



All-Party Parliamentary Rugby League Group

Ordinary Meeting Minutes

28th January 2014 Committee Room 13

Meeting commenced 1810

In Attendance

Members: Greg Mulholland MP (in the chair); Gerry Sutcliffe MP; Lord Thomas

Honorary Life Members: Maurice Oldroyd (no affiliation); Spen Allyson (no affiliation)

Organisational Associate Members: Lewis Rogers (William Hill); Ralph Rimmer (RLF); Sue Taylor (BARLA)

Individual Associate Members (all, no affiliation): Martin Coyd; Stephen Johnson; David Ballheimer

Other: Eric Czerwonkia; guest of Eric Czerwonkia

Secretariat: Mark Ramsdale

Apologies

Members: Lord Smith of Leigh; Lord Hoyle; Lindsay Hoyle MP; Yvonne Fovargue MP; Mark Pawsey MP

Honorary Life Members (all, no affiliation):

Organisational Associate Members: Nigel Wood (RFL); David Gent (RLF); John Roddy (The Shield Group); Peter Aaronson (The Shield Group);

Individual Associate Members (all, no affiliation): Paul Kenny; Ikram Butt; David Rammage

Minutes of the Previous Meeting

In absentia, The Treasurer (Lord Smith of Leigh) agreed the minutes of the December Group meeting were an accurate account.

Welcome

The Chairman welcomed new supporters The Shield Group and Super League sponsors Tetley's. He thanked both bodies for their support. Both automatically became Associate Members.

The Chairman welcomed new individual Associate Members Martin Coyd OBE, Gary Job, Sara Job, Kristoff Czweronkia.

Matters Arising

The Secretariat raised the on-going activities:

- Compilation of the complete list of the Super League Player of the year. Hope to have completed soon, ahead of the upcoming announcement of the 2013 player of the year.
- Have a contact in LGA to take forward Associate Membership for councillors
- Memorial at National Arboretum for rugby league players.

Action: Secretariat to prepare letter for Lindsay Hoyle

Our Supporters



RFL





All-Party Parliamentary Rugby League Group

Ordinary Meeting Minutes

28th January 2014 Committee Room 13

Correspondence

Sent

- Letter to COO of RLF regarding the Challenge Cup
- Letter to an Associate Member removing said status.

Received

- Letter from the Chairman of BARLA regarding the Challenge Cup
- Letter from two Associate Members regarding behaviour of an Associate Member
- Correspondence to be taken forward with Officers regarding charitable support
- Correspondence via the website praising the Group's work on helping secure RLWC2013 on Virgin Media
- Letter from RFL CEO Nigel Wood setting out the new league structures

Pending

- Letter from the Chairman to organisers of Bristol's RLWC2013 game.
- Letter from the Chairman to France Rugby League.

Group Activity Report

Parliamentary Questions

The Secretariat presented Lord Addington's references to RLWC2013 made during a debate on the Commonwealth Games 2014 and the legacy such large international sporting tournaments can leave.

Public

The Group sent out press releases congratulating the RFL and Super League clubs on agreeing the structure of the professional game and on securing a title sponsor.

The Group received over 1323 visits since the previous meeting and has 1125 followers on Twitter.

Political Animals Report

The Secretariat (also Political Animals club Secretary):

- Raised the upcoming game against the Army Veterans side "Race Against Time and Senility (RATS)"
- Raised the potential upcoming game against a journalists XIII.

Super League Update

The Chairman thanked RFL Chief Operating Officer Ralph Rimmer for attending the meeting, and asked him to pass on the Group's thanks to Nigel Wood for his correspondence on the changes to league structures.

Rimmer explained the wider-reaching and exciting new structure that will produce more games that matter, will appeal to crowds and viewers.

All stakeholders in the game were consulted and some of the proposals had been contentious at times. The RFL had secured second tier sponsors and had been working closely with First Utility to set in place the Super League deal.

Action: Group to write to First Utility, making them aware of the Group.

Our Supporters



RFL



-2-





All-Party Parliamentary Rugby League Group

Ordinary Meeting Minutes

28th January 2014 Committee Room 13

The outcome of all is a well-financed, aggressive and stable structure that is performing well in the current climate and a significant boost to the sport.

The policy review took a collegiate approach, including discussions of a set ratio of commercial dividends to each of the tiers.

Responding to a question about preparing fans for the change, Rimmer noted the 2014 season had to be played and it was important to focus on delivering that well for clubs and fans. There would be a gradual approach to 2015, with a big bang made before the season starts.

Rimmer was confident all teams will finish the season and noted that previous minimum standards had been adapted to create as much transparency as possible, and much of the focus on a club's ability to host a broadcaster.

On questioning about the game in London, Rimmer explained one of the challenges was not having a base. That had now been put in position. In addition, a London advisory group had been created.

Coyd noted that growth in the capital was strong and there was a pathway for London players with London Broncos being a draw. Regionally, he sees more children selected from the region who look like rugby league players, and London Skolars are stronger than they ever have been.

The Chairman reiterated comments from previous meetings that the Group should be seen as something with which the rugby league community could interact and asked if the RFL could do anything to promote the Group's work. Rimmer believes there is significant passion for rugby league in the capital and south east and the Group is a part of that. He would investigate opportunities.

