County Office and Hon Secretary Report

Date – 26th August

Report compiled by Graham Crozier and Claire Sharpe

Key events, issues, and achievements

A lot of work has gone on over the summer – this is brief(!) summary.

Following the AGM, I have met with all of the Directors to discuss how they want to work with the office, the support they may or may not need and best ways to communicate with them. I have also, over the summer, met with all of the volunteers in key roles that report up to Directors – again to discuss interaction with office, support needs for the group for the season and how best to implement and achieve this.

Have met with RFU staff. Liam has been into the office on three or four occasions over the summer and we are often on the phone with catch ups and I met with Andrew Souter and Dave Westhead in July at Northern with Pete O'Brien. Some good conversations as we re-introduce working practices with the team and go back to the system of "central office and no point of failure" on comms as the office is now automatically copied in on mails sent out from the RFU team. This has enabled a number of returns to be submitted over the summer – CB/RFU Club Return, U20s feedback, Colts National Cup Rules feedback, Ranking of Colts and Girls U16/U18 National Cup entries and Volunteer nominations to name a few.

Have collated and worked on budgets for all portfolio directorates – work collating all of the information is being finalised this week.

A route and branch review of costs is being undertaken with the Chair and Hon Secretary. We have already identified potential savings across a number of areas and these are already being implemented or are on the immediate horizon for action. Areas include the CB IT systems, CB broadband, bus provision for teams, CB kit store and kit purchasing.

We have over the summer implemented the CB AUP (Acceptable Use Policy) for all those who have access to CB information and mailboxes, further enhancing the work ongoing in relation to data protection and GDPR.

We have, further to conversations with members of the RFU, re-instated the CB Digital Systems for ALL Age Grade Regulation 15 forms so we now no longer use the RFU forms system. The CB is fully compliant and information is shared with the RFU on a weekly basis. The RFU fully endorses the processes we have in place and thanks should be recorded to James Barnett for his work on this project re-instating all of the forms over the summer.

We have also changed and updated our systems on how we record cross border matches for the returns required by the RFU.

Comms have been reinstated with all club age grade coaches via WhatsApp – we have a community chat so everyone at all age grades gets a message if we post in "community". We also have individual age grade chats so can target specific groups with updates that would just apply to them. Feedback following reinstating these groups has been great as has meant that comms are two way and we got going with cup entries, expressions of interest in hosting age grade events and discussing season 2025-26 very early on. This has continued over the summer with CB being able to answer questions, assist when asked and jump in where help or advice can be given.

We are re working the Clubs Section on the website. We are combining this work with the club updates for season 2025-26 – rolling two tasks into one and simplifying the return to save time at both club end and CB end. It is disappointing that to date only a few clubs have completed their returns given requests were sent out in the middle of July.
This impacts on a couple of fronts – website updates, checking that personnel in mailing groups and chats are correct and being able to allocate club digital folder access to the correct people (CB digital forms and being GDPR compliant).

We have dealt with two SAR requests over the summer. Considerable work for both, one in particular has taken an excessive amount of time due to the requests listed in the application.

We have moved over to Office 365 in the last week. Some teething issues but we are working through these in a timely manner.

Have collated information and updated the Age Grade Calendar for Season 2025-26 – we have never been this far ahead at this stage of the season.
I am now at a point where we can cancel out sone of our provisional bookings of the AGP at WBR as we know when we will need pitch time as the age grade programmes are already confirmed.
We have also altered how pitch time is worked this season so we no longer book three hours for a two hour session.
This will lead to considerable savings on pitch costs and I am in communication now with members of the 365 team as we edit these bookings.

All CB Club cup draws for season 2025-26 have been made (U13 to U16 boys, U14, U16 and U18 Girls and all of the Adult Cup Competitions). Information on all are on the website. (Colts Cup Draw to take place in next few weeks)

All Cup Rules (adult, age grade and colts) are either under review or have been reviewed.

The CANDY League rules have been reviewed, simplified and approved – main aim, to get rugby played and make it easier to get players on a pitch.

All CANDY matches to end of September are now on GMS. Five new teams in the leagues for season 2025-26 – necessitated a review of the leagues due to numbers so we now have an additional new "CANDY 3 Central" league. (Six Leagues + the Merit League + the Vets League for season 2025-26.)

