



Sussex RFU

Competitions Open Forum Meeting

Held at Hove RFC on 11 May 2011

Minutes of Meeting

Chairman	Peter Bailey (President Sussex RFU)	
Supported by	Ken Nichols (Competitions Committee Chairman)	
	Mike Richardson (Team Leagues and Cup Organiser)	
Minutes by	Simon Flint (Midhurst RFC)	
Clubs Represented	Burgess Hill	Lewes
	Cinque Ports	Littlehampton
	Crawley	Midhurst
	Crowborough	Newick
	Ditchling	Norfolk Arms
	Eastbourne	Pulborough
	Hastings & Bexhill	Rye
	Haywards Heath	Shoreham
	Heathfield	Uckfield
	Hellingly	Worthing
	Holbrook	
	Hove	
Other Organisations	Sussex RFU	
	RFU	
	London Division	

1. Apologies

Barns Green RFC forwarded its apologies.

2. Sussex League 1

2.1 Ken Nichols tabled the structure recommended for 2011/12 which consisted of:
League 1 of

Brighton 2	Burgess Hill 1
Chichester 3 (promoted)	East Grinstead 2
Eastbourne 2	(Hastings & Bexhill 1)
Holbrook 1	Newick 1 (promoted)
Pulborough 1	Rye 1
Seaford 1	Worthing 3



During the course of the debate explanations were given as follows:

- i. Uckfield has been promoted to London SE but no Sussex team has been relegated.
- ii. Newick's promotion was in accordance with the rules of the league. Despite finishing 4th in the Intermediate League it was the highest finishing 1st XV.
- iii. It was assumed that Hastings & Bexhill will play in Kent 2011/12 but this has not been confirmed.
- iv. An indication of the strength of Sussex Rugby was that promoted sides to London SE were progressing. The committee viewed this as a vindication of the move to open up the Sussex League 1 to non 1st XVs.
- v. London DOC was due to meet 15 May 2011 and it was felt that any decisions taken would need to be ratified by it because Sussex League 1 comes under London's jurisdiction

2.2 Neil Upton (Burgess Hill) initiated a debate on the consistency of teams in League 1. He argued that whereas there was consistency before the 2010/11 season, 2010/11 had included several examples of inconsistency. Inconsistency led to distortion of the League with some 2nd and 3rd XVs fielding senior players one week and failing to fulfil a fixture another. He was prepared to travel further to obtain consistency.

Consistency became a recurring theme through this item of the Forum which dominated the evening.

2.3 David Hirst (Hastings & Bexhill) presented the Club's issues with Sussex RFU. There was no difference from a travel perspective to playing in Kent compared to Sussex. He was looking at finding the best route through to playing in the London leagues. He wanted consistent rugby – a level playing field. He felt that this was not possible whilst Worthing 3 teams were so variable. He questioned whether the Worthing 3 experiment had been a success. To illustrate his argument, he cited that Worthing 3 had forfeited three matches (two against Rye and one versus Holbrook). However it had fielded against Hastings a near 2nd XV because the seconds match against Blackheath had been cancelled. These results distorted the League and the final placings.

He was keen to point out that he had raised these points with previous Competitions Committees and with the Sussex RFU Executive in February 2011.

2.4 David Hinchcliff (Worthing) had apologised to various teams about the variability of Worthing 3. 2010/11 had been a difficult season with a shortage of players caused by retirements, players leaving for University and a reduced



Colts squad. He was confident that this would be rectified for the forthcoming season.

- 2.5 Tony Smith (Crawley) was against 2nd and 3rd XVs in League 1 as he was 2 years ago. He gave consistency as his reason.
- 2.6 Peter Bailey (SRFU) pointed out that the vision was to strengthen the playing capability of Sussex which has been achieved by including 2nd and 3rd XVs ref Clubs being promoted and staying promoted. Mike Richardson had carried out a number of exercises that proved that by stripping out non 1st XV results the final league places for 1st XVs alone were the same.
- 2.7 Neil Upton (Burgess Hill) countered by saying that these statistics do not take into account the attritional effect of playing stronger (and unbalanced) teams.
- 2.8 Alan Jenkins (Haywards Heath) argued that “senior” clubs were not trying to be deceitful. Clubs act with integrity. This year Worthing was trying to operate with a smaller playing base to give the whole of its playing members a game. Walkovers were as a consequence of poor recruitment.
- 2.9 David Alexander (Newick) had come to terms with the ultimatum of “be promoted or leave the league”. Newick has decided to bite the bullet despite finishing 4th in the Intermediate League. However the rules are flawed when a side as low as 9th could have been promoted.

