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BRIEFING NOTES FROM THE RFU COUNCIL MEETING HELD 27th September 2024

Please see below the briefing notes from the RFU Council Meeting held on 27th September 2024. please drop me a line or give me a call if you would like to discuss any matters or require more detailed information.

BRIEFING NOTES:

1. Presidential matters

1.1 Rob Udwin (President) welcomed the new members of Council to the first meeting of the year.

2. CEO's Update to Council

2.1 Bill Sweeney (CEO) updated the Council on matters being undertaken by the Executive Staff. The verbal and written update included:

2.2 **Women's Rugby World Cup**

a. This tournament is one of the biggest opportunities for the game in 2025 and the RFU were working hard to maximise the impact of hosting.
b. Sales for the opening match and the final is already strong, with over 49,000 already sold for the final.
c. The BBC had been announced as the broadcaster with a commitment to broadcast or stream every match, making this the biggest ever opportunity for people to watch the women's game.

2.3 **Community Game Future**

a. Work is continuing on implementation of Community Game Future and also on the new delivery model. As work on the structure of the delivery model evolved there would be opportunities to consider alignment with the Governance and Representation Review.

2.4 **CB Roadshows**

a. A further round of CB Roadshows was going in the diary. Previous meetings with CBs had been a great opportunity to talk through the issues and opportunities facing rugby.

2.5 **Men's Professional Game Partnership (MPGP**

a. Work with the other stakeholders in the professional game had led to the co-creation of an agreement of the men's professional game up for a successful future. The Men's Professional Game Partnership (MPGP) had now been signed and on the 4 September, there was a joint RFU, PRL and RPA media briefing.
b. To govern the MPGP, the Professional Rugby Board (PRB) had been established. An independent chair and two further independent members are being recruited to supplement representatives from the RFU, PRL and RPA.
c. The Tier 2 Board had been in operation since 1 July 2024 and had representatives from the RFU and from the clubs. An independent Chair was being appointed with the aim of having them in place by early November.
d. In their monthly meetings the Board was focusing on developing the commercial strategy, competition structure and player development strategy for the new league, plus the self-assessment process for the current Championship clubs. The Board had also been working on the proposed process for selecting additional clubs to join the league.
e. Sweeney thanked Terry Burwell (Council Member for Hampshire and chair of the Adult Competition Management Sub-committee) for the significant amount of work he had put in on Tier 2 and for stepping in to chair the Board whilst the independent chair was appointed.

2.6 **Rugby Players Association Agreement**

a. The funding agreement for the RPA had now been signed. The RFU was now working with PRL and the RPA to agree the scope and role of a hardship fund that would be put in place by the end of the year.

2.7 **Executive Update**

a. As reported publicly, RFU staff are in a redundancy consultation process.

b. The new Executive Director of Venue, Anthony Mundy, currently Operations Director at Leicester City Football Club, was due to start at the beginning of December 2024. A public announcement was yet to be made. The appointment of the new Chief Financial Officer (CFO) had been concluded, with an announcement to made shortly. Recruitment for the Executive Director Corporate Affairs was underway.

2.8 **Nations Cup**

a. Negotiations regarding the possible Nations Cup continued at pace with several meetings taking place between Unions across north and south hemispheres.

2.9 **World Rugby and Rugby Europe Elections**

a. In November, World Rugby will elect a new Chair, Vice Chair and Executive Board. In December, Rugby Europe will elect a new President and Board. The RFU Board had agreed a process to decide who the RFU would vote for in the World Rugby elections and the International Relations Advisory Board (IRAG) had agreed the same for the Rugby Europe President. As part of both processes, chair and presidential candidates would have the opportunity to present their manifestos to the Board and IRAG respectively.

3 Chair of the Board of Directors Update

3.1 Tom Ilube CBE (Chair of the RFU Board of Directors) noted that there was a change of emphasis from planning to implementation. Some key building blocks were in place, including the PGP and Adult Player Registration, and a strong partnership roster including Allianz; while there were some significant projects still in train (especially the CGF and Governance and Representation Review), there was now more of an opportunity to take a more front foot approach to communicating.

3.2 Council had a detailed discussion on decision-making around tackle height in the professional game.

3.3 Board reviewed the process around adult player registration, and in particular the governance around the programme.

3.4 Other key discussions at the Board related to the implementation of the PGP, and next steps on the Community Game Future. Recent changes to the senior men's coaching team and the process by which new coaches would be approached and then selected was also discussed.

