

## **Minutes of Meeting**

### **Ospreys Supporters Club (OSC) meeting with Abi Tierney, Chief Executive Officer, Welsh Rugby Union**

**Date:** Thursday 19 February 2026

**Format:** Microsoft Teams

#### **1. Attendance**

##### **Present**

- Abi Tierney (AT), Chief Executive Officer, Welsh Rugby Union
- Sarah Collins-Davies (SCD), Chair, Ospreys Supporters Club
- Keith Collins (KC), Secretary, Ospreys Supporters Club
- Louise Collins-Davies (LCD), Treasurer, Ospreys Supporters Club
- Cathy Green (CG), Social Media Officer, Ospreys Supporters Club
- Lynne Jones (LJ), Minutes Secretary, Ospreys Supporters Club
- Annette Davies (AD), Committee Member, Ospreys Supporters Club
- Samantha Imray (SI), Committee Member, Ospreys Supporters Club
- Katherine Hewlett (KH), Committee Member, Ospreys Supporters Club
- Nigel Jones (NJ), Committee Member, Ospreys Supporters Club

##### **Apologies**

- Grant Berni (GB), Vice-Chair, Ospreys Supporters Club

#### **2. Introduction**

AT opened the meeting by thanking the OSC for attending.

SCD thanked AT for joining the meeting while on annual leave and explained that, in view of the limited time available, a structured series of questions had been prepared. SCD noted that the questions had been drafted on the basis that they were not considered commercially sensitive.

AT advised that, should time not allow for all matters to be addressed during the meeting, she would be willing to respond to any outstanding questions by email.

#### **3. Assurances relating to PRA25**

##### **3.1 Fair funding assurances and PRA25**

SCD asked why assurances could not be provided to the Ospreys and Scarlets regarding fair funding arrangements, which in turn resulted in those clubs not signing PRA25.

SCD also asked what had changed so significantly within the space of 14 days, following the JSG meeting on 30 April 2025, that led to a statement in mid-May 2025 indicating that the WRU was

planning to move away from a model of four evenly funded clubs after the Ospreys and Scarlets had failed to sign the new PRA within the deadline set.

AT explained that the Ospreys and Scarlets had initially indicated that they understood why the WRU had chosen to intervene, but had sought a number of assurances. Some of those assurances were acceptable to the WRU, while others were more difficult to accommodate.

AT said that, at the beginning of May, a side letter had been drafted by the lawyers acting for the Ospreys, Scarlets and Dragons, setting out a list of assurances required from the WRU in relation to the Cardiff acquisition. Those assurances were subsequently provided. Cardiff and the Dragons then signed PRA25, whereas the Ospreys and Scarlets did not, instead introducing further requests late in the process.

AT advised that negotiations had been ongoing since August 2024 and that the WRU Board was running out of time to finalise the agreement required for refinancing and for the implementation of improved systems and alignment ahead of the new season.

In relation to the proposal to move away from four equally funded clubs, AT stated that a combination of on-field performance, increased costs, lower-than-forecast revenues, and the administration of Cardiff had demonstrated the fragility of the existing system and had prompted the question of whether the strategy developed in August 2024 remained the correct one.

SCD queried whether contingency planning had been undertaken for the financial risks identified and, if so, why these had not been built into forecasting.

AT confirmed that downside scenarios are included in business planning. AT also stressed that any decision to reduce the number of clubs was not based solely on finance. She stated that the WRU could still afford to fund four clubs at present, but not at a level that would be both competitive and sustainable while also enabling investment in pathways and development.

#### **4. Consultation document: financial evidence and data quality**

##### **4.1 Financial and evidential basis**

SCD stated that the OSC had welcomed the opportunity to contribute to the consultation and had submitted detailed feedback. However, concern was raised that the consultation document did not include comprehensive financial analysis or costings to support the proposed two-team model or the alternative three- and four-team options. Questions were also raised regarding a number of data assumptions referenced in the document. SCD asked for clarification on the evidential and financial basis underpinning the models and what assurance had been taken to ensure that the analysis was robust and sufficiently complete to support informed decision-making.

AT stated that the data contained within the consultation document was robust and invited the OSC to send any identified inaccuracies to her, noting that these issues had not been raised with her previously.

LCD gave, as an example, a chart comparing international performance across different unions. LCD said that the chart was difficult to interpret and appeared to assume that the performance of other unions would remain static. CG also highlighted inconsistencies in the numbers stated for professional players in England compared with Wales.

