

Buckinghamshire Council Representative Report

Buckinghamshire RFU AGM July 26

Since the 2025 Buckinghamshire RFU AGM, I have attended all Council meetings both formal and informal, all Community Game Board (CGB) meetings both formal and informal and chaired the Rugby Growth Sub Committee meetings with additional sub-group meetings.

I have met with the Council Nominations Committee on 2 occasions and continue to work towards my desire to Chair the CGB next year. Unfortunately, this hasn't happened with no appointment made in time for the RFU AGM, but I continue to support the CGB.

I have reported to member clubs on my voting record and provided a brief commentary as to why I voted as I did. I have provided notes and a commentary on the key meetings and decisions at Council. I remain available to all clubs to further discuss any of these issues or as this year, assist with problems that I can short-cut with Twickenham.

The following issues are worthy of note in my report:

The Council Governance and Representation Review (GRR) & SGM

The GRR debate continued to be controversial after the AGM last year. A new GRR2 review group was set up comprised of more Council Members but the same core membership that put forward the original proposals to remove Council. In February Council voted to take the 28 recommendations to an SGM, including the critical recommendation to remove decision making from the Council. Faced with a clear challenge to a member's right to be part of decision making via their elected representative the game mobilised and voted down the GRR recommendations. I was very clear in my voting intentions to both the Chair of the GRR review group and had shared my vote in February with Buckinghamshire.

I remain in favour of governance change but based upon changing behaviours first and doing even better what we do currently. Only after that should we consider what structural changes are required. I believe that the RFU Main Board desire to empower CGB as a proper Board can be achieved alongside keeping Council decision making powers for the community game. Further work must be undertaken over the next 6 months to find consensus on what behaviour/process recommendations could be agreed without the need for an SGM.

Project Forge: Removing automatic PREM promotion and relegation

At the same February meeting as Council voted on governance changes, Council was also asked to vote on removing promotion into and relegation from the PREM and move to an 'expansion model'. My Council meeting notes provided the detail for my decision to vote in favour, and the subsequent announcements about increased investment into PREM clubs has shown the decision to have been positive. That said, it is incumbent upon Council Members to maintain an overview of progress over the next 5 years to ensure that post 2030, monies that the RFU pay to PRL as part of the Professional Game Partnership are reduced and redirected to the community game as promised.

Community Game Board (CGB) / Rugby Growth Sub-Committee (RGSC)

"The CGB is likely to be strengthened as part of the GRR to become a more autonomous board. I welcome this potential move to create a more effective board accountable to the community game."
My comment last year didn't come to fruition, but my view remains positive.

The 2025-26 CGB business plan focused upon a broad work programme, including:

14-18 Coach Development Programme, including growth of female Coaches & Match Officials; Implementation of the Winman Match Official Review recommendations; A new digital learning platform for Coach/MO training & Club support; Launch Loan/floodlight programme, and complete WRWC Facility investment programme; CB Funding and partnership agreements; Progressing additional regional Safeguarding roles; Agreement to principle of partner funded local Development Officers.

The Rugby Growth Sub-Committee work programme has continued to include responsibility for youth engagement as well as oversight of the intended actions from the women and girls review and overseeing the club facing element of the T1 non-contact rugby.

More Than A Game 2030: a new RFU strategy

The RFU launched its new 5-year strategy in January 2026, with 4 'big goals': to PLAY, PERFORM, FOLLOW and FUND. The PLAY strand sets the goal of 50,000 more community rugby registered players by 2030 from a baseline of 290,000 (both adult and junior). It aligns with the Community Game Future strategy that is owned by the CGB.

Additional work undertaken as Council Member

Inclusion & Diversity: I have supported the development of the RFU I&D Framework and Toolkit to be launched in the new season. In addition to this, the revised work on TREDs and a new piece of work on sexism and misogyny will also be launched before Christmas. It will require sensible scheduling and those leading the work will be required to consider volunteer overload.

RFRU Governance Review: the referees CB was required by its membership to undertake a review of its governance following its role in the 2025 SGM. I was asked to take part as an independent member.

National CB Funding: I have been asked to look at the principles for funding the RFRU.

Hosting Bucks Volunteers at Twickenham

An incredibly rewarding part of being a Council Member is being able to host volunteers for a special day at an international match, supported by the CB. I was able to welcome 13 club volunteers this season who have given so generously of their time.

I continued to referee across the county on both Saturdays and Sundays and will do so again in 2027/28. It is an excellent way for me to meet players and coaches as well as the club leadership.



Simon Winman

RFU Council Member, Buckinghamshire RFU
Member RFU Community Game Board
Chair RFU Rugby Growth Sub Committee