of volunteer members.
- Undertakes an annual evaluation of committee performance, involving external input.
- Manages a staggered rotation system with a minimum/maximum term of office.

Terms of Reference

Every committee, from the Management Group to operational committees should have terms of reference which will often be guided by the Club constitution. This is the foundation upon which their work can be conducted.

Their goal is to:

- Clarify the committee's purpose and activities.
- Set out how the committee members are appointed.
- Define the limits of authority on spend and activities.
- Outline the roles and responsibilities of committee members.
- Include reporting frameworks so there is sound oversight by the Management Group and transparent communication between each sub-committee.

Principle 4 – Strategic Planning

What is a Strategic Plan?

A strategic plan is really a master plan which maps out where you are now, what goals or objectives you want to achieve, and what you will do to achieve your goals. It is a plan for success. Many Clubs will already have in their minds an approach they are taking, but it is important that this is enshrined in a document and created as a forward-looking plan. Strategic planning is a disciplined process for getting to the important decisions, and the plan is simply the document that frames these decisions. A strategic plan allows you to put effective collaborative governance into action at your Club and set about achieving the high levels of customer satisfaction that will dictate your future success.

Who develops the Strategic Plan?

The Management Group should engage with members and then create a strategic plan on behalf of the Club and its membership. The plan should also be informed by the knowledge of professional staff and insight from supporting Clubs. The strategic plan should involve the Management Group:

- Envisaging the future of their Club.
- Developing the structures and procedures required to achieve that future.
- Acting as custodians of the strategy on behalf of the membership.

A strategic plan can fit on a single piece of paper, or it can stretch to a dozen or more pages. Its success is not dependent on the size of the document or the level of detail it contains, but the sense of direction it takes.

Why is it important?

Due to the nature of the governance structure in Clubs, the elected leaders change on a regular basis and in the absence of a plan, this can result in inconsistency of mission. Having a strategic plan in place will help to safeguard the priorities of a Club by providing consistent aims and objectives that all elected Management Group members need to work continuously towards. This new consistency will help the Club focus its resources in the areas identified by the membership as key priorities for the Club and will help to prevent individuals acting on their own views instead of agreed common objectives.

Benefits of a Strategic Plan

- There are significant benefits for a Club when working to a strategic plan, including:
 - Greater unity throughout the Club on what makes your Club attractive, and why people would want to join and remain as members.
- Identification of a manageable number of key performance indicators for evaluating Club performance and individual performance at all levels of the Club.
- Less crisis management, with the Management Group kept busy working on the business, rather than in the business.
- Agreement on accountability for each key area of the Club's business, and identification of any training gaps to help achieve those goals.
- Improved selection of committee members identified for their knowledge and commitment to specific areas of the strategic plan.
- Greater unity and morale amongst staff who will welcome a consistent approach to the established direction of the Club and will have clarity in their roles.
- More focused and efficient committee meetings, with an agenda driven by the strategic plan.
- Continuity of aims when handing from one committee to another after annual election.

- A more professional approach to the collaborative governance of the Club resulting in a more rewarding term of office for volunteers.

Linked to strategic plans Clubs are encouraged to create a Club Development Plan which the RFL can assist Clubs in creating. It works best when the overall club vision is broken down into smaller, more manageable objectives that are realistic and achievable. Supporting clubs to ensure that the objectives are spread across all the main areas required to run your club. The health of your club membership, your volunteers or workforce, your facilities, the state of your finances and who you work in partnership should be included.

Regular review of your Club Development Plan, at least annually, is essential to ensure you are on your way to achieving your aims and overall vision

RFL Club Accreditation can also be considered due to the time pressures of achieving Accreditation community clubs will have 12 months to be signed off and become accredited as long as they complete annual health check and update their club development plan they would remain Accredited.

- **Safe Club Accredited** – Meet the minimum safeguard standards (all clubs with junior teams need to complete)
- **Silver Club Accredited** – Club are recognised at having good practices and meet all the minimum safeguarding standards
- **Gold Club Accredited** – Club go above and beyond the minimum standards and recognised for their best practice

Club Health Check - The delivery of club health checks for all rugby league clubs, but primarily to support asset owning clubs, or clubs at risk. A health check would aim to assess and provide recommendations on the management of the business, rather than the playing activities of the club.