LCD explained that this issue had been raised with Dave Reddin during the consultation meeting, at which point it had been said that the graph data was aspirational and “borderline fictional”, and that no answer had been provided regarding the player numbers in England.

AT asked whether the OSC believed that this specific example would have changed the outcome. LCD responded that the issue was not the effect on the overall outcome, but rather the inclusion of fictional data in a consultation document without any contextual explanation. LCD stated that this returned to the wider issue of clarity and transparency.

AT reiterated that the consultation feedback had broadly supported the need for change, and that the majority view expressed was that two teams would be too few while four teams were unsustainable.

*(The OSC have since shared specific examples with AT who is reviewing them and will respond in due course)*

## **5. Consultation process: WRU survey**

### **5.1 Survey design and interpretation of responses**

CG reiterated the need for clarity and transparency and raised concerns regarding the structure of the WRU survey issued during the consultation period. CG stated that the limited answer options did not allow supporters’ views to be accurately represented and that respondents were therefore either abandoning the survey out of frustration or selecting options that did not reflect their views simply to progress to the free-text section.

CG asked whether all information provided in the free-text section had been captured and analysed.

AT confirmed that the free-text responses had been analysed as part of the process.

CG further observed that respondents would not necessarily have corrected the earlier unrepresentative answers they had selected in order to reach the free-text section. As a result, those earlier answers would still have been included in the analysis, potentially skewing the overall data.

CG stated that, in her view, the survey had not been designed in a way that would produce accurate and reliable data.

## **6. Potential loss of professional rugby in the Ospreys area**

### **6.1 Impact on the Welsh game and supporter behaviour**

KC raised concern regarding the possible removal of professional rugby from the Ospreys geographical area and the detrimental effect this could have on the development of the Welsh game. KC also challenged the apparent assumption that supporters from any region losing its professional team would simply transfer their support to one of the remaining clubs, stressing that this was highly unlikely.

AT responded that she recognised the risks involved and confirmed that no agreement had yet been reached between the WRU and Y11 in relation to the possible purchase of Cardiff Rugby. AT further stated that no decision had yet been made regarding the future of the Ospreys or the allocation of the West, or any other, licence.

AT acknowledged the strength of supporter affinity and connection within Welsh rugby. She said that, once the issue of Cardiff's future ownership had been resolved, there would be a review of how rugby the West, Central and East Regional geographies would be structured.

AT also stated that, across the 32 consultation meetings held, there had been overwhelming support for the need for change.

SI advised AT that, without clear communication, there was a risk of irreparable damage being done. SI highlighted ongoing concerns regarding communication and lack of transparency, stating that these issues were preventing the WRU from engaging people effectively in the process.

## **7. Collapse of Cardiff Rugby**

### **7.1 Rationale for WRU intervention**

SCD asked why, if Cardiff's collapse had not been the key driver behind the planned reduction in the number of professional teams, this option had not been considered sooner. SCD also referenced the WRU's position that it had been unthinkable to allow professional rugby in the Welsh capital to collapse, and questioned why it was considered acceptable for Cardiff's survival potentially to come at the expense of another club, including one based in Wales' second city with a long-standing contribution to regional rugby and player development.

AT stated that Cardiff's collapse had not been the key driver for the reduction in professional teams. However, allowing Cardiff to go into administration in April would have had a significant and immediate impact on staff, players, WRU finances and the wider Welsh rugby ecosystem.

AT noted that, had Cardiff folded abruptly, the WRU could have faced liabilities of approximately £20 million, including liabilities arising from Cardiff being unable to fulfil fixtures. AT also explained that the WRU is contractually obliged to field four URC teams, with uncapped liability for non-compliance. The decision to rescue Cardiff was therefore taken to prevent sudden collapse and the resulting instability.

SCD raised concerns that any move to three teams would still result in redundancies at another club. AT replied that the distinction was the avoidance of an "overnight collapse", and that a managed transition would allow for the redeployment of staff and players, as well as forward planning.

### **7.2 Possibility of tendering for licences**

AD asked whether, once Cardiff had been sold and all four clubs were privately owned, the WRU might tender for three licences rather than targeting one of the teams in the west.

AT responded that the consent route is still in progress and no decision is final. A tender is also still possible if consent negotiations fail. For tendering, there is a risk that owners may chose not to bid which we need to also consider.

