

REPORT TO HAMPSHIRE CLUBS

From Terry Burwell,

Hampshire Representative on RFU Council

February 28th 2019

Welcome to the 2nd Edition of my 'Blog' or Newsletter which also includes the notes taken from my colleagues in Middlesex of the RFU Council Meeting in early February. This will contain some information of direct importance to our clubs but is provided in full to enable you to see the extent of the work that is carried out in RFU Council and Committees.

Over the winter months I have had the opportunity of visiting many of our Clubs, Colleges and Schools and hope to have visited, or watched play all of our Clubs before the end of the season, I have deliberately, focussed on informal match day meetings, taking the opportunity to talk to members of all sections and listen to the concerns and challenges that face the Community game.

During my time on RFU Council, I have attended a number of Committee and Sub-Committee meetings at Twickenham, working to ensure that issues of significance to us in Hampshire are properly understood and discussed. This particularly relates to Offshore Travel, Competitions Support, Half Game Rule and Under 18 players playing in the Adult game. At the present time the focus at the RFU is on the 'reset' of the budget following the earlier redundancy programme in 2018. This involves looking at all the areas of discretionary spend and determining how any cuts can be made without seriously impacting the development and sustainability of the game and our Clubs. I am lobbying hard to ensure the travel support we receive for IOW Travel and CI support is retained in the budget but there are no guarantees that this funding will not be reduced. With regard to IOW Travel, HRFU have made special funds available to help with non-1stXV matches and it is hoped that we can continue to support this programme. Bernie Rhodes has been able to help by negotiating a discount package for travel to IOW so please take advantage of that offer.

Overall, it is the HRFU Budget that is likely to come under pressure and will impact on Rugby in the County and that is why your responses to the Questionnaire that Julie and Bernie put together are so important in ensuring the funds we have are targeted effectively. Support to the Nat West Rugby Force and Pitch/Facilities programme remains high on our list of priorities, as does the continued improvement in standards of coaching and officiating. Mark Castle and the Club Development team are working on the Local Funding Plan that will enable our RDO team, in partnership with HRFU, to really make a difference in promoting our Game.

Our work on Retention and Recruitment is continuing but I have to report that the RFU Council did determine that the Half Game Rule would be mandatory next season, although I spoke against the regulation and the challenges of compliance and sanction. It has been agreed though that player welfare issues will be critical in determining if a player should play a full half game and hopefully that will mean our coaches can apply common sense and best practice. There will be a need to look at Competitions Regulations in the Youth Game. On a more positive note, we won the argument, for now, on whether under 18-year olds can play Adult Rugby but we can expect a more rigorous approval process to sanction players playing up into the Adult Game.

With only a few weeks of the season remaining for our clubs, I wish everyone success in your final crucial matches and hope the outcome is more teams continuing to play at the highest possible League level. This has been a challenging season for many Clubs, with changes to the league programme and some cancellations, withdrawals and mismatches along the way. Richard Isaacs and his committee continue to work very hard to deliver a quality competitions structure and they deserve our support. The good news is there has been more matches played in the County this season but this has also seen more cancellations at lower level. The Women's and Girls game continues to grow with more players involved and more playing opportunities being provided and our Clubs continue to enjoy success at the highest level, notably Trojans, Portsmouth and Ellingham and Ringwood.

There is another Council meeting on April 12th and the HRFU Clubs meeting will be scheduled before the end of the season. For those of you who have and can afford tickets to the Italy match this weekend, please take the opportunity to come and say hello in Cardinal Vaughan Car Park, pre-match for a beer or glass of wine and there may be some picnic left if you don't leave it too late. In the meantime, thank you to all the volunteers that support the Community game, your support is invaluable.

<https://middlesexrugby.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/MCRFU-RFU-Notes-8th-February-2019.pdf>