

Minutes of the  
**League Club Meeting**  
**Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2026**  
Via Zoom at 7.00pm

**Present:** 55 member clubs.

**Not Present:** 21 clubs were not represented, of which 3 offered their apologies in advance of the meeting.

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## 1. Fixtures

- 1.1 Only 11 Part A leagues had been decided out of the 27 Part A leagues. The majority will be sorted by the end of January although some will stretch into Feb due to LFA Cup games etc
- 1.2 Trophies - Clubs were asked to contact the League Secretary to arrange collection of any Part A league winners' trophy
- 1.3 Part B – we will look to extend some of the 3G venues until the end of March and will concentrate on the U12 – U18 games.
- 1.4 Easter Holidays – We agreed at the AGM to have a 3-week break over the Easter Holidays of March 29<sup>th</sup>, April 5<sup>th</sup> and April 12<sup>th</sup>. However, we may look to schedule some U12 – U18 games on Sun 12<sup>th</sup> April to try and help with the backlog. Teams will be allowed a free postponement if they are short of players.
- 1.5 Clubs were reminded that dates and kick off times of the Cup finals had been shared and no changes would be made to these. Clubs were also asked to be careful about booking tournaments in case they clash with the cup finals or league games.
- 1.6 End of Season dates were confirmed as U7-U11 on