

MINUTES

MINUTES OF THE RLEF ANNUAL COUNCIL MEETING 2014

STRICTLY PRIVATE & CONFIDENTIAL

Location	Darwin Room, Brunel University, London	Date	Friday 22 August, 2014
Chair	Maurice Watkins (RFL)	Time	1230 hrs
Members Present	Ladislav Cintler, Jaroslav Bzoch (CZRLA), Jean-Michel Beauclou (FFRXIII), Tiziano Franchini (FIRL), Matt Ashill, Nikolaos Kostakis, Tasos Pantazidis (HFRL), Romeo Monteith (JRLA), Remond Safi (LRLF), Anthony Micallef (MRL), Bob Doughton (RLD), Michael Aughey, Paul Bolger, Conor Kelly (RLI), Enrique Guy, Lars Haigh (RLN), Graeme Thompson (SRL), Marko Janković, Radoslav Novakovic (SRLF), Artur Martyrosyan (UFRL), Mike Nicholas, Chris Thair (WRL)		
Observers	Aitor Davila, Matt Dulley (AERL), Yves Kazadi, Zakaria Zoubir (BRLA), Steve Davy, Kristina Landsperg (DRLF), Norbert Csapkai, Lenard Grimm, Zsolt Lukacs (HRLF), Marijlou Benders, Dan van Rossum, Justin Stook (NRLB), Sol Mokdad (UAERL)		
In attendance	George Clark, Rabie El Masri (Palestine), Geoff Hardy (Romania), Martin Crick, Thierry Dumaine, Richard Graham, Danny Kazandjian, Tom Mather, Paul Nicholson, Nebojsa Sretenovic, Jovan Vujosevic, James Vukmirovic (RLEF), Nigel Wood (part) (RLIF).		
Apologies	Edgard Taturyan (ARLK), Sylvester Wellington (GRL), Mustapha Jedoual (FMRL), Vilmaris Sokolovs (LRL), Paul Briggs (SwRL)		
Absent	Canada RL, South African RL, Saudi Arabian RL Association, Trinidad & Tobago RL Association		

Item No. Agenda Item

- 1.0** Maurice Watkins opened the meeting by welcoming all the delegates. He reported that nine of 11 Full Members, six of eight Affiliate Members, six of 11 Observers and two uncategorized nations were represented. The presence of 15 members was a new high, compared with 13 in 2013. MW thanked everyone for their effort in attending the Conference. He confirmed the RLEF had received apologies from Ghana, Latvia, Morocco and Sweden. Danny Kazandjian conducted a roll call of the delegates empowered to vote for their NGB.

MW introduced the top table, consisting of the RLEF Directors and General Manager.

2.0 Minutes of 2013 Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 August 2013 were presented and unanimously approved as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

3.0 Matters Arising from Last Meeting

MW referred to item 4.2 of the 2013 Council Meeting minutes, where the Council approved to mandate the RFL's accounts department to make transactions on behalf of the RLEF using the electronic banking system, on the proviso that all transactions are authorized by the RLEF General Manager. DK confirmed this safeguard had been maintained.

MW referred to item 6.0 of the 2013 Council Meeting minutes, in which Council had raised no objection to the RLEF commencing a recruitment process for an Independent Director to replace Christen Farmer. MW reported that the recruitment process had resulted in the appointment of Paul Nicholson, in December 2013.

4.0 Motion to amend the RLEF Membership Policy

Resolution: Council moves to formally request the RLIF amends its Membership Policy in line with RLEF recommendations (contained within the supporting paper).

MW read out the resolution and invited DK to explain the background. DK reported that the constitutions of the RLEF and RLIF differ on the topic of changes to membership policy: The RLEF Council is required to effect any changes, while the executive committee can make changes to the RLIF's policy. He explained the RLEF believed it was not in the sport's interests for a confederation to seek a change to its membership policy if the RLIF was not prepared to change its own membership policy as that would lead to a divergence. He informed Council they would be asked to vote on a series of recommended changes, presented to them in the supporting paper, which would then be proposed to the RLIF for ratification and universal adoption.

DK opened up the floor to debate. Tasos Pantazidis [Greece] said any proposed changes were intended to make members stronger and cited the example of other sports with extremely strong national members. He said the Hellenic Federation of RL supported the principle behind the amendments but wanted to propose further changes.

On the question of the length of a domestic championship season TP suggested increasing the length of a domestic competition from 10 weeks to 20 weeks for Full Members to encourage greater commitment to rugby league alone.

On the question of the minimum number of teams for Full Members TP indicated lowering the number of teams would attract more Full Members. He proposed reducing the requisite number of senior teams from 12 to 10 and junior teams from six to four.

On the question of the number of registered players TP used an average of 20-players-per-team to explain that, even with the current 18-team minimum, 360 players would be registered. He proposed reducing the requisite number of registered players from 500 to 400.

DK responded, thanking TP for his contribution. He said it would be very unlikely that the RLIF would agree to any proposal that sought to lower standards and felt the RLEF should not seek to lower its own standards. He said that a 20-week season would be out of reach for most current Full Members. He felt the number of teams should remain as per the current regulation but said he was interested to hear more views on the minimum number of registered players.

Marko Jankovic [Serbia] suggested augmenting control measures to verify activity on the ground, proposing site visits to countries during their domestic championship. DK responded, citing the Annual Member Audit which has been enhanced yearly and in 2014 will include a match-logging requirement for all NGBs with leagues that play under 100 13-a-side matches; and that matches would need to be verified by clear match reporting in the local NGB's country, through their official website.