The health check is to help you understand current position so that the RFL can assist with 3 objectives: -

- Collection of data on club tenure, organisation structure and legal status. In addition, financial records would be helpful to identify the costs of running a club, using different models.
- Assess effectiveness of existing organisational structure, governance and financial processes and identify risks associated.
- Present a health report for the club and make recommendations on potential improvements to the management of the club.

Principle 5 – Values, Vision, and Mission

When creating the strategic plan Clubs should consider what is their core purpose, or even just how the Club wishes to be known. Some Clubs prefer to move beyond a simple statement that summarises their purpose, and establish a vision, mission, and core values.

Core Values

Core values are the guiding principles which apply across the Club and underpin how its work is conducted. The values of a Club are basic beliefs about what really matters to the individuals at the Club and what binds them together. They should guide how things are done across the whole Club. The values of a Club can form a key building block to creating a strategic plan.

The RFL Values are:

UNITED (we are one team heading in the same direction);
PROFESSIONAL (we are open and honest with ourselves and our customers);
EXCELLENCE (we know what excellence means and we strive for it every day); and
RESPECT (we listen to each other to understand everyone's needs and opinions).

Vision

Before you start to think about creating a strategic plan it is important that you have a single shared vision for the Club that everyone is aware of and working towards. This enables everyone to see the common goal for the Club. A vision is the long-term change the Club would like to see if its work is successful. It should motivate and enable individuals to see how their effort contributes to an overall inspirational purpose. It is a clear and inspirational hope for the future and is often about the effect your Club will have on the external world and environment if it is successful.

The RFL's Vision is A Growing, Accessible and Vibrant Sport

Mission.

Once you have agreed a vision for the Club you can then look at defining the mission of your Club. The mission statement should clearly define the purpose of the Club. It is a short, formal statement about what the Club aims to do and why it is trying to do it. It is the reason the Club exists and helps to keep everyone focused. It is what the Club will do to make its vision a reality, or to move closer towards achieving its vision.

The RFL's Mission – To consistently deliver great Rugby League Experiences.

Principle 6 – Financial Management

The Club should have sound financial plans in place and ensure that anything set out in the strategic plan is costed and achievable.

The financial policies and procedures of a Club are an important part of the overall control framework. Effective policies and procedures that are understood by the Management Group, staff and volunteers will help to ensure effective management of the Club's finances.

Checklist:

The financial policies should be appropriate for your Club and, whilst these may differ slightly from Club-to-Club, they should include:

- Planned budget and long-term forecast which is aligned to the strategic plan.
- Controls on expenditure – who can spend how much and on what.
- What expenditure needs special permission.
- Limitations on credit card use.
- Controls on travel and subsistence – when and what expenses can be claimed by staff and volunteers.
- Banking – how income is banked, who can authorise direct debits and how bank accounts are reconciled.
- Procurement – how a Club ensures that effective competitive procurement processes are in place.
- Reserves – target levels and how these will be monitored.
- Accounting software used, password protocols and back up procedures.
- Management accounts, frequency, timeline, and level of detail required.
- Cash handling procedures, including limitations on cash in safe or private dwelling.
- Record keeping, including the fixed asset register (if applicable) and depreciation policy, debtors' policy, accruals policy.
- Audit requirements.
- Insurance obligations and requirements.
- Membership fees should be regularly reviewed.
- Financial policies are communicated to relevant people across the Club.

Principle 7 – Policies

It is important for Clubs to have appropriate plans, policies, and processes in place to ensure that they:

Understand and comply with all relevant laws and regulations.
Manage and control risk.
Effectively plan and manage their finances.

Having the right measures in place will help to protect your Club and its operations, financial security, and sustainability. Mitigating against issues and risks also helps to build trust and ensure you can continue to offer a safe, positive experience to everyone involved.

Club Constitution

A Club constitution is a simple document that outlines its functions and the rules under which it will operate.

A Club constitution should help to clarify how Club procedures work. The constitution, together with your Clubs' policies and procedures, will help to protect your Club members and officers and make your Club run more smoothly.

A sample of a Club Constitution can be found [HERE](#)

Why do we need one?

Your constitution sets out the fundamental principles of your Club. A good constitution will:

- Explain to members (and non-members) what your Club is about.
- Help protect Club members and officers.
- Clarify how Club procedures should work.
- Clarify and help sort out internal problems.
- Underpin funding applications - most funding bodies will not consider applications from groups without a constitution.
- Enable your Club to become incorporated.

When do we need one?

