



Cambourne Exiles Rugby Football Club

Minutes

5th March 2009

7:30pm, The Monkfield Arms, Cambourne.

Attending. Mark Lisher (Chairman), Neil Ingham (Hon. Secretary), Mark Griffiths (Treasurer), Peter Simpson (Fixtures Secretary), Ben Yeats, Darren Macey, Dan Sundler, Paul Greaves, Andy Nichols, Steve Brudenell.

1. Apologies

Received in advance from Dave Hatrick, Chris Elderfield, Stephen Keerie, Bob Cox.

2. To review the minutes from the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 18/12/09 were passed as a true record of the meeting.

3. Matters arising

No issues raised.

4. Chairman

ML commented that despite interruptions to the playing schedule due to the winter weather conditions it was encouraging to note that up to 9 new players have been recruited in recent weeks. Thanks go to **BY** and **DM** for their efforts in recruitment. However, **ML** reiterated recently expressed concerns throughout the club over players commitment to playing and training. It was stressed that the club must be more proactive in determining players availability in advance of matches. This is essential from many points of view, but is crucial for the fixtures secretary to be able to confirm fixtures with opposition clubs. **ML** will collate player availability for forthcoming matches. **ML** welcomed Paul Greaves back to Cambourne Exiles RFC.

5. Secretary

NI reported to those present that the sports centre, so long promised for Cambourne, has been delayed yet again, due to funding issues and the current economic climate. No decision is possible at the moment of the feasibility of the Cricket pavilion in Upper Cambourne and the proposed enhancement to this to serve as a facility for all the village clubs.

At a recent meeting with the Leisure and Amenities committee representatives of the Cambourne Parish Council, **NI** proposed that, in the light of the further delays to the sports centre and associated facilities, the developers must relent and allow permission for the Rugby Club to site a storage container. Permission for this has since been granted. **NI** continues to work with CPC to determine costs / container position / timescale for installation, etc. Following conversations with other members of the Exiles committee, **NI** also proposed that an additional changing room portacabin with shower facilities be installed as soon as possible. At this time, it is understood that this proposal will be put forward to CPC and the developers at the earliest opportunity.

NI expressed disappointment at the lack of interest / response from member to recent calls for fundraising assistance. **BY** commented that this had not been clearly communicated to members. **NI** apologised for not having had the opportunity to drive this forward, but stated that details of the schemes had been on the Club website for many weeks. **ML** proposed that such general announcements could be made at training and prior to matches.

NI announced that a meeting has been arranged with Lee Adamson (RFU/ECRU Rugby Development Officer) for Monday 16th March, in the Monkfield Arms. Any interested parties are welcome to attend.

NI asked for suggestions for content / material for the club website. Please forward direct to **NI**.

6. Treasurer

MG reported that the club is in a reasonably good financial position with £7006 in the bank. Funds are available to buy rugby kit (balls etc) if and when needed and to contribute towards the costs of a storage container. However, sponsorship is still desperately needed to allow the club to buy a new set of match shirts to begin using in the 2009/10 season.

It was noted with much concern that many players have several weeks match fees outstanding and 17 members still owe the second £30 part of their annual subs. This represents a significant amount of money that the club is owed. **MG** stated categorically that this situation is unacceptable and cannot be allowed to continue. **MG**, **DS**, **ML** and **NI** will firmly encourage all members with outstanding debts to the club to settle as soon as possible.

7. Fixtures Secretary

PS had nothing to report. **ML** thanked **PS** for all his efforts in contacting opposition teams and Exiles club members with regard to the playability of games during the adverse weather and ground conditions experienced recently. **PS** then reiterated recent concerns that the idea to have planned weeks off from matches is not working as anticipated and suggested that we should revert to a full schedule of matches for the 2009/10 season. This will be discussed further at the 2009 AGM.

8. Sponsorship

In the absence of **BC**, no news was available on the current sponsorship situation. There is a great need within the club to push as hard as possible, despite the current economic climate, to obtain new and sustainable sponsorship deals. **NI** will communicate directly with **BC** and **CE** to further explore opportunities with a large company soon to relocate to Cambourne. **PG** discussed some innovative ideas for obtaining income which had proved highly successful during his time at Newmarket RUFC.

