

REPORT FROM GRAHAM THOMPSON, SUSSEX REPRESENTATIVE ON THE RFU COUNCIL

I am pleased to write this report on a Sunday afternoon feeling very up beat about Rugby! This morning Carole and I visited Midhurst where I had the great privilege of presenting the club with their, Mini and Youth, "Seal of Approval" plaque and certificate. I was impressed to see so many minis and youth present and really enjoying their rugby, supported by so many coaches and parents. Well done to this club where the Senior first XV is also an emerging force.

After all the doom and gloom of the last 10 or so months at the RFU and with the press calling it "meltdown", I truly believe that we turned the corner on Wednesday last week. There was an excellent press conference featuring our new acting chief executive, Stephen Brown, and the Director of Professional Rugby, Rob Andrew. Contrition was necessary in the light of recent events and this was genuinely expressed. The Council meeting on Friday was also a turning point. Much was discussed and much will happen in the weeks to come. The RFU is alive and the correct structure and administration failures will be corrected. The Community Game Board will continue to fight the corner of the junior clubs and support the work of all volunteers.

The Council meeting on Friday 2 December was chaired by the President, Willie Wildash. The President introduced the two newly appointed members to the board -Independent Non Executive Directors, Miles Templeman and Andrew Higginson. (From my first meeting with these two gentlemen I believe they are well chosen and will be of great value to the Union).

The "Slaughter and May" report was presented to us by one of its authors Nigel Broadman. The presentation was given very professionally and throughout the presentation many questions were asked. The report will shortly go out to the game at large for consultation. A sub committee will be in place early next week, under the Chairmanship of Miles Templeman. The sub committee will report to the board before Christmas suggesting how the consultation should work. The S&M report and recommendations are on the RFU website, comments would be much appreciated from clubs and individuals as soon as possible. The many recommendations have strengths and weaknesses. We must act as soon as possible. When reviewing the paper it will be right to consider that, in some respects, the report is slightly out of touch with the game. The poor and wrong recommendations will be rejected. However, the report does give us something to focus on and an opportunity to ensure a better future which we must not miss. In due course I suggest we have a special General Meeting of Clubs to discuss their views and those of the CB. (A copy of the presentation is also attached)

Steve Grainger, Rugby Development Director, gave an up-date on the priorities for the department which included information on the progress of appointment of the five heads of department. He set out the priorities as:

- Refocusing CRCs and RDOs as club based
- Club accreditation
- Long term development planning
- Review of age group rugby and adult competitions
- The status of touch and tag rugby along with a sevens review
- RWC its lead up to 2015 and its legacy

(we later heard that Simon Winman had been appointed Head of Club Development and Mark Saltmarsh as Head of Education). (A copy of the presentation is attached).

Our acting CEO gave a review of his first week in office and then gave an overview of our Financial results for the year ended 30 June 2011- record revenue, record profits. He also reported that we had received, only this week, the rates refund due which, including interest, was £500000 over budget. In view of the cyclical way of our finances, the results for 2011/12 and 2012/13 will not be good. Our funds are strong and 2015 should see our reserves continue to improve.

A review into the 2011 World Cup results and the generality of the team's performance in New Zealand was reported by, a very contrite, Rob Andrew. There were many questions and it was agreed that we must now look forward and ensure that, such off the field events as happened in NZ will never be repeated. The press leaks were horrendous and are still being investigated. Any revised policies will stress the importance of our five core values—TEAMWORK, RESPECT, ENJOYMENT, DISCIPLINE, and SPORTSMANSHIP

As to the appointment of temporary coach or the permanent coach, the PGB are in the process of considering applicants but no appointment is to be announced until after the appointment of a new Chief Executive which is due on or about the 14 December. On the matter of the appointment of a new CEO, the interviewing panel are into the second series of interviews and these continue next week. We were assured that the quality of applicants was extremely high.

A search is on for a new Chairman of Rugby World Cup 2015. The chief executive, Paul Vaughan reported that various personnel appointments have been made and, at present, there are negotiations taking place with various bodies to ensure that everything is progressing on time, including negotiations regarding Twickenham stadium upgrade etc. Peter Grace also reported that the matters regarding the stadium upgrade were moving forward in a timely fashion. World Cup dates will be finally confirmed after the next IRB meeting.

The meeting closed with Council feeling positive and pleased that “rugby” itself had been openly discussed at length.

I am sorry this is a long report. I shall be pleased to answer questions and supply further information if required. May I suggest that the S&M report is left “on the table” tomorrow evening for full discussion, as suggested, at a special meeting.

I am looking forward to Chairing the treasurers' conference on Friday next. This is always a robust conference, but we usually finish at the defined time. Gavin Ross will be attending in place of Richard Hopkins.

Graham P Thompson

4 December 2011