If you are thinking of setting up a Club, before your group holds its initial meeting (or at least at one of your early meetings) it would be good to draw up a draft constitution. Doing this means you can discuss and agree the core principals of your Club early on. Having a constitution in place is one of the basics that funding Clubs will expect to see if you are applying for a grant. Make sure you have a constitution in place and that it is regularly updated.

Code of Conduct

A committee's effectiveness is determined by who sits on it, what it does and how it acts. Many Clubs adopt a code of conduct for their Management Group and committee members to help regulate and manage their behaviour. This is sometimes known as a behavioural framework and should be linked to the Club's values. A code of conduct can help to foster an environment where committee members feel they can openly debate matters and are clear about how meetings are run and what is expected of them. The chair of the committee also has a key role in creating the right environment and running meetings effectively.

It is the responsibility of everybody involved in your Club to ensure it remains a safe place, free from discrimination, fear and where possible, risk.

A key component of maintaining a quality Club culture is to set standards of acceptable behaviour, which must be upheld by all involved, and those participating in Club run activities and competitions. A crucial tool for defining and communicating acceptable standards of behaviour is a documented Code of Conduct. Ideally the Code of Conduct must apply to all involved in your Club and its activities, different groups of people that should be covered include:

- Adult members
- Junior Members
- Club Officials and volunteers
- Parents and Carers

Clubs must also be able to demonstrate that they are complying with the RFL Policies below

- RFL Safeguarding Policy
- Safeguarding of Vulnerable Groups Policy
- Betting Policy
- Anti-Doping Policy
- Data Protection & Privacy Policies
- Risk Management Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy

In addition, Clubs are membership Clubs and, regardless of their legal structure, they are subject to legislation. Clubs need to be aware if they are undertaking an activity that has the potential to breach legislation they must have appropriate policies and procedures in place to manage the risks.

Principle 8 – Processes

Having set and agreed processes for how a Club deals with certain matters will enable there to be more transparency and clearer decision making. This will also enable a Club and the Management Group to protect itself should any person make a claim against it. Clear processes enhance trust amongst the members of a Club and mitigate risk in terms of legal liability.

Principle 9 – Risk Management

Managing risk is an essential role for the Club's Committee. Effective risk management will safeguard the Club's assets and ensure that the Club Development Plan can be achieved. Managing risk means reducing the likelihood or impact of any identified risk and/or putting in place contingency plans in case a risk materialises. A clear risk identification and monitoring process can help improve strategic and long-term planning.

It is important that risks are identified early, and the management of such risks are regularly reviewed. This should include considering how best to mitigate the risk identified.

The Management Group may wish to setup a specific risk working group to conduct this function. There should be a member of the Management Group with overall responsibility for managing risk. It is also advisable to set out a Risk Management Action Plan that can include a statement setting out how the Club handles risk.

Creating a risk register can be a simple and effective way of recording and managing risk. There are several ways of creating such a document (tables, spreadsheets, computer programmes) but the most crucial factor is the content. Such content should include dates that risks are identified and modified; a description of the risk; an explanation as to what sort of risk has been identified (e.g., financial, operational, strategic); an assessment of the severity/impact of the risk; what has been put in place to mitigate the risk; and finally, who is responsible for managing the risk.

Guidance on creating a risk assessment can be found [HERE](#)

Principle 10 – Inclusivity

Rugby League has a long and proud history of being inclusive. The Club should be committed to upholding the RFL mission statement and Tackle It Policy and Plan. The Management Group should promote policies and practices to welcome every person into its Club in order to extend the reach and appeal of rugby league, diversify the talent pool, improve culture, and actively deal with all forms of discrimination.

The RFL's Tackle It Plan can be found [HERE](#).

Diversity of background, opinion, skill, values, and personal experience help Clubs make better decisions and to become more welcoming environments. Embracing diversity and inclusivity can ensure a Club stays relevant and meets the needs of its ever-changing demographic of members (and potential members) in an ever-changing world. It is also important that all members feel that their views are listened to and represented at all levels.

Furthermore, the Club should ensure that it complies with its obligations under the Equalities Act 2010 and ensures that it does not discriminate against an individual based on any of the protected characteristics.

The Management Group should be representative of the Club and the community in which it is based. The recruitment policy should be open and inclusive. The Management Group should consider how best to ensure it is inclusive and to ensure the values of the organisation give consideration to inclusivity within them.

It is important to remember that equality refers to fairness and in particular to universal access; while diversity is about recognising and embracing differences within an institution, workforce, or society.