Chris Thair [Wales] said he disagreed with a minimum 20-week domestic season as it was unrealistic for most of the NGBs. He suggested amending the wording of the section covering youth rugby league, explaining that a nation might have strong junior structure but still not meet the membership criteria if the specific "under-18" stipulation remained. He proposed changing "under-18" to "youth [under-18 or younger]".

Enrique Guy [Norway] suggested a joint reporting system be introduced, that would enable NGBs to see the structures in place in other Member nations. DK said that the annual statistics are logged and published in the annual report and saw no reason why the collated member audit statistics should not be circulated throughout the membership.

Graeme Thompson [Scotland] reminded Council that the main principle behind the proposed amendments was to remove any ambiguity from the current policy wording. He said that the RLEF is beginning to enforce compliance through the membership criteria and audit. He supported CT's concerns with a 20-week domestic competition requirement, suggesting that only England and France could satisfy that at the moment. He indicated SRL would support the original resolution but agreed with CT's recommendation to change the wording of the junior category from "under-18" to "youth [under-18 or younger]".

Radoslav Novakovic [Serbia] responded to TP's point about the number of registered players, suggesting that to navigate a full season any club would need more than 20 players and therefore recommended maintaining the 500 player minimum requirement.

There being no more comments MW read the resolution once more, adding “subject to amending the wording on the regulation concerning junior rugby league”.

Moved: CT [WRL] moved to approve the motion. **Seconded:** Remond Safi [LRLF]. The motion was unanimously approved.

Action: DK to amend the policy document, re-wording the “under-18” segment following further consultation, and submit to the RLIF on behalf of the RLEF Council.

5.0 Motion to effect changes to RLEF annual meeting

5.1 ***Resolution: Council moves to adopt the name “Congress” instead of “Conference” for its annual gathering.***

MW read out the resolution and advised that a supporting paper had been distributed. He explained that there was no suggestion of amending the constitutional name of the Council, just the name of the annual gathering.

Moved: RS [LRLF] moved to approve the motion. **Seconded:** Chris Thair [WRL]. The motion was unanimously approved.

5.2 ***Resolution: Council moves to transport the annual meeting around Europe.***

MW read out the resolution. Bob Doughton [Germany] said he agreed with the resolution in principle but questioned whether there would be any additional cost implications to the RLEF. Nebojsa Sretenovic [RLEF Director] said some nations have already expressed an interest in hosting the Congress and that the RLEF has a budget to support the event.

GT said that by hosting the Congress a nation could raise the visibility of the sport at home. MW said that the possibility of sponsorship would increase for the Congress as cities and hotels vied for the business represented by an influx of roughly 50 people.

Moved: RS [LRLF] moved to approve the motion. **Seconded:** Chris Thair [WRL]. The motion was unanimously approved.

6.0 Financial report to the Council

Resolution: Council moves to adopt 2013 RLEF accounts.

Richard Graham [RLEF Director] delivered the financial report to Council, which had been supplied with the paper report, the 2013 management and statutory accounts. He reported that the RLEF covers almost 30 countries and therefore the RLEF is spread extremely thinly in a financial sense; that as the sport continues to grow we will see more confederations, which would take the pressure off the RLEF somewhat; that we will have more regional staff, rather than national staff.

He compared 2013 management accounts versus 2012, highlighting the modest resources at the RLEF's disposal; the poor commercial income and the fact the RLEF does not benefit from any income from its events, which must now be the principal objective of the RLEF Board.

Moved: CT [WRL] moved to approve the motion. **Seconded:** Remond Safi [LRLF]. The motion was unanimously approved and the 2013 accounts were duly adopted.

7.0 2014 Member Elected Director election result

MW congratulated the Council on an excellent participation rate in the recently held election, with 16 of 18 members voting. This was a very strong turnout compared with 2012. He reported that Nebojsa Sretenovic and Graeme Thompson had been re-elected and would serve a subsequent two-year term in office, expiring on the day of the 2016 Annual Council Meeting.

He thanked all who had put themselves forward for election.

8.0 Mid-point strategic review: RLEF strategy 2010-2017

DK delivered the mid-point strategic review. He commenced by explaining the history of the RLEF, its values and strategic focus areas, before moving onto the results:

Participation

- Increase in NGBs with club competitions from 12 [2010] to 18 [2014]
- Increase in NGBs with youth competitions from 7 to 9
- Significant increase in the number of matches played, with detailed statistics presented
- 2011-13 Technical Strategy which resulted in 16 coach tutors and 14 match official tutors trained and qualified who are now actively delivering Level 1 courses locally
- Creation of the RLEF MO Development Squad
- Commencement of a second major capacity building project, supported by the EU

Stronger Members

- Increase in NGBs with government recognition from 7 to 11
- Increase in NGBs with government funding from 6 to 9
- Rise in the multilateral use of the cluster system, citing various examples
- Increase in number of Full Members [5 to 11], Affiliate Members [5 to 8]; Observers [8 to 11]
- Increase in democracy and pluralism represented by available Council votes, from 25 to 52
- Two multilateral governance projects

Improved Central Performance

- Introduction of Written Document Policy; quarterly staff operations reports; operational rules; annual report; Independent Director recruitment; three Elected Director elections; increased number of Board Meetings from 3 to 6; active sub-committees
- Augmented member audit leading to higher standards among the membership

- RLEF established as a limited company
- Introduction of the Financial Accounts Model to provide a standardised financial reporting system and providing a service to the membership, where necessary
- Reduction of administration costs from £200,000 [2009] to £120,000 [2013]
- Increase in Membership fees
- Reduction in RLIF / RFL contribution
- Acquisition of external funding where none existed prior to 2010: £22,000 [2010], £61,000 [2011], £162,000 [2012], £182,000 [2013]

9.0 Any other business

There being no further business, MW once again thanked the delegates for their presence and contributions and closed the meeting at 13.45.