

Honorary Secretary Report to Buckinghamshire RFU AGM 2026

CB Executive & County Club Meetings

Bucks RFU Executive has formally met 6 times this season (online) to ensure that it remains on top of all matters. The CB has continued to communicate directly with Club Chairs, holding 3 meetings this season, including one face to face meeting. We will continue to hold Chairs meetings in Sept (Face to Face), January and May each season. (AGM each July is an additional short meeting).

The Club Chairs meeting this September will take the form of a two (half) day Conference in the Holiday Inn, hoping to repeat the success of the Conference held in April 2024.

Club Support

This season we have helped many of our clubs with 50% funding support for First Aid training courses; lent support to clubs' facilities funding applications to the RFU Facilities team, with whom we have an excellent working relationship; assisted a club to create a new Constitution.

Tour / Festival / Camp Approvals

This season 9 of our 15 clubs applied for Tour approvals covering around 40 age group and senior tours. The Tour approval process we currently run for Age Group tours is to look at the documentation submitted on Safeguarding and to validate that a club officer has signed the Tour Approval form, acknowledging that they are satisfied with their club's tour arrangements.

The RFU have promised delivery of on an 'online' Tour / Safeguarding approval process next season to replace the current manually intensive sign, scan, email, print process and we look forward to this.

RFU Governance and Representation Review (GRR)

As all clubs will be aware, this topic has again taken up a good deal of time this season with many documents to review, webinars & meetings to attend, an SGM to prepare for and attend, responses to surveys, briefings to clubs etc. Matters came to a head with a series of proposals from the RFU Board to radically revise the Rules such that the Council would become an advisory body rather than a controlling body. The Council themselves had controversially approved these proposals; the Council members representing the community clubs were generally not in favour but were outnumbered by the assortment of Council members who are not directly elected by clubs. The SGM proposals had to be passed by a two thirds majority of the member clubs voting; it substantially failed to do so, not even gaining 50% of the votes. When appraised of the implications of losing their council member representation, the clubs, who **are** the RFU, did not roll over and accept the Board's proposals. This is not to say the current governance process is nearly as good as it should be and it is hoped that some of the agreed deficiencies and shortcomings can be addressed in the next year or so.

CB's role in the game

It has been a year of change on a couple of other fronts for the County. The RFU are introducing bodies called Regional Growth Partnership Boards, of which there will be 7 across the country, representing a collection of geographically adjacent CBs. Their role was originally announced as a team of 2/3 heads who would look to source new funding in their geography and direct this to the CBs to help run rugby for their clubs. There are now signs/fears that these RGPBs role may be expanding and that they could become more of a controlling body.

The process that dictates what funding the CBs receive from the RFU to run rugby in their areas is changing to reflect the volume of rugby (clubs, registered players) in their county and Bucks will lose out here in the medium and long term. The funding calculation is not unreasonable, but it has come as a surprise. There is an additional focus that the funding received is conditional on the CB working to successfully raise / retain the number of registered players in their CB area. Clearly it is the clubs that register players, so the CB will need to work with the clubs to find ways to achieve growth ... achieving this growth where previous RFU initiatives have not worked it seems.

These various RFU 'change' activities have taken up a vast amount of time in the CB this season.

Finlay Gemmell

Buckinghamshire RFU Honorary Secretary
18th June 2026