

Annex A

Kent County Rugby Football Union Limited

Report of the proceedings of the Annual General Meeting held at Gillingham Anchorians RFC on 19th July 2023

The Honorary Secretary of the Kent County RFU, Nigel Fray, opened the meeting and welcomed those 10 members present, including County Officers, Life Vice-Presidents, members of the KCRFU's committees, and representatives of clubs.

The following Clubs were represented at the meeting:

Askeans	Canterbury	
Aylesford/KCRFU	Gillingham Anchorians/KCRFU	
Bexley/KCRFU	Maidstone	
Charlton Park / KCRFU	Vigo / KSRFUR	
Blackheath		

Also present was Mark Finnis, (RFU Club Developer).

The Hon. Secretary noted that apologies for absence had been received from 17 members. He noted, too, that the number present was not quorate. The Rules (section 7.4) of the KCRFU state that, for General (including Annual General) Meetings the quorum shall be 20 members. Even with the further five members for which Steve Homewood (Askeans), the KCRFU's Membership Secretary, represented their proxy votes, the number present still fell short of a quorum.

With the agreement of those present, the meeting continued, not least because there was no guarantee that suspending the meeting and convening it at a later date would ensure a greater attendance.

In Memorium

He read a list of people associated with Kent County RFU and its member clubs who had passed away during the past year:

- a. Mike Newsom (Blackheath FC and Past President, KCRFU)
- b. Mark Humphrys (Gillingham Anchorians RFC and former teacher at The Howard School, Rainham and Sir Joseph Williamson's Mathematical School, Rochester)
- c. Neil Armstrong (Thanet Wanderers, E Kent Representative to General Committee and Chair of Selectors, Kent Senior XV)
- d. Clive Putner (Beccehamian RFC and Local Metropolitan Competitions Secretary)

A minute's silence was held in their memory.

Minutes of the last AGM held on 20th Sept 2022

The minutes of the meeting held on the 20th September 2022 were confirmed as a true record, with no matters arising. The minutes were adopted by consensus and without comment. (*Proposer – Steve Homewood (Askeans RFC) / Seconded – Kevin Cope (Bexley RFC)*)

Minutes of the last AFGM held on 1st February 2023

The minutes of the meeting held on the 1st February 2023 were confirmed as a true record, with no matters arising. The minutes were adopted by consensus and without comment. (*Proposer – Kevin Cope (Bexley RFC) / Seconded – Steve Homewood (Askeans RFC)*)

Kent County RFU Annual Report 2022-23

The Hon. Secretary highlighted some of the key points from the 2022-23 Annual Report, illustrating the extensive range of activities that the Executive and its Committees, all of whom (as with our clubs' officials) are volunteers, have carried out to support rugby in Kent:

- The fantastic performance of our Representative teams, led by Taff Gwilliam and his staff, especially the Senior Men's XV who are now County Champions – the first time Kent has won this since 1927.
- The work of our Club, Game Development, Competition, Youth, Minis, and W&Gs Committees, the latter of which under Graham Withers, now has a robust and committed Committee structure in place.
- Our work to sustain clubs in difficulty (sadly, not always successful), including through the incentive scheme with Shepherd Neame to ensure that matches are completed. Also, Rugby United.
- Working to identify clubs' key priorities, especially recruitment & retention and coaching development, where we will be continuing in 2023-24 to target funding and resource to deliver this.
- Evolution of the League structure, to try to ensure that clubs at every level have meaningful fixtures that motivate players.
- Finally, and on a more serious note, the Executive Committee's continuing concerns regarding discipline. This must improve (especially MOA). He expressed his thanks, on behalf of the executive to Huw Gronow, Simon Corcoran and Andy Gent for the enormous amount of work they and the Panel members do to ensure that the CB fulfils its obligations that are delegated to it by the RFU. It is an incredibly difficult and time-consuming role. He also paid attribute too Tracy Pettingale, who, as well as fulfilling her role managing the CB and Referees' Society, this past season had also carried out the role of Discipline Secretary. He noted that the CB has now appointed a Discipline Secretary, James Connerton, who is already in post and is engaged in a handover with Tracy.