Annual Dinner

The Secretariat noted the evening's meeting represented the close of reservations for the Group's Annual Dinner.

AOB

The Group recognised the RLEF lifetime award of Maurice Oldroyd.

The Secretariat (interest declared) recorded the date of the 2014 Rugby League Varsity Match.

Main business concluded at 1842.

Presentation

The Chairman welcomed Lewis Rogers from William Hill, and thanked him and William Hill for their support.

Rogers began by acknowledging the interest in betting within Parliament and saw his attending the meeting as opportunity to answer questions.

He presented an overview of William Hill, including statistics on the betting firm: 13,000 employees, 2,500 shops, over half of workforce is female. Many employees stay with the firm for a long period, including the CEO who started working in a shop 40 years ago.

Our Supporters



RFL



-3-





All-Party Parliamentary Rugby League Group

Ordinary Meeting Minutes

28th January 2014 Committee Room 13

Horse racing represents 23% of the total betting share, football is 11%. Rugby league is a much lower percentage, with 360,000 bets placed per year representing £8m. Betting plays a role in boosting the profile of a sport due to it providing added opportunity and excitement in being involved. It is possible to market the sport in shops to increase exposure.

William Hill takes sports integrity seriously; match fixing and other related activities damage the sport. Their line is clear - when people try to corrupt sport for financial gain through betting, sport loses out, as do bookmakers. For that reason, they work closely with governing bodies and invest in profiling sport and betting patterns. In so doing, they and other bookmakers are the first line of defence.

On gambling addiction, Rogers noted that over the last 10 years, the level of people with gambling addiction has remained at the same level at less than one per cent of those placing bets. The betting industry funds education and research into responsible gambling via an independent trust and through education services via gamble aware.

William Hill undertakes lots of charitable projects and activities. For example, their four-year Project Africa scheme has enabled a school to be built in Africa, including staff from shops. Another is the shop managers who take time to work with that not in education, employment and training and offer placements, mentoring and advice on things like CV writing. William Hill matches funding raised by employees.

The firm's most significant office is in Leeds, employing 1000 people from each of the city's constituencies.

In opening to questions, Gerry Sutcliffe supported the work of William Hill in terms of the activities it undertakes in local UK communities and elsewhere. He felt the industry underplays its charity work. He highlighted the proliferation of gaming machines in betting shops and elsewhere, as well as the perceived growth of betting shops on high streets. He noted the Gambling Trust review, an interim report for which is due in March and a full report in October.

The machines were discussed, as well as the opportunity to place relatively stakes over a short period. It was noted that this based on an extreme example predicated on players losing all the time whereas data showed people play briefly and for small amounts and that players were more likely to win the lottery three weekends in a row than lose consistently.

It was noted that problem gambling levels are very low in the UK. Britain has a responsible and highly regulated betting industry, more than many other countries. There was no evidence to suggest the machines are more harmful than others, but steps have been taken to address. With trade associations, major betting operators instigate training and technical systems to ensure people with problems are noticed and supported, and that limits can be set in both time and amount to provide greater control for the customer.

On betting shops on the high street, William Hill would support changes to the planning system to allow a local authority the ability to consider the promulgation of betting shops as they do with alcohol-licensed premises under the Licensing Act.

In terms of supporting the sport, the decision to become involved with the Group came from William Hill's CEO. William Hill pay 10% of profits from horse racing back into the sport and make a voluntary donation to greyhound racing to ensure the sport remains active. There may be the possibility of retail outlets being used to direct customers to rugby league.

Our Supporters



RFL



-4-





All-Party Parliamentary Rugby League Group

Ordinary Meeting Minutes

28th January 2014 Committee Room 13

On in-game gambling, the concern was raised that live data being provided was focused on betting rather than post-match statistics, which could leave sport in general open to abuse. Specifically, given betting on rugby league represents a low relative proportion of William Hill's business, how could they be confident that a small number of people within the game could not have an impact.

Referencing the changing activities of people and the way they engage in sport, William Hill and others had to reflect demand, and do so responsibly. There were in-play teams in Leeds who look at data during a match and the odds competitors are offering. Should there be any discrepancy, there exists the ability to suspend a market should anything suspicious arise. It is in both William Hill's and rugby league's best interest to ensure customers and consumers are confident in the products on offer. There are also certain things on which William Hill will not take bets – for example red cards. In these cases, the potential risk of corruption far outweighs any commercial opportunity.

Additionally, William Hill works with sporting bodies on education, particularly with players so they recognise and understand the position and responsibilities they hold. The Group acknowledged the RFL is part of the Sports Rights Coalition and their work, and that more work was needed in lower leagues to educate players.

The Chairman thanked Rogers for his attendance.

Whilst attempting to ask a question, the Chairman explained to Mr Czerwonkia that the his office had sent correspondence prior to the meeting stating Mr Czerwonkia was not allowed to attend the meeting and therefore would not be allowed to speak. Mr Czerwonkia became aggressive and gesticulated toward the Group's Secretariat and referred to him as "an a*****e".

Meeting concluded 1920.

The Group is placing on record Mr Czerwonkia's actions post-meeting. This included shouting and referring to the Group, the game and elements and individuals of both therein in derogatory fashion. Specific details are not being made public but have been recorded should they be required.

Our Supporters



RFL