His concern was that he may have to promote a prop from his 2nd XV, level 12, to play a player who is normally turning out at level 7.
- 2.10 Andy Ward (Hove) thought that teams need to have players registered to one league only.
- 2.11 Alex Steele (Pulborough) had always been against 2nd and 3rd XVs. The issue was Rugby First and the difficulty of maintaining effective registration for teams like Worthing 3.
- 2.12 Simon Flint (Midhurst) in response to a question on a revamped 1st XV league felt that Midhurst was not strong enough to be matched against the likes of Burgess Hill and Pulborough.
- 2.13 Keith Martin (Chichester) said that Chichester and Chichester 3 had ambitions. The team was a genuine 3rd XV that had worked hard and it would be unreasonable for it to be penalised. He added subsequently that if Chichester 3 was not promoted then the Club would consider withdrawing from Sussex Leagues.



- 2.14 Peter Bailey called for a vote. However Andy Ward wanted a break to consider the alternatives. There followed a fresh round of discussions.
- 2.15 Alex Steele (Pulborough) prompted a response from Mike Richardson when he raised the subject of effective policing of registrations. Worthing 3 will produce a parallel system to Rugby First for its Level 9 players.
- 2.16 Burgess Hill called for a vote for a 1st XV league.
- 2.17 John Thompson (London Representative) argued that all leagues have a potential imbalance. For instance in London 1 South Tonbridge Juddians had won 25 of its 26 matches whilst Chobham had not won a match.
- 2.18 Roger Stanning (Eastbourne) said that the aim was to establish competitive rugby with well matched teams wherever possible. The ideal situation was not always possible.
- 2.19 Peter Bailey called for a vote. 7 Clubs voted for and 9 Clubs voted against League 1 as proposed.
- 2.20 Simon Flint (Midhurst) called for a second vote and 7 Clubs voted for and 9 Clubs against an all 1st XV league. Effectively the floor had created an impasse.
- 2.21 Following a recess, Mike Richardson offered two options for 2011/12 either a league based on merit or a 1st XV league. Mike Richardson reiterated Mal Chumbley's views that a process starting in September/October 2011 should look at the options for 2012/13.
- 2.22 Peter Bailey summarised for 2011/12 with an undertaking for effective registration for Worthing 3 and Chichester 3. He asked the floor to reconsider
- Uckfield promoted from League 1
 - Chichester 3 promoted to League 1
 - St Francis relegated from League 1

This was accepted and passed.

3. Sussex Intermediate League, Sussex League 2 and Sussex League 3

- 3.1 The structure for the above leagues was tabled and 14 voted for and 0 against with 8 Abstentions.
- 3.2 Colin Hill (Littlehampton) queried whether all leagues needed to be home and away. Littlehampton is a one team club and needs to blood new players and give all players a game. (Intermediate sides are allowed to field more than 3 replacements if agreed prior to the Saturday of the fixture with the opposition).



4. Sussex Cup Competitions

- 4.1 Ken Nichols confirmed that Brighton University would not be invited to participate in the Cup competitions.
- 4.2 He continued by saying that he would not allow a reoccurrence of Uckfield's tactic of scratching from a higher cup and thus allowing its senior players (who were not cup tied) to play in a junior competition.
- 4.3 The Sussex Trophy Final will be played on 4 April 2012 under lights. This will allow a 10 day break before the teams next league commitment.
- 4.4 The floor advised Ken Nichols and Mike Richardson that it preferred one draw and not a draw after each round.
- 4.5 Venues for the finals are selected in advance of knowing who the finalists are. It is an opportunity for Clubs to host key matches. It is not always possible to find a venue to suit the finalists.

5. RFU Structured Season 2011/12

- 5.1 League rugby was due to commence on 3rd Saturday in September ie 17 September 2011.

6. Sussex League Regulations

- 6.1 Ref Reg 7: Paul Best (Littlehampton) had confirmed that it was only 3 replacements in the Intermediate League unless previously agreed.
- 6.2 Ref Reg 4g: Andy Ward (Hove) said that the penalising of junior sides when a senior side can not fulfil a fixture is wrong. It puts the onus of playing members outside their comfort zone. Simon Flint (Midhurst) countered that smaller clubs needed the protection and reassurance that big clubs will not load lower teams. Conclusion was maintain Reg 4g. Ian Newman (Eastbourne) said that at the lower end players wanted social rugby.
- 6.3 Ref Reg 4c: Phil Clarke's (Lewes) challenge was rejected.

7. Any Other Business

- 7.1 A vote of thanks and a round of applause were extended to Mike Richardson for all his sterling work in organising the Sussex Leagues.