

To Hampshire Clubs Chair

You will have received a letter from the RFU detailing the extent of budget cuts for the season 2019/20 and I thought it appropriate as your RFU Council representative to provide you with more detail as to how these decisions have been made and the impact the budget changes will have on your Club's Rugby activity.

The RFU Committee responsible for the Community Game (CGB) has been looking at options over the past 9 months commencing with the reduction in professional staff and now the reduction in programme spends and Club/CB support. Faced with a need to reduce the overall Community Rugby budget to £30m, all aspects of the RFU support programme were examined and the impact of any specific cuts carefully analysed.

I spoke at RFU Council in February, asking specifically that we ensured we understood this impact on the majority of our Clubs and minimised accordingly. I raised this again at RFU Council last week and asked that we make it clear to our Clubs that 85% of grassroots Community rugby clubs would see minimal change to their RFU support. The letter from the RFU seeks to reaffirm that but I wanted to provide Hampshire Clubs with more detail.

The RFU will still fund the following that directly supports our Clubs:-

- All player insurance
- Off shore support travel for IOW and Channel Islands, although some RFU reduction is expected and HRFU will look to support the IOW programme as we do at present.
- Nat West Rugby Force alongside the HRFU additional support
- HRFU Local Funding at 18/19 levels to assist Clubs with issues highlighted in the recent Clubs questionnaire.
- 2 RDOs and 2 CRCs working on programmes that specifically support the development of Clubs/Schools and Universities
- Direct funds from the International ticket fund that all clubs receive equally.
- Coach and Match Official development funding and delivery via CRCs and external workforce

HRFU will see its support funding for Senior/Women's/U20 teams cut by 40% but is working actively on a sponsor programme to make up the potential shortfall. All other Development programmes are unaffected by this review but there is a further review of U15/U16 pathways about to be undertaken with a meeting scheduled for 30th April at Trojans RFC. HRFU has been undertaking a review of its budgets over the past 6 months with the intention of focussing our support in the Game in the County where it will make the biggest difference.

HRR has agreed to freeze the charges it levies for match officials to clubs for a further 2 years, whilst expanding the number of matches at Youth and Women's it appoints to.

The biggest impact is in the Facilities support, with the suspension of the Artificial Grass Pitch planned at Trojans RFC, discussions on which are still being progressed. This is very challenging to the Club and its Officials who have worked tirelessly with a number of partners and stakeholders to obtain agreement but it is hoped that this is a temporary stall in this project.

Furthermore, there is a suspension of the large grants programme for 12 months and a reduction in small grants available to Clubs. Whilst this is regrettable, it actually means a retiming of Clubs facility improvements which hopefully can be rescheduled for the earliest possible date. As previously stated the outstanding Nat West Rugby Force programme remains delivering real value to Clubs, not just in Club and Ground makeover but just as critically the engagement of its excellent volunteer force. In addition, Jason Bowers, who supports our Club's funding and facilities programme is looking at external opportunities to help deliver Club's identified facility needs.

I and my colleagues on HRFU are committed to ensuring our Clubs have support and resource, financial and physical, to deliver a vibrant and sustainable club and schools game with more people playing more rugby more often. We appreciate that this season has again been challenging for many of our Clubs and volunteers, and we want to ensure that you fully understand that we will continue to work with you to provide the support and resource you need. Critical to that support is the partnership we have with our excellent RDOs and CRCs, who are actively engaged with both the planning and delivery of our programmes with the HRFU sub-committees.

Thank you for your continued hard work and support to your Club and Rugby in Hampshire. I hope to see you at the Clubs meeting on 8th May but if not, look forward to visiting your Club during the Summer or early next season.

Terry Burwell
RFU Council Member, Hampshire