Address of Kent County RFU President, Doug Hursey

Doug Hursey said that, during his second year as Kent President, he had visited 18 clubs. Together with Roger Clarke and Nigel Fray, the Executive Committee had sought to visit as many clubs as possible to listen to each club's perspective on what has been a season of great flux. The tackle height edict from the RFU proved divisive at all levels, but with a measured response in listening to all the feedback from clubs and then making our voice heard at the RFU Council, he believed that the Game has reached a sensible resolution for the change.

The County representative teams' performances, for both men and women, was of the highest order. The Ladies' team produced performances that reflected the organisation and structure put in place by Taff Gwilliam last year. After finishing second to Hampshire this year, he looked forward to them gaining promotion back to the top level of next season.

The Men's Senior and U20 teams performed at the highest level and but for what the county saw as an unwarranted points deduction, the U20s would have made the County Final; along with the Men's team, neither side lost a game in the County Championship season.

The Senior Men' Final at Twickenham was a great occasion and one that, for much of the first half, Lancashire dominated, utilising their vast experience in the competition (having won the County Championship on no less than 25 occasions). However, Kent showed great spirit, determination, and tactical nous to change their game plan, deservedly winning the County Championship for the first time in almost 100 years. It was a great honour to represent the County in the royal box, made even more enjoyable by the nature of the victory and the clear disappointment of Bill Beaumont, who sat next to me, as his beloved Lancashire saw the game slip away from them. He noted, too, that the County Development Squad is currently on tour in South Africa, having won the first two (of three) of its matches. The final game was being played that evening.

The arrival of the new league structure, with lower XVs joining, seemed divisive when it was first proposed at this time last year. However, the leagues quickly settled into competitive matches, with none of the anticipated walkover scores; and from his conversations with clubs, they seemed happy with the way the system had worked. This will be expanded next year with more lower teams entering the leagues and Kent now having 5 divisions.

He congratulated all the County's teams that won promotion (Blackheath, Westcombe Park, Old Alleynians, Dover, Canterbury 2nd XV, Medway 2nd XV, Dartford Valley, Tonbridge Juddians 2nd XV, and Sittingbourne) and hoped that all the CB's member clubs flourish wishing them all good luck for the new season.

Adoption of KCRFU Annual Report for 2022-23

The Annual Report was adopted by consensus and without comment. (*Proposer – Sylvia Taylor (Aylesford RFC) / Seconded – Giles Hilton, Canterbury RFC*)

Questions to The Executive Committee

Giles Hilton (Canterbury RFC) welcomed the RFU's decision to open the English Clubs Championship leagues below Level 7 to senior clubs' lower XVs. This had been a far-sighted and welcome approach, given the comments he has received and the envy that has been expressed by clubs outside of Kent that did not vote for the change. **Andy Pritchard** (Gillingham Anchorians RFC) noted that his club had, perhaps, been one of the proposal's strongest nay-sayers, but was happy to concede that introducing the lower XVs into the ECC has, albeit on the evidence of one season only, been a success.

The **Hon. Secretary** replied, noting that although Kent approved the change, due to the number of votes against not meeting the RFU's voting criteria, he felt that the introduction into the leagues of the lower XVs had passed off reasonably smoothly. The CB had taken a great deal of care to ensure that lower XVs were placed in the most appropriate leagues and by-and-large, the CB had got this right, with few if any extremely uncompetitive matches having taken place and, thankfully, with no player safety / welfare issues having arisen (which many lower-level clubs had feared). Any slight misallocation seems to have 'naturally' ironed out themselves or would likely do so over the next season or two.