9. Discipline

NI expressed concern about a spate of yellow cards over recent matches. Unfortunately, this has led to a certain amount of indecision within the disciplinary committee. The current policy regarding fines imposed after yellow cards has been seen by many as somewhat onerous. The club is not in a position to risk losing players as a result of imposition of fines. However, this does not detract from the serious nature of being awarded a yellow card. The referee is often the sole representative of the laws of the game on the pitch at the level we play at and his decisions are to be respected. However, many concerns have been raised within the club at the quality and reliability of refereeing we sometimes receive. **DS** and other senior players have expressed significant concerns that in some matches the Exiles have faced definite bias favouring the opposition. **NI** and others queried such concerns in the light of the scoreline in these matches and were satisfied that it was not simply "sour grapes" being expressed, but a real sentiment from several players. **PS** suggested that the club's position regarding provision of match officials / referees be reviewed at the end of season and a decision taken at the AGM as to how to proceed into 2009/10.

Whilst not wanting to appear to make light of any yellow card situation, **NI** proposed some changes to the disciplinary policy. This will reduce the immediate financial penalty for an individual yellow card incident, but will penalise a persistent offender with a more severe mandatory fixed and non-negotiable fine.

The proposed changed policy will read as follows :-

- As soon as possible, the player will make a written statement of events to the Chairman of the Club Disciplinary Committee.
- **Penalty** - Mandatory Club Fine – to buy a pint for Referee immediately after the game (or to buy the Exiles Man-of-the-Match pint by way of recompense for letting the team down).
- **Persistent Offenders Penalty** – for 3 yellow cards in a single season - Mandatory Club Fine - £50 payable immediately to the Treasurer. As this will apply only for multiple and repeated yellow cards, a player will be fully aware of the situation he faces and therefore there will be no excuse, no argument and no appeal to avoid payment of the fine. The player will be required to explain his behaviour to the club committee.

- Yellow card incidents will be reported to the CB and RFU via the referee, to be recorded. This may incur further sanction and financial penalty (payable by the player on top of any fine imposed by the club.)

The proposed changes will be made immediately and will apply for the remainder of the season. However, this will be subject to a vote at the 2009 AGM for formal adoption by the club.

10. First Aid

AN reported a disappointing response from club members, especially from those who'd already expressed interest, to his recent attempts to organise first aid training courses. **AN** will now chase members to attend the course on May 10th, at the expense of the club (£31 per head).

11. A.O.B.

Coaching Training. CCC **DM** delivered a reminder that coaching courses are available, at the expense of the club, to anyone wishing to attend. **DM** will continue to chase members expressing interest to ensure attendance on such courses.

Youth Rugby. After a mid-winter break, youth rugby has restarted on Sunday mornings. Youth Coordinator, Keith Robinson, should supply CRB forms as soon as possible to those who've made a request for them. **DM** reiterated his intention to begin to focus more on senior coaching. **KR** and others within the club will then move to take on more within the youth setup. However, it is felt that the club is moving towards a critical point with regards to the sustainability of youth rugby within Cambourne Exiles RFC. With such a low degree of interest despite much publicity, a decision will be taken in due course as to whether continuation of youth coaching is viable given with significant investment of time and effort from all those concerned.

End-of-Season Dinner. **BY** will target early May for the 2009 club dinner.

Next Meeting. Suggested date – Thurs 2nd April 2009. Monkfield Arms 7:30pm.

Minutes for this meeting prepared by **NI** (18.3.09)

Hon. Sec. additional notes and general comments:-

It was clearly apparent from several points raised during the meeting that email is not the most effective way to communicate with club members. Messages are sometimes sent at the last minute with an immediate response often expected. Members are very often "sluggish" at responding to emails – eg. recent calls for match availability – or often do not respond at all. More direct means of communication are recommended when appropriate or when a response is required urgently. There was some very constructive discussion on determination of player availability for matches and commitment to playing / training. Many such ideas have been raised and discussed on numerous occasions in the past and it is now time for the appropriate persons to put words into action.

It is suggested and recommended that all members be more proactive in all aspects of their interaction and involvement with the club. An increased membership is the key to the future success of the club. All members should make the most of any opportunity to improve the clubs situation and prospects; encourage new players to join the club, pull in new sponsorship deals for the club, etc. We need **active** members; members willing to give their time, energy, experience and effort for the benefit of the club and all those involved with the club. Volunteers are always needed, so please don't wait to be asked, instead put yourself forward and offer to help out!!