



Surrey County Football Association Limited

General Meeting

Minutes of the online General Meeting held on Monday 24th January 2022 commencing at 7.00pm.

Present

County Members:

Colin Barnett, Keith Boanas, Soye Briggs, Emma Clarke, William Douglas, Nick Drew, Richard Ireson, Graham Keable, Ray Lewis, Lizzie Liebenhals, Tony Loveridge, Emma O'Connor, Victor Olisa, Sheila Pink, Brian Reader, Yvonne Rees, Vic Rolland, Jeremy Taylor, John Waddelow, John Wallis, Alex Warner, John Young

Staff:

Emma Barnes, Anne-Marie Cliffe, Bob Dick, Andrew Dickinson, Dominic Fairhurst, Richard Garland, Sally Lockyer, David Miller, Nicola Novell, Josh Symmonds

Clubs:

Bourne Blades, Burpham Juniors, Byfleet Village, Camberley Town Youth, Carshalton Athletic, Charlwood, Chessington & Hook United, Chessington Sports Youth, Dunsfold, Esher Youth, Godalming Town, Holland Sports, Horsell, Junior Elite, Meadow Sports, Merstham, Oxshott Royals, Redhill Youth, Richmond & Kew Youth, Stoughton, Tolworth, Virginia Water, Worcester Park Colts

Leagues & Competitions:

Morden & District Sunday League (Jeff Martin), Surrey County Intermediate League Western (Derek Stovold)

Apologies

County Members:

Derek Alldridge MBE, Peter Ashdown, Kate Budd, Alan Clarke, Gordon Harrison, Barrie Hogan, Mike Jermey, Bob Woods

Clubs:

Leatherhead Youth, Send United Boys

1. Apologies

The new Surrey FA Chair, Alex Warner, introduced himself and welcomed those present. Alex then read the apologies as above.

2. To receive and consider the accounts for the year ended 1st July 2020 to 30th June 2021 and the reports of the charity trustees and auditors

Nick Drew reported that despite the challenging year, Surrey FA are again pleased to confirm that we ended the year in a strong financial position. The year closed with available funds of £576K as of 30th June 2021 with £105K allocated to replacing the pitch at Meadowbank within the next few years.

COVID-19 impacted annual income and we were below target by approximately £70K but were able to offset this by additional grant funding that was achieved through the government's furlough scheme and local business grants. This allowed us to reinvest £1 million into grassroots football in Surrey. Another contributor to the decrease in income year on year was the centralisation of The FA's coach education and referee education courses.

The surplus for the year was approximately £67K against a target of £35K which is the annual contribution to the sinking fund to replace the pitch at Meadowbank with the remainder being reinvested.

Nick then outlined other key information including changes to the Board of Trustees including the resignation of Ray Lewis for compliance reasons. However, Ray is still Surrey FA President and therefore still active on the Board. He also confirmed that Taylorcocks have completed their audit of the accounts.

In addition, Surrey FA have a benevolent fund holding £8,000 which is available to players who suffer injuries leading to absences from work and therefore requiring financial assistance. Clubs and leagues should ensure that players are aware of this fund.

In summary, the county has come through the COVID-19 pandemic by absorbing central funding cuts from the FA, which is our primary source of income, and we've remained in a healthy financial position providing a strong base to launch the new 10-year strategy from. Ongoing issues remain with The FA's centralisation of courses, but we are committed to supporting both The FA and our learners through this continued transition.

Details for the accounts are available on our website.

3. Strategy Presentation

Sally Lockyer delivered an update on Surrey FA's 10-year strategic plan. There has been a great deal of knowledge gathering in order to understand the market and the opportunities for grassroots football in Surrey. A survey was held with our key stakeholders as well as consultation with our Inclusion Advisory Group, County Members and the Youth Forum.

This was followed by a series of online workshops covering values and behaviours. involving staff, Board, IAG and Youth Forum including key areas identified through stakeholder consultation. In November 2021, the strategy was presented to The FA who signed it off immediately; they were impressed with the long-term approach taken and our ambition within the strategy. Before publishing the strategy, we wanted to present it to those attending the meeting as well as allowing Alex Warner and Yvonne Rees and our key stakeholder groups the opportunity to view it.

Surrey FA have taken a long-term view to improve facilities and develop the workforce to enable us to grow the game. We aim to maximise the revenue from Meadowbank for investment into grassroots football. The strategy is not just related to affiliated football; it also targets new participants and the recreational game. Our vision is to make football in Surrey inclusive, safe, sustainable and fun, and this can be delivered by ensuring that we can provide support and services to those involved in football, while remaining respectful, ambitious, collaborative and focused.

Sally indicated that the three pillars of our strategy are playing, enabling and governing the game, highlighting the objectives of each one and advising that the Governance Code will be delivered shortly. She also outlined the targets for the next ten years.

David Miller then provided an overview of the discipline figures showing yearly comparisons and indicating the alarming rise in misconduct cases; consideration is being given to the causes of these increases, which is a national trend. David also highlighted the discipline panel pilot which has been introduced by The FA for non-serious cases and these are grouped regionally so that we can access panel members from other local County FAs. The aim is to ensure that sanctions are consistent and feedback has been good. Referring to player registration, David indicated that all the youth leagues are now engaged with the process, about 32,00 players have been registered and the system is now working well following issues when it was introduced. The 23 County Cups are now taking place with the competitions currently at different phases and the finals will take place at Meadowbank. It was queried whether or not any analysis had been undertaken regarding discipline cases received from Charter Standard and non-Charter Standard clubs, and Sally agreed that this is being investigated.

