



Rugby Football Union
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Dear Club and Constituent Body representatives,

As many of you may know, the RFU is in the process of reviewing its governance structure, in order to increase transparency, accountability and independence. I wanted to write to explain how this is being done, what is proposed, and what will happen next.

Background

The RFU's governance framework is based on regular review, with a view to continual improvement of how the RFU can operate on behalf of the Game. The current work marks the third governance review within the last ten years. The Constitutional Review Task Group, reporting in 2008, made significant improvements to how the RFU governs itself, and further reforms followed the Slaughter and May review in 2011. The Code For Sports Governance, published on behalf of the Government by Sport England and UK Sport in October 2016, has given a further impetus for the next stage of reform. The current work has been undertaken by a Working Group, chaired by Jason Leonard, which was made up of seven members of the Council and one Independent Non-Executive Director. This Working Group presented to the Council across a number of meetings, including a meeting of the Council in April 2017 called specifically to discuss these proposals.

What is the current situation?

The RFU is unique among governing bodies as having a co-operative structure. Rather than being a company, it is a members' organisation with a "one member, one vote" principle enshrined in its constitution. The member clubs must remain the ultimate safeguard for the Game as a whole. The Board of Directors will continue to be the body responsible for the day-to-day running of the RFU, and the Council (made up predominantly of representatives of clubs) will remain as the body which holds the Board of Directors to account on behalf of the member clubs. These principles will not change. The proposed changes are to assist in the clarity of the roles of each body, and to ensure that power cannot be easily entrenched among any person or group.

What is proposed?

Since 2014, there have been time limits for individuals to serve on the Board of Directors. It is proposed that from 2018, individuals will be limited to serving for nine years on the Council. This will be an important piece of the work to allow talented volunteers to take their place within decision making at a national level. There will be very limited exceptions, namely a possible three year extension for those appointed to the Board of Directors, for the Presidential ladder, for those serving as representatives to international bodies such as World Rugby and some transitional arrangements for existing members of the Council.

There will also be a new process for appointing members of the Board of Directors. This will improve transparency, by allowing member clubs to ratify the appointment of all directors other than members of the professional staff (such as the CEO and CFO). Some responsibilities will move from the Council to the Board of Directors, most notably approving the annual budget, but the Board will be required to consult with Council on this.

The RFU has also adopted a target of having at least 30 per cent female representation on the Board of Directors. This will form part of a wider project to increase diversity and inclusivity throughout the Game, and more details of this project will be available during next season.

What happens next?

The broad principles of these changes were agreed by the Council in June 2017. Changes to the RFU's constitution require the approval of the RFU's member clubs. The detail of the changes will continue to be debated and scrutinised by the Board of Directors and the Council, with a view to a Special General Meeting of members taking place on 24 November 2017. Full details of the proposed changes will be provided closer to the time. Should you have any queries in the meantime, please contact your Council representative.

With best wishes

Angus Bujalski

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'ABujalski', followed by a horizontal line.

Legal and Governance Director