The benefits of embracing inclusivity include:

- Ensuring members feel engaged and represented meaning they stay with the Club for longer.
- Differences in opinion and personal experience often leads to healthy debate that ensures better decision making and more tested policy decisions.
- Being more representative of the area in which the Club is based is more attractive to potential funders.
- Being more representative of the area in which the Club is based opens up the ability to appeal to more members, which in turn will lead to the opportunity to have wider strategic aims.

Principle 11 – Integrity

The Management Group should set standards for the rest of the Club to follow. Obviously, as set out earlier, the Club should ensure that members follow the Club's policy on betting, anti-corruption, and anti-doping.

The Management Group should ensure that its members always act in the best interests of the Club and the sport. Conflicts of interest should be recorded for all members at all meetings. They should be mindful that it is the wider membership that decides upon the strategy and direction of travel for the Club, and the Management Group put simply are the current people managing that on a day-to-day basis.

The Management Group should consider the implementation of a Code of Conduct or Volunteer Agreements that include the standards and behaviours expected of its members.

The key aspects to this are:

- Promoting the reputation of the organisation.
- Adhering to the values of the organisation.
- Ensuring the perception of the Club within the community is ethical and in accordance with the values.
- Ensuring it manages conflicts of interest and does not allow outside interference on decision making.

Template Code of Conduct and Volunteer Agreement to be provided.

Communication

It's important to be clear about why your Club exists, what its aims or goals are, how it is managed and how it is performing. Communicating this demonstrates transparency and accountability which is important to internal and external stakeholders.

Taking time to understand and respond to the needs and views of stakeholders is important. It can help your Club shape its strategy and development, and ensure stakeholders feel involved, valued, listened to, and supported.

Developing and sustaining open, two-way communication empowers stakeholders by giving them the information they need. It can also help you to promote internal democracy and gives extra confidence to brand new stakeholders, potential partners, and investors.

Principle 12 – External Communication

The key to this principle is to understand who the relevant stakeholders outside the Club that need to be communicated with are. The Management Group should then establish how and when it needs to engage with these stakeholders.

A stakeholder is anyone with an interest in your Club. They can be individuals, groups or other Clubs that are affected by the Club's activity, including funders, members, and suppliers.

External stakeholders are groups outside the Club, for example, the wider rugby league community such as Leagues, other Clubs and the RFL, and partners such as Sport England the Local Authority and commercial sponsors.

Communicating effectively with stakeholders is important to build up trust, accountability and will improve a Club's reputation in the local community and the sport more generally.

This should lead to better relationships with these stakeholders and improve the strategic and financial opportunities available.

Principle 12 – Internal Communication

Internal stakeholders are groups within the Club, such as members and staff.

Knowing how and when to communicate with these groups will increase accountability of the Management Group but also ensure that the membership feel engaged, thereby encouraging them to remain involved for longer. This should have an effect of increasing participation and membership.

By effective communication, the Management Group becomes more effective, relevant and make more informed decisions that benefit the wider membership and Club as a whole. It in effect, ensures that the decision making of the Management Group is legitimate.

In theory, most people understand and see the benefits of effective communication with members and support the idea of being transparent. However, in practice it can be difficult to achieve for several reasons. Some information is not suitable to be publicised, such as commercially sensitive information. Finding the right balance between transparency and confidentiality can be challenging. For the Management Group to be transparent you need to be able to share information with members and other stakeholders. Some organisations will struggle to find the right media or the right time to share the information.

It is recommended that there is a named member on the Management Group who is responsible for communication and a Club's Management Group should develop a clear communication strategy that separates how and when it will communicate with both internal and external stakeholders.

Useful Resources

Sport England Club Matters offers free, simple, and bitesize support to all Clubs and helps you improve your Club with:

Club Finances

Areas covered: Managing Money, Budgeting, Tax and Sports Clubs, Generating Income, Funding Guidance

[More Info](#)

Club Management

Areas covered: Club Development Planning, Club Structures, Partnerships, Governance, Facilities

[More Info](#)

Club People

Areas covered: Members, Participants, Volunteers, Coaches

[More Info](#)

Club Marketing

Areas covered: Marketing Strategy, Market Research, Marketing Options

[More Info](#)

FURTHER SUPPORT

Sport England Club Matters offers free, simple, and bitesize support to all Clubs and helps you improve your Club with:

Online Modules

There is wide a range of support available including online toolkits, quick reference guides and e-learning modules.

Workshops

Club Matters workshops are free, short training sessions delivered across the country by Club Matters facilitators on a range of specific topics.