3.5 Tom also reported that he and the President were engaging with clubs in Sussex and Somerset as it was in these CBs that clubs had voted against Tom's reappointment as Chair of the Board.

4 Tier 2

4.1 The Tier 2 Board was meeting monthly to continue to develop both the commercial growth strategy, competition structure and player development strategy for the new league, as well as overseeing the self-assessment process for current Championship clubs and considering how additional teams might enter into the league. The latter point was around the concept of an open tender process to identify and select additional teams to participate in the league from the 2025/26 season onwards.

4.2 Council **APPROVED** an open tender process with the launch of an expression of interest on Monday 30th September.

5. County Championship Regulations

5.1 Following the conclusion of last season's County Championships, the County Championship Management Group ("CCMG") had proposed and overseen some minor changes to the regulations in response to feedback from the Game.

5.2 Council **APPROVED** the proposed County Championship Regulations for Season 2024/25 with any final drafting delegated to the Governance Standing Committee.

6. RWC25 Update and Legacy Work

6.1 Steve Grainger (Executive Director of Rugby Development) noted that there were 329 days until the start of the RWC25. Tickets for the opening match and final went on sale on September 24th with pool matches and knockout stages following in late October once the pool draw, and match schedule were completed.

The RWC25 Impact programme was managed directly by the RFU with government funding flowing, via Sport England. The programme was built around 5 strands of work namely Facilities, Coaching & Officiating, Playing & Volunteering, Community & Fan engagement and International. In addition to the formal (and government funded) elements of Impact other opportunities would arise to engage with. Engagement activities were taking place on ticketing, volunteering and tournament activation. A project around pioneers was also in place to inspire the future, create a database of pioneers and celebrate existing pioneers.

7. Rugby Return On Investment

7.1 Council was updated on a project to measure the social return of community rugby, including this being benchmarked against other sports.

8. Community Game of the Future

8.1 Steve Grainger shared the updated proposal for the number and geography of Regional Bodies along with further detail on Regional Body management and structure. An update was provided on the Regional Body revenue generation and cost modelling. The system was expected to be operational from July 2025.

8.2 There was a detailed discussion on proposed boundaries between the regions, how these would work with one another, and how chairs of these bodies will be appointed.

8.3 Council **ENDORSED** the number and geography of Regional Bodies and the Regional Body management and structure. There is still some final work to do in order to finalise the detail of all of the boundaries.

9. Governance and Representation Review Update

9.1 Paula Carter (Council Member of Surrey) noted that the Governance and Representation Review (GRR) Group was at the end of the information gathering stage and was moving to collating its findings and then to proposing possible models for discussion. This followed a meeting of the GRR Governance Sub-group on 19 September. An update was provided on the process undertaken thus far and some very high-level findings from the consultation phase. The outline design principles, which would be further refined by the GRR Group and on which Council input was sought was also shared and discussed. Council discussed the importance of a democratic voice in decision-making.

10. Safeguarding Training

10.1 Council was due to receive annual safeguarding training, but the presented has been taken ill and this was postponed to the next meeting

11. RFU Annual Report 2024 – President's Assurance Statement

11.1 Council reviewed that the proposed assurance statement from Rob Briers (Immediate Past President) for the forthcoming annual report was a fair reflection of the activity undertaken by Council in 2023/24 to fulfil its responsibility, including of oversight and monitoring of the Board of Directors on behalf of the membership.

12. 2024/25 Delivery Plan and Strategy Targets

12.1 Council was presented with an update on this year's delivery plan and strategy targets. Council was also updated on the evolution of the Strategic Plan plus Council Members' involvement.

13. Year End Finance Report

13.1 Council was presented with the Year End Finance Report for information.

14. Business Planning

14.1 Council was presented with an update on this year's business planning.

15. Reports

15.1 Council received reports from the following groups and the opportunity to question their authors: Community Game Board, Men's Professional Rugby Board, Every Rose Update (including WPAG Report), Council Nominations Committee, Governance Standing Committee and Head Injury Prevention and Management Subcommittee.

16. Any Other Business

16.1 Rob Udwin provided an update on a piece of work to refresh the Core Values, with particular emphasis on making these relevant to young people.