Josh Symmonds then presented on Surrey FA's enhanced profile and sustainable revenues, focusing on the marketing perspective. There has been an increase in website users which indicates that it's still the primary resource for accessing information, so we aim to ensure that information is relevant and updated regularly. We have been utilising different platforms on social media, the focus being on Twitter and Facebook, where bespoke and FA content is shared. LinkedIn is used for commercial partnership, board and staff announcements, and recruitment.

Recent examples that have been particularly successful in terms of engagement are the Black Friday giveaway on Instagram, announcement of our Specsavers partnership on LinkedIn and World Cerebral Palsy day on Twitter.

Our e-mail newsletter is a primary source of communication and there has been a significant increase in engagement, as we have made key information more accessible. We have utilised our digital assets to develop content that engages our audience, for example the virtual grassroots awards Digital optimisation, staff spotlight series and stoppage time podcasts.

In terms of brand partnerships, we have signed a new three-year deal with Specsavers as sponsors of the Surrey Senior Cup and received additional investment from Veo (sports camera partners). Josh highlighted the launch of a video series with Beder, our mental health charity partner, aimed at using the power of football to explore the relationship between the game and mental health (inc players & management from Sutton FC, Wimbledon FC, Tooting & Mitcham FC and Dorking Wanderers FC).

Andrew Dickinson thanked staff for their efforts over the year as well as leagues, clubs, coaches and referees who enable Surrey FA to continue to deliver strategies to grow the game. The customer support portal went live just before the pandemic; this provides solutions to common issues faced as well as offering additional support and hopefully provides a quicker resolution. The number of users at Meadowbank's facility has increased greatly and exceeds our targets. We are progressing well through The FA's Code of Governance and would hope to have this completed and approved this year. Andrew gave details of staff recruitment as well as those who have left since the previous AGM.

Andrew then provided a safeguarding update highlighting the CPD session for Club Welfare Officers in December 2021 as well as linking up with Surrey Police and Surrey County Council, to support an initiative to tackle suicide among young men across the County, resulting in the organization of a mental health awareness course through Mental Health England. Safeguarding visits are currently being completed, and engagement with clubs and their parents has been good. In addition, we carry out reviews of club websites and provide templates, advice and suggestions on safeguarding, and how to ensure that clubs and key personnel are easily identifiable and contactable.

Surrey FA are committed to The FA's Safeguarding 365 and continue to embed safeguarding not only in Surrey FA but across the whole game in Surrey. Andrew thanked attendees for the continued support and drive to make football safe and fun to play in Surrey. As part of the standards, Surrey FA (along with every other County FA) will undergo an assessment by a third party and this year it will be the NSPCC – CPSU that assess us.

This year saw The FA and NSPCC join forces to launch the 'Play Safe' campaign and there will be a designated Play Safe weekend every season as well as support to other safeguarding-related events during the year, e.g. Anti-Bullying Week, Safer Internet Day and NSPCC Parents in Sport Week. The FA have also launched their EDI strategy & Disability Game Plan.

Surrey FA have reviewed and updated our Equality Action Plan in line with the resubmission of our Intermediate Standard application. This is a working document that we have aligned with the strategy and Surrey FA IAG objectives. We have successfully achieved disability confident status and disability confident employer status, and now look to achieve disability confident leader status. Disability Confident will help us recruit, retain and develop disabled people who will help our business continue to succeed. The Disability Confident badge will also show disabled people that we recognise the value they can bring to our business.

Referring to equality initiatives, Andrew highlighted Black Lives Matter, National Hate Crime Awareness Week, Rainbow Laces and International Day of Disabled Persons 2021, as well as upcoming events.

Emma Barnes then outlined participation figures for female, male and disability, as well as England Accredited Clubs; these were previously known as Charter Standard Clubs. She also highlighted the growth and development throughout these areas including the Women's and Futsal leagues as well as Powerchair sessions.

The total funding awarded to clubs between July and December 2021 was £283,839 and this included contributions towards machinery, goal posts, portable floodlights, grass pitch maintenance fund and 3G projects. Further funding is available to improve grass pitches and for project opportunities. Emma then displayed how the investment from the Football Foundation has supported teams within Surrey.

Referring to the referee workforce, Emma emphasised the delivery of referee courses, the number trained and CPD events. Lastly, CPD events and programmes have been organised for coaches throughout the county.

4. Introduction to the new Chair and Senior Independent Director of Surrey FA

Alex Warner thanked the team for their insightful presentations. Alex then outlined his background within the transport and leisure sectors, as well as his involvement with Crystal Palace and various clubs within Surrey. He is delighted to take on this role and aims to support the progression of Surrey FA and the 10-year strategy but is aware of the challenges faced particularly in relation to the reliance on volunteers, diversity and discipline.

Yvonne Rees introduced herself and advised that she has been chief executive of a few local authorities including Mole Valley and Oxfordshire. She feels passionately about the power sport has, particularly football, to drive the physical and mental well-being of our communities, and if we as a country are to improve our economic outputs following COVID then we must have a mentally and physically fit workforce, and sport is key to this.

Yvonne echoed Alex's sentiments that today had proved a phenomenal induction to this role. She feels privileged to have been selected and aims to provide help and support. She outlined the background to her interest in football and her wish to be involved with an ambitious organisation.

5. Any other relevant business as admitted by the Interim Chair

There was no other business

Alex thanked those at the meeting for their support and contributions adding that he was looking forward to seeing everyone soon.

6. Closure

The meeting closed at 8.33pm.