Rory O'Sullivan (Blackheath FC) reported that Blackheath FC has been successful in its application to the Community Ownership Fund for a grant to assist in the purchase of the freehold of the club's ground at Well Hall. This represents a tremendous vote of support for Blackheath's ambition to own its own ground for the first time in its history.

Reinstatement of Financial General Meeting (FGM) into the Annual General Meeting

The **Hon. Secretary** explained that the annual FGMs have for recent years been held separately to the AGM. For governance purposes and to ensure better attendance and thus a greater opportunity for questions from members to be put to the Executive, it would be desirable and administratively tidier (incl. from a governance perspective) to include the annual financial report and publication of the KCRFU's annual accounts within the AGM.

The KCRFU's financial year is end-June, and the Executive is comfortable that the audited accounts can be produced in time for the financial reports to be included in the AGM. Should there be any delay, then the KCRFU's Rules allow for its AGM to take place as late as September, as was the case during Covid.

The proposal was carried by consensus. (*Proposer – KCRFU Executive Committee / Seconded – Giles Hilton (Canterbury RFC)*)

Honours

The **Hon. Secretary** recalled the Honours Review, the recommendations from which were adopted at the 2022 AGM. He explained that, should any individual member and/or member club wish to propose anyone for an award, nominations should be submitted to him, with a citation, explaining and evidencing why that person should be honoured, noting their contribution both to the County and their Club. This

will be submitted to the Executive Committee for consideration. Subject to the published criteria being met, the nomination will be submitted to the membership for approval at the 2024 AGM.

For 2022-23, the Executive Committee wished to propose that **Colin Smart** (Tunbridge Wells RFC, Newport RFC and 17 caps for England) be made a Life Vice-President of the Kent County RFU. The proposal was carried by consensus. (*Proposer – KCRFU Executive Committee / Seconded – Giles Hillton (Canterbury RFC)*).

As regards the President's Award, **Doug Hursey** announced that this would be presented to **Ian Lunn** (Askeans RFC). Ian has been "the rock" upon which the club's survival for the past over 20 years has been founded. Quite simply, without Ian, there would no longer be an Askeans RFC. Ian's award was accepted on his behalf by Steve Homewood; Ian could not attend the AGM, because he was at the club assisting with training.

Election of officers of the County

President – Doug Hursey (*Proposer – Executive Committee; Seconded – Giles Hillton (Canterbury RFC)*). Elected by consensus.

Hon. Secretary – Nigel Fray. (*Proposer – Kevin Cope (Bexley RFC); Seconded – Sylvia Taylor (Aylesford RFC)*). Elected by consensus.

Hon. Treasurer – Ben (*Proposer – Kevin Cope (Bexley RFC); Seconded – Sylvia Taylor (Aylesford RFC)*). Elected by consensus.

Election of Executive Committee for season 2023-24

Roger Clarke, Doug Hursey, Ben Ashby, Nigel Fray Kevin Cope, Jarrod Lawrence. (*Proposer – Steve Homewood (Askeans RC), Seconded – David Oliver (Vigo RFC)*). Elected by consensus.

The Hon. Secretary noted that the Chair of the Executive Committee is elected by its members at the beginning of each season.

Appointment of Auditors

The **Hon. Secretary** noted that Crane & Partners were elected as the CB's auditors for 2022-23. However, the Executive Committee has decided that we move to take advantage of the small company exemption and use existing accountants. This will save the County £2,000 per year.

This was noted without comment.

AOB

The **Hon. Secretary** reminded those present that clubs' views are invited by 31 July 2023 on the result of the RFU Club Key Priorities 2023-24 survey, details of which have been circulated, including on the CB's website.

Mark Finnis (RFU) noted that the RFU, to support players, coaches, referees, volunteers and CBs with tackle height changes ahead of the 2023/24 season, will be holding a series of Community Games outreach events (virtual and face-to-face) during July and August.

There being no other business, the meeting finished at 8.16pm.