

## **RFU Liaison / RFU Councillor's Report 2021-2022 (Roger Clarke)**

During 2021-22, Roger Clarke served the first of a new 3-year term as the RFU Council Member for Kent. It was the first opportunity for the Council to meet physically following a virtual meeting in September, with 4 of the meetings then being held as hybrids or full physical Council Meetings. Many of the RFU Committees continued to meet virtually, due to time or for financial reasons, to keep meeting costs low in a difficult year.

Roger served on the RFU's Community Game Board as Chair of its Club and CB Development Committee, as a Trustee of the Rugby Football Foundation (an RFU charity), and on the RFU Age Grade Governance Sub-Committee. He also sat on two Task and Finish Groups: the Club of the Future Commission; and the Volunteer Workload Group. Both Sub-Committees are still working to produce recommendations for 2022-23.

As part of Roger's role as County Executive Chair and RFU Councillor, he visited a number of Kent clubs; so, too, did KCRFU President, Doug Hursey and other members of the Executive Committee, who together, visited 31 clubs throughout the season. Invitations to visit clubs are already coming in for 2022-23; if you would like to have a discussion on any topic, invite us to a committee meeting or to a game. Please contact Tracy Pettingale ([office@kent-rugby.org](mailto:office@kent-rugby.org)) and arrangements will be made to fit into your and our diary.

Key RFU Activities during 2022-23 – Club Development: Key areas of RFU activity were reduced to an achievable level and only progressed if they fitted RFU strategy and were allocated full time staff to help to progress them. In the Community Game the more important Developmental issues included:

- Further development of the Club Support Centre on the England Rugby website with efforts to encourage clubs to place key questions on the site which would be turned around in a few hours unless they were really complicated. Funding has been approved for further technical development and clubs are encouraged to use this site for advice as much as possible with a Communications programme to drive that message.
- Developing future leaders and volunteers at clubs, CBs and nationally remains a key RFU objective for 2022-23, with finance and resource already allocated for this purpose. This is in direct response to the clear link having been established coming out of lockdown that the 'health' of clubs on and off the pitch is clearly linked to the number and quality of volunteers available. It is also recognised that more work needs to be done to recruit new volunteers from those club members who are approaching the end of their playing careers, not least because the motivation to volunteer appears to be lower and/or due to greater the time constraints.

To overcome this, clubs and CBs will need to 'work smarter', for example by identifying specific and time-limited tasks or projects, which are more likely to find the volunteers of the future. The RFU ran the Leadership in Union course during the year; Ben Ashby, the County's Treasurer, will soon join Nigel Fray and Dan Phimister as graduates from the year-long course. In addition, the RFU ran the national Leadership Academy Network, and Kent ran its Leadership Academy, but with fewer participants than in previous years. Plans are advancing for next year. Anyone from Kent clubs wishing to put themselves forward for any of these initiatives should please contact Tracy Pettingale ([OFFICE@KENT-RUGBY.ORG](mailto:OFFICE@KENT-RUGBY.ORG)).

- Ensuring that clubs reflect the make-up of their local Communities and form lasting relationships with schools, local authorities, chambers of trade/commerce, charities and local businesses continues to be a key objective. The RFU makes available to clubs advice on how to build business plans and form networks with local business, how to handle VAT, and how to control energy costs (all of which is available on the England Rugby website).