RFU COUNCIL MEETING
10 January 2025
Post-Meeting Council Briefing Note

1. Presidential matters

1.1 Rob Udwin (President) welcomed Council members to an extraordinary meeting of Council which was requisitioned by 20 members. The meeting would also be used for the ratification of the appointment of Sir Bill Beaumont as interim Chair of the Board.

2. Ratification of Sir Bill Beaumont as Chair of the Board

2.1 Sir Bill Beaumont was ratified as Chair of the Board by an overwhelming majority. It was noted that this was an interim appointment, pending the appointment of a permanent chair. This process has now started.

3. Update on Independent Review of the Long-Term Incentive Plan

3.1 The review of the process under which this was put in is being undertaken by an external law firm. The work is being overseen by three members of Council. Tim Miller (RFRU) provided an update on the progress of the work.

3.2 Those members of Council who requisitioned the Council meeting to vote on resolutions regarding initiating a review of the LTIP confirmed that they wished to withdraw those resolutions as the matter had been overtaken by events.

4. Communications with the Game

4.1 Sir Bill Beaumont addressed the Council and set out the work to be done to engage with the Game in the coming months. There will be a process of roadshows and virtual events starting in late January for discussions with groups of member clubs, principally to hear from those clubs and discuss ways of uniting the game. These will also help correct some of the misinformation currently being put out.

4.2 Those roadshows will also include a discussion of the work of the Governance and Representation Review Group and the future governance of the RFU and the game.

4.3 In addition to the roadshows, a fuller review of how communications and engagement with the Game are managed will take place, and members of Council will be involved in that review.

5. Governance and Representation Review (GRR) Group Update

5.1 Malcolm Wharton as Chair of the GRR Group, together with Penny Stewart (Northumberland) and Paula Carter (Surrey) provided an update on the work of the Group, noting that the work was accelerating given the more urgent need to deliver a more modern and effective governance structure for the RFU. There was a consensus that there needed to be greater clarity around roles within the governance structure, but most importantly to put the members first.

5.2 Potential proposals were discussed, and these will be discussed with members in the roadshows to be undertaken over the coming month.

6. Confidentiality issues

6.1 Several members of Council expressed their disappointment that confidential information had continued to be leaked from Council meetings. Further work will be done to help prevent this. There was a general discussion about transparency, with a consensus that it would be helpful to be more open about the discussions happening at Council, but to ensure that when there was a need for topics or particular views to be discussed, the confidentiality of the information needed to be respected.

7. Special General Meeting Update

7.1 It was noted that a letter requesting a Special General Meeting had been received from the Secretary of the RFRU. Individual emails from clubs were now being received so these must be verified. It was confirmed that this has been co-ordinated and promoted by the RFRU Board and members of the Championship, who had also engaged an external PR agency. The press release containing the request to the SGM had been sent out by the Chair of Nottingham RFC in the Championship. It was confirmed that those Championship Clubs who were co-ordinating the request for an SGM were doing so because of a range of factors, including reduced funding, and that they were seeking redress for past decisions.

7.2 There were a number of views expressed about the inflammatory language used in the letter to the RFU, including that Council Members did not communicate with their clubs. A range of other inaccuracies were noted, including around the financial position of the RFU, cost of removing England coaches, and around promotion and relegation within the pyramid structure.

7.3 If an SGM is to be called, the notice would go out within two weeks, and the date of the SGM would be at least 45 days from the date of that notice.

Further information

The press release following the meeting is as follows:

Media Statement

The RFU is in the process of validating the additional information that has now been provided to request a Special General Meeting (SGM).

The notice to request an SGM contained a significant number of inaccuracies, however, the RFU respects the right of its members to call for an SGM and for their views to be heard.

A date for the SGM will be announced in the next two weeks and it will take place after the Guinness Men's Six Nations has concluded.

An open letter from Sir Bill Beaumont will be sent to clubs on 10 January 2025 and will be available on www.englandrugby.com.