Following discussions with Directors, player headshots (Rep Players) are being re-instated for the new season. Already had conversations with John Austin and dates will be planned well in advance so are in the diary.

Conversations are ongoing re comms with Rep teams and players within these teams this season. Feedback around the use of Spond was not positive and requests were received

from a number of groups to reintroduce WhatsApp and FB pages. These will be actioned as each group begins their programme for 2025-26.

Conversation ongoing re the raffle and reinstating this now that we have comms with clubs and club coaches re-instated so have a better volunteer base to contact when promoting the raffles. Two tickets for England v Ireland are being purchased in the ticket window which opens tomorrow and the Chair is in discussions relating to a potential second prize.

In general, lots going on. The office phone is very busy along with Whatsapp chats as coaches get in touch for advice or help, visits to the office are increasing and there are daily catch ups with key CB personnel.
The kettle is always on for anyone who wants to pop in – warm welcome guaranteed, just can't guarantee the chocolate hobnobs!

Current and impending issues, events, and work streams

CB AUP (Acceptable Use Policy) – a number of users are still to sign off on this. As agreed with the CB Data Protection Officer, access to mailboxes and data will be blocked if returns are not received. A cut off date needs to be agreed.

A number of club updates are still required – need these for season 2025-26 updates, to assign access to club digital folders and to write up each individual club AUP policy for their folder.

Final review of Cup Rules (adult – currently out with committee for comment), colts rules (about to be updated) and age grade (waiting on updates from Andrew).

As we are on the front foot organising events and dates in diary for season 2025-26 we now have a "host clubs" list so can see who is hosting and what event that is (ensuring a fair share of events are allocated around the County).

We need to finalise the County Members package for Season 2025-26. Following the successful "Pie and Pint" event in May, we have another date for diary – Presidents Christmas Wine and Cheese– Sunday 21st December at WBR prior to the County Under 18s match v Durham. We are also looking to repeat the "Pie and Pint" next May but do not have dates as yet for the 20s, Men or Womens programmes.

We are moving over to a printed outer cover for County Match Programmes – discussed over the summer and we now need to start prep work on this.

Issues requiring Decision, Discussion or Dissemination

AUP – cut off date for returns needs to be agreed.
Implication – those who do not submit a return have either (or both) their mail boxes blocked or access to CB data (eg A Rep Rugby player list) revoked.

Club Returns for Website, Comms groups and Club Folder Digital Access.
Need to agree a cut off date.
Implications - No return = no club info on website (they are all now blank in readiness for the new season updates), club digital folder allocations won't be processed, the individual club AUP policy that sits with digital folder access can't be drafted and mailing groups won't be updated.
Focus on tasks changes as the season draws closer and we move into the next group of tasks to support rugby in the County. Updates are a summer task and as we are now

nearly into the new season late returns will drop down the priority list as other tasks have to be completed so that schedules remain on target.

County Member Package – so that we can create the page on website / info we need for enquiries or promotion, can we please get a finalised decision on what is included in the County Member package as its very difficult to sell being a County Member when we don't have a "this is what you get" list.
Also, are we repeating the "County Membership Card" idea for this season as there are still a lot from last season that were not handed out.
Currently: Membership Card (collected – is not posted out)

- Pin Badge (collected – not posted out – first year only as you don't need two)
- On production of membership card, free County Match Programme
- Access to Home Autumn International Tickets
- Access to Home 6 Nations International Tickets
- Access to Away 6 Nations International Tickets
- Christmas Event (held prior to an age grade County Match)
- Pie and Pint (or equivalent event) held prior to an Adult County Match in Spring
- Offers on Gilbert Kit (determined by Gilbert)

Opportunity to sponsor ball at County Match – talked about but not taken forward.
Opportunity to attend away County Match (4 seats on away bus – idea that the County Pres or his/her representative has a few others with him/her at an away match) – talked about but not taken forward.
County Tie – talked about but not taken forward (and need an equivalent for a female member).
Access to tickets at Falcons game – talked about but not taken forward.

NB – This report must not include personal or identifiable data as it will be uploaded to monthly folders on County Website. If there is a need to report on a Confidential matter, please forward that communication separately, marked 'Confidential'.