## **8. Swansea Council and local stakeholders**

### **8.1 Communication and redevelopment issues**

SCD asked why Swansea Council and local stakeholders had not been informed earlier about proposals that could remove elite rugby from Swansea after the 2026/27 season, particularly in light of ongoing

redevelopment discussions concerning St Helen's and Swansea Council's commitment of £1.5 million to the project. SCD also asked how the WRU intended to respond to the latest legal action being taken by the Council.

AT stated that matters relating to the redevelopment of St Helen's and Swansea Council were questions for Y11 and Lance Bradley, as she had not had any direct contact with Swansea Council regarding those matters specifically. AT stated that she could not comment on the legal action.

## **9. Women's game and revenue growth**

### **9.1 Strategic alignment and investment**

SCD stated that the OSC strongly supported the development of women's professional rugby and recognised both its strategic importance and growth potential. However, SCD asked why the men's and women's professional games were being aligned within a single strategy when they were at different stages of maturity, particularly in relation to funding and investment growth. SCD also requested greater clarity on the proposed allocation and deployment of funding for the women's professional game.

AT explained that investment in women's rugby remained much smaller than investment in the men's game as a proportion of total rugby investment, and that the WRU was not investing in the women's game at the expense of the men's.

AT acknowledged that growth in the women's game was essential to long-term sustainability and stated that Wales had fallen behind international counterparts and needed to invest in order to compete. AT also said that the figures published represented targeted, phased investment.

### **9.2 Revenue growth and transparency**

LCD stressed that the OSC agreed investment in women's rugby was necessary and appropriate. However, LCD said that the issue being raised was not one of disinvestment, but of financial transparency and how the WRU intended to spend and commit the additional funding.

LCD also asked about growth targets and how these would affect funding for both the men's and women's games, particularly in light of references to improved revenues and loan terms.

AT replied that the WRU's five-year plan included significant revenue growth targets supported by a clear strategy. As one example, AT referred to a new catering contract that would improve the food and beverage offer and increase sales.

LCD responded that it was positive to hear that work was being undertaken in this area, but that no meaningful consideration of growth had been included in the consultation document. LCD said that, following the meeting with Dave Reddin, the OSC had requested an outline of the strategies in place to maximise revenue opportunities.

LCD stated that, frankly, the WRU was not currently achieving optimal revenue levels from this area and asked what active steps were being taken to improve performance.

## **10. Perceived chaos in Welsh rugby governance**

### **10.1 Changes in position and public messaging**

SCD asked whether AT accepted that the previous year had appeared chaotic, noting the progression from four equally funded regions in April, to a move away from four equally funded teams in May, back to a position in July that there was enough funding for four teams, then to the identification of two teams as the optimal model in August/September, and finally to a three-team solution by the end of October.

SCD added that, given the repeated leaking of important announcements to the Welsh media, it was reasonable to conclude that the process had been chaotic and confusing, particularly for an organisation of the WRU's standing in Welsh society.

AT said that this was a fair question. She explained that the WRU had had a plan, but that Cardiff entering administration and the refusal of two clubs to sign PRA25 had caused major disruption. AT also stated that Cardiff's ownership issues had not been caused by the WRU.

AT advised that the three-team solution had emerged directly from the consultation process. She acknowledged the upset and frustration felt by supporters and recognised that media leaks had repeatedly undermined orderly communication. AT expressed her frustration at misinformation and the impact this had had on public perception.

AT also emphasised the efforts she had made to communicate regularly with key stakeholders across Welsh rugby, while noting that achieving clear communication had become increasingly difficult in a social media environment where algorithms could amplify negativity.

## **11. Public confidence and supporter engagement**

### **11.1 Support of the Welsh public**

SCD asked how the WRU was assessing and evidencing public confidence, given recent ticket sales trends, public commentary and organised petitions suggesting concern and dissatisfaction among some stakeholders. SCD noted that on-field performance might be one contributing factor, but that wider issues of governance, culture and transparency had also been raised publicly. SCD asked what steps were being taken to mitigate the risk of longer-term supporter disengagement.

AT said that this was a difficult question and stated that she received both support and criticism, with some public sentiment favouring necessary reform. AT acknowledged the risk of losing supporters and the frustration being caused during the transition.

AT stated that the decisions being taken were difficult, but maintained that change was essential for the survival of Welsh rugby and was in the best interests of Welsh rugby as a whole.

SCD and other members of the OSC Committee recorded their disagreement with that final point.

## **12. Closing remarks**

AT thanked the OSC for the discussion and reiterated her willingness to respond by email to any questions that had not been fully addressed during the meeting.