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**MINUTE OF QUARTERLY MEETING OF THE SCOTTISH RUGBY COUNCIL
HELD BY MICROSOFT TEAMS
AT 5.00PM ON MONDAY 7 FEBRUARY 2022**

Present:

Colin Rigby	(CR)	Vice-President
Alistair Forsyth	(AB)	Borders Representative
Bobby Frazer	(BF)	National 3 Representative
Bob Richmond	(BR)	North Regional Representative
Eric Hugh	(EH)	National 2 Representative
Gerry Tosh	(GTo)	National 1 Representative
Gordon Thomson	(GT)	Premiership Representative
Hazel Swankie	(HS)	Midlands Representative
Ian Rankin	(IR)	Co-opted Representative (URC)
Jim O'Neil	(JON)	Glasgow South Regional Representative
John Halliday	(JH)	Co-opted Representative (Rugby Europe)
Kenneth Knott	(KK)	Referees Representative
Murdo Gillanders	(MG)	Edinburgh Regional Representative
Rosy Hume	(RHu)	Women's Representative
Willie Gardner	(WG)	Glasgow North Regional Representative

In Attendance:

[NAME REDACTED]	(XX)	Senior Solicitor & Council Secretary
John Jeffrey	(JJ)	Chairman of the Board
[NAME REDACTED]	(XX)	Head of Business Services, Rugby
Gavin Scott	(GS)	Development Director of Rugby Development
Mark Dodson	(MD)	Chief Executive Officer
[NAME REDACTED]	(XX)	Head of Training and Education
Julian Momen	(JM)	Chief Commercial Officer
Robert Howat	(RHt)	General Counsel & Company Secretary

Apologies:

Ian Barr	(IB)	President
Gavin Hastings	(GH)	Co-opted Representative (British and Irish Lions)

1. Introduction

ACTION

The Vice-President welcomed Council Members and invited guests to the Meeting. He noted a quorum was present and opened the Meeting at 5pm.

It was noted the President was having connection issues but would join the Meeting as soon as possible.

2. Quarterly Review of Board Matters

2.1 CEO and Chairman Update

The Vice-President welcomed the members of the Executive to the Meeting.

The CEO provided the Council with an update. The following points were noted:

- The CEO referred to the Men’s National Team’s recent victory in the Calcutta Cup and noted that it had demonstrated the ability of rugby to affect the mood of the nation. He hoped the team would go on to have further success during the tournament.

The CEO highlighted that a number of high-profile business leaders had attended the Calcutta Cup in a business capacity which demonstrated the interest in Scottish Rugby at the highest level of industry.

- He noted that Edinburgh Rugby and Glasgow Warriors were sitting in the top two places of the URC league table respectively, for the first time. He highlighted that the Head Coaches of each team were also working to complement the work of the National Team.
- The Women’s National Team had an upcoming game which was potentially history making; if they won they would qualify for the final stages of the Women’s Rugby World Cup for the first time.
- In relation to the Company’s trading and cash positions, it was noted that Scottish Rugby was in a strong position and was continuing to move forward.
- It was acknowledged that player numbers in the grassroots game was a concern for everyone. The CEO noted the other home unions were also facing similar issues.

He advised that in order to attract more people to the game, Scottish Rugby had to stay relevant and use different methods to appeal to new sections of society, particularly young people.

He highlighted that the Clubs that were using social media well were largely seeing success in marketing themselves and the game. He referred to the recent deal the 6 Nations had done with TikTok and noted that this reflected how engagement with supporters and potential supporters was changing.

He encouraged the Council Members to communicate the importance of this to their Clubs. There was a need for all Clubs to embrace it in order to move things forward and stay relevant. He emphasised that the Rugby Development Department could assist Clubs and Council Members with this if and when required.

The CEO invited questions, with the following points noted:

- The Edinburgh Representative agreed that social media was essential in attracting the younger generation to the game but noted that to do it successfully needed someone well versed in social media to drive it forward within a Club. He suggested that the Rugby Development Department could run seminars for people who may be interested in this to improve knowledge and skills in this area.

The CEO agreed that it was vital that the individual in charge of the Club’s social media was willing and talented. He highlighted that Clubs should consider making this a paid role to attract people with the right skillset. It was

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suggested that digital capabilities could be built into the minimum operating standards for Clubs.

