



Kent County Rugby Football Union

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Main County Sponsor

REPORT ON ROGER CLARKE'S FIRST YEAR AS THE KENT REPRESENTATIVE TO THE RFU COUNCIL.

1. GENERAL.

I have just completed my first year on the RFU Council since Kent clubs voted for me to succeed Mike Cordell who has moved to Gibraltar for business reasons. I felt it would be helpful if I provided a summary of the year and what I have done to help and consult with our counties clubs and also what I have achieved with the RFU. I am very keen to get responses to this report and am very happy to visit club Executive/ Board meetings or games on a Saturday during the season to discuss any of the content of this note or any other matter which relates to the County and or the RFU.

2. KEY RFU ISSUES DURING THE YEAR.

Reduction in spending within the Community game by the RFU.

This was not a good way to start as the County lost £20k RFU funding, major facilities grants were suspended for clubs and travel allowances were cut. Clubs in the higher leagues also lost RFU contributions for Referee appointments and second and third officials. We have worked hard to offset these losses at County level through prudent use of reserves and my colleagues on the Council and I am campaigning hard for facilities grants in particular and any areas effected to be restored within two years. Community game spending by the RFU remains at around £30m for the last year but in comparison with current spends on the Professional game, some rebalancing on an upward trend for the Community should take place as soon as finances allow. We do need to be mindful though that the England team performing at Twickenham and TV rights plus other Commercial income around the International game provides around 82% of total annual RFU income.

Kent has consulted widely this year to get the county clubs views on priority areas to include in its RFU Local funding spend (Just over £90k for the 2019/20 season)) and it's discretionary spend from annual income and County reserves. As a result following meetings held with club officials and players at Faversham, Maidstone, Canterbury and Westcombe Park (supported by our major sponsor Shepherd Neame) you told us with great certainty that the recruitment and retention of adult XV a side men's players was paramount and as a result we have tried to prioritise this in terms of our activity and budgets for 2019 /20. A more detailed note on this will be sent out to you all at the beginning of October.

Finally, I'm acutely aware that the administrative burden placed on Club volunteers as we approached the start of the season has caused major concern at several clubs. Regulation and rule changes in some cases cannot be deferred as they are passed down through World Rugby to the RFU and on to the clubs. However, I and others acknowledge that the flow of change-particularly where the RFU have discretion could be managed better with longer transition/introduction periods and with a more pragmatic approach in some cases to what these initiatives achieve at a Community level. I will be working hard to ensure as the RFU reviews its strategy under new CEO Bill Sweeney that the workload for Club volunteers is managed more effectively and that one Senior individual (either staff or Volunteer) takes an overview of what is being passed down particularly in the 6-8 weeks just prior to the start of a season.

3. WHERE HAVE I BEEN AND WHO HAVE I SPOKEN TO IN THE COUNTY DURING 2018/19.

I have visited the following clubs either for meetings or to attend matches: Blackheath, Elthamians, Bromley, Sidcup, Tunbridge Wells, Maidstone, Canterbury, Westcombe Park, Cranbrook, HSBC, Old

Colfeians, Medway, Sheppey, and Tonbridge Juddians. I have followed the Senior County XV in the Bill Beaumont Cup Division 1 to Clifton against Gloucestershire and to Havant against Hampshire.

Finally, I have attended 6 County executive meetings, 3 RFU Regional Development Officer meetings, the County Leadership Academy, the County AGM at Sheppey, 4 consultation evenings with County Clubs, The Mitsubishi Volunteer Awards and the county Annual Awards Dinner at Ashford.

As mentioned in the General introduction to this note I am very happy to visit clubs across the County and particularly would like to talk to Executives or visit matches in the East of the County this season. Let me know by contacting me on the e-mail addresses below if you would like a visit.

4. WHAT HAVE I DONE AT THE RFU?

During my first year, I have been appointed as a Member of the CB and Club Development sub-committee. I'm clear that this group needs to prepare focussed guidance to help both clubs and counties operate to the best possible standards and effectiveness. This is particularly important where recruitment and retention of players and volunteers are concerned and in developing the facilities and the welcome you provide to both players, administrators, and supporters.

At the start of this season, I have been appointed to the Powers of the Council WG which has the task of coming up with proposals to the Council on how it holds the Board of the RFU to account during the year. Due to an accident involving the Chairman I have stood in as interim Chairman of this group and presented the interim progress report at the September Council meeting.

I have also been appointed to the RFU Age Grade Governance Committee which has the task of looking at the way the Schools and Youth areas of Rugby are regulated. I have been consulting with David Clent and particularly Debbie Park our Kent Youth Chair in relation to the way the RFU has sought to introduce a range of changes within a short time period eg 17-year-olds playing up to Senior Men's Rugby, the half-game rule and re-registering of Youth players and will be sharing these points with the sub-committee when it has its first meeting of the season on the 10th October.

I will continue to raise matters of concern from a Kent point of view or good ideas from you that should be adopted by the game at the RFU Council.

In the meantime, good luck to all of our 70 clubs in membership for the 2019/20 season, good luck to England in Japan and I look forward to meeting you or hearing from you as the season progresses.



Roger Clarke. RFU Council Member for Kent.
Chairman of the Executive Committee KCRFU.

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