The Director of Rugby Development noted that a pilot programme was being run in the North Region where media students were working with the Clubs and positive results had already been seen. He highlighted that a combination of funding and education was required.

There were no further questions for the CEO or Board Chair. They were thanked for their attendance and left the Meeting at 5.30pm

2.2 *Regulatory and Company Secretary Report*

The General Counsel referred to his Report which was taken as read. The following points were highlighted:

- Insurance - a table had been included in the Report which outlined the number of teams being insured by Scottish Rugby and a breakdown of the nature of those teams. The figures demonstrated a continued growth in the Women and Girls game, an uplift in the number of insured teams at age grade level (U18, Midi and Mini) and a switch from Golden Oldies into Walking Rugby. The number of teams insured overall had grown but with a reduction in the number of adult male teams.
- At the December 2021 Board meeting delegated authority had been provided to a sub-committee of the Board to approve updates to Scottish Rugby's Disciplinary and Anti-Doping Rules, the update being required to bring Scottish Rugby's domestic rules into line with the revised version of World Rugby Regulation 17 approved in November 2021 and taking effect on 1 January 2022.

The CEO, Vice-President and Midlands Representative had agreed to participate on the Sub-Committee.

As part of the consultation process two drafts of the Disciplinary Rules were made available for open comment via the Scottish Rugby website, with the consultation publicised in the Club Communication ezine.

The updated Disciplinary Rules were approved by the Sub-Committee on 27 December 2021 and came into effect on 1 January 2022. References to the updated rules had been included in Club Comms.

- It was noted a question had been received by the Edinburgh Representative from Haddington RFC regarding the publication of Board and Council Minutes and the reporting to the Council on the use of Government funding.

As a reminder, the Company Secretary outlined the process for approval of the Minutes for both Board and Council. The process followed was the same for each. The draft Board and Council Minutes were sent first to the Chairman / President for review and approval to circulate to the Board or Council members, as the case may be. The drafts provided to the Chairman and President also identified any section of the Minutes where redactions were considered necessary, for them to review.

The suggestions for redaction were made in line with the Redaction Policy, which was published on Scottish Rugby's website.

After the Chairman/ President had approved the full and redacted drafts for internal circulation, the full and redacted drafts were then sent to the Board or Council members for approval. Following approval the Minutes were then published, with any redactions identified and the reason for redaction stated.

No comments or objections had been raised to date by either the Council or the Board on the number or nature of redactions made. The extent of redaction varied, depending on the nature of the business covered at a particular meeting. The Company Secretary encouraged Council members to let him or the Council Secretary know if they had any queries about redactions.

The method of making redactions - deletion from electronic text and marking where the deletion had occurred, rather than blacklining - was discussed and explained. The Council confirmed they were satisfied with the process for redaction and approving Minutes for publication and their answer would be communicated directly to Haddington RFC.

The second part of Haddington's question in relation to the reporting of use of Scottish Government funding to the Council would be covered under Agenda item 4.3.

During questions the following points were noted:

- The Company Secretary confirmed that there was an ongoing disciplinary investigation into an alleged incident at a club match involving racist remarks to a player. The Council would be kept up to date as and when appropriate.

The Vice-President thanked the Company Secretary for his update.

2.3 *Finance Update*

The CFO referred to her Report which was taken as read. The key points were highlighted as follows:

- The business was in a positive financial position. Despite the impact of Covid-19, it was hoped costs would remain within budget.
- It was highlighted that 6 out of the last 7 full matches had seen sell out audiences.
- There was further opportunity for savings and growth throughout the business.
- It was noted that the new finance system, Netsuite, was now embedded and it was hoped this could be used to assist in identifying savings in the business. The CFO confirmed that the transition to the new system had gone well and would provide improved insight on the costs of the organisation.

- The CFO intended to amend the format of the financial reports to the Board and Council in future so as to be more focused on investment and provide a clearer and more straightforward picture of the overall financial position of the company. She asked Council Members to consider what information they would like the reports to contain and provide her with feedback.

During questions the following points were noted:

- The cost of energy had risen substantially in light of the current energy crisis. Specialist external advisers had been engaged to review the use of electricity and gas throughout the stadium.
- A detailed audit tender process had been carried out by the Audit & Risk Committee and following that new auditors had been appointed by the Board. It was confirmed that four firms had been invited to tender and the rationale for appointing the successful firm was explained.

The Vice-President thanked the CFO for her update and she left the Meeting at 6pm.

2.4 *Commercial Update*

The Vice-President welcomed the Chief Commercial Officer to his first Council Meeting and wished him all the best in his new role.

The CCO confirmed he had now completed five weeks at Scottish Rugby and noted that he looked forward to working with the Council going forward.

3. Council Matters for Quarterly Review

3.1 *Council Member Quarterly Reports*

The Vice-President referred to the circulated Council Member Quarterly Reports, which were taken as read. Council members were asked to verbally update on matters related to their individual reports.

The following points were noted:

- In response to a question, it was noted that if Clubs were experiencing issues with the movement of players between the Premiership and Super6, G McKelvey and S Gemmell were the first point of contact for the Clubs.
- The Rugby Europe Representative offered to provide the Council with a presentation on the work of Rugby Europe so people had a working knowledge of the work of the body. The Vice-President thanked the Rugby Europe Representative for his offer.
- The Midlands Representative noted that a question had been received from Grangemouth RFC regarding player numbers and the information update requested on SCRUMS.

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The Head of Rugby Development Business Operations noted that Rugby Development had received the same question from Grangemouth RFC. He explained that the player information on SCRUMS did not necessarily count how many times each player had played in any one season but provided the number of active players.

In relation to the information requested on the SCRUMS registration page, the form identified various regulations and policies that players were already subject to by playing in Scottish Rugby's competitions and by being members of the Clubs.

It was highlighted that in the modern game, Scottish Rugby was required by World Rugby and others to bring these matters (including anti-doping and anti-corruption) to the attention of the membership and those playing the game.

The risks associated with playing a contact sport such as rugby also required to be highlighted to players. The registration form sought to do that in a straightforward way and the statement included on the form did not (and could not) waive any right an individual may have to any future claims.

The registration page also signposted players to other information and resources, including important materials on player welfare, which should be read when filling in the form.

The request for updates on postcodes and the disability disclosure was required as they may directly influence funding available to Scottish Rugby, and in turn the Clubs, so was brought to the Clubs' attention.

- The Borders Representative referred to an Under 18s disciplinary matter and asked whether disciplinary action should be reduced for age grade players, as it was by the RFU. The Referees Representative confirmed that in his view it should be treated in the same way.
- The treatment of the male and female Scottish national referees by other unions and social media was raised by the Referees' Representative. He asked if steps were being taken to stop it. It was noted the Media team were actively reviewing and considering online abuse.

4. Rugby Development Update

4.1 Rugby Development Report

The Vice-President welcomed the representatives of the Rugby Development Department to the Meeting.

The Director of Rugby Development referred to his Report which was taken as read. The following key points were noted:

Reset – Welfare

- The application process for players to play at a higher age grade had reopened on 10 January 2022. The application criteria were amended to account for

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the unusual circumstances Covid had created. To qualify, players must have played a minimum of four matches at their actual age grade earlier in the season before they would be considered for moving up. There had been a steady, but manageable stream of applications since it had opened.

- In relation to serious injury reporting, the follow up with the Clubs had recommenced in January 2022. Ensuring serious injuries were reported correctly was one of the criteria of the Supporting Clubs Investment Programme. This was also important for the commencement of the insurance process for any such injuries.
- Reports of Covid cases in January 2022 were second only to September 2021 in terms of volume, and reflected the impact of the Omicron variant. January 2022 also saw the total number of reports hit 500 cases, since reporting started in August 2020. Clubs were now well versed in the reporting process, and Rugby Development would continue to work with them to ensure appropriate measures were taken every time a case, or cases, occurred.

Rebuild – Grow, progress, sustain

- There had been some changes to the format and appearance of SCRUMS, to ensure consistent branding across the Rugby Development department.

Some new steps had also been introduced to collect additional information from SCRUMS users, as discussed above.

- It was noted that the 65% fulfilment rate had now been achieved in all competitions therefore the season could be completed with promotion and relegation for the women's, men's and men's reserve league competitions.

4.2 Male Adult Season Structure Consultation

The Head of Training and Education provided the Council with an update on the ongoing male adult season structure consultation. The following points were noted:

- Over 2,200 responses had been received thus far. A breakdown of the areas from which the feedback had been received so far was provided to the Council. The deadline for responses was 18 February 2022.
- The dates and agenda for the upcoming consultation meetings were shared with the Council.
- The project timeline was outlined to the Council and it was confirmed that the aim would be for recommendations to be communicated to the Council in May 2022.

4.3 Reporting on Scottish Government Funding

The Head of Business Operations referred to the funding information that had been recirculated to the Council in the papers as a reminder of the previous reporting to the Council on the streams of funding to the Clubs.

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He then provided the Council with an overview of the Club funding streams to date, highlighting the following:

- The Club Hardship Fund (CHF) had focused on assisting the Clubs with the effects of Covid, early in the pandemic. This funding (£500,000) had come directly from Scottish Rugby's own resources. The first round of this funding was paid to Clubs in June 2020. £387,000 had been awarded to 82 Clubs.

The second round of CHF was paid to Clubs between August and June 2021. £47,379 had been awarded to 56 Clubs.

£65,612 had been carried forward to other funds.

- The Club Recovery Fund (CRF) of £500,000 came from Scottish Government funding. £556,484 had been awarded to 112 Clubs. The awards were forward funded and paid by Scottish Rugby to the Clubs between June and September 2021. It was noted that the Rugby Development Department were awaiting the relevant supporting receipts from Clubs for verification however thus far only a quarter of Clubs had returned them.
- The Kickstart Fund of £700,000 also came from Scottish Government funding and assisted Clubs with return to rugby events. £689,194 had been awarded to 115 Clubs and had been paid between July and November 2021.
- It was noted that the Club Recovery Fund had been oversubscribed but applications had been met from other funds to cover the additional awards made.
- Circa £300,000 was being applied for the ongoing marketing and support of the Return to Rugby campaign. The sum was intended to be used throughout the year, with targeted marketing during the 6 Nations. A full breakdown of the spend to date was provided to the Council.
- The amounts of £30,000 given to each of the regions was also broken down for the Council.
- The Head of Business Operations showed the Council the tracker which was being used to monitor all funding streams. The Rugby Development Department would continue to report to the Council at each Quarterly Meeting on the use of the funding streams.

During questions the following points were noted:

- In relation to the question received from Haddington RFC, the Council confirmed they were satisfied with the reporting they had received from the Rugby Development Department on the uses of Scottish Government funding.

It was asked how much of this information would be made available to the Clubs. The Rugby Development Department noted they were keen to share as much of this funding reporting with the Clubs as possible. It was intended that detailed end of year reports would be provided to the Clubs.

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The Company Secretary confirmed that at its Autumn 2021 meeting the Audit and Risk Committee had discussed the publication of more information on club funding and were equally keen to share more information with the Clubs. The Rugby Development Department noted they needed to consider the most appropriate format for this information to allow it to be easily communicated and understood.

- It was noted that the Rugby Development Department would continue to encourage the Clubs to submit the required receipts. Council members also noted they would assist in encouraging the Clubs to do so.

It was noted that strictly speaking, if the Clubs did not provide the necessary receipts to verify spending then under the terms of the awards made Scottish Rugby would be entitled to seek recovery of unvouched money. That was not Scottish Rugby's preferred option and the Rugby Development Department were hopeful the Clubs would submit the necessary information.

- The Women's Representative asked for a breakdown of the funds given by Scottish Rugby to the male and female teams in the leagues.

The Vice-President thanked the representatives of the Rugby Development Department for their update and they left the Meeting at 7.05pm

5. Diversity and Inclusion Update

No Diversity and Inclusion issues were raised.

6. Safeguarding Update

No safeguarding concerns were raised.

7. Scottish Exiles and Schools Representatives Update

The Vice-President noted that due to personnel changes there were currently vacancies on the Council for a Scottish Exiles and Schools Representatives.

The Vice-President suggested that if any Council Members knew of people interested in the vacancies to contact the Council Secretary who would outline the election process to them.

8. AOB

Under AOB the following points were raised:

- The travel arrangements for the away 6 Nations matches were discussed.

With all business concluded, the Vice-President closed the Meeting at 7.45pm.

Date of next meeting: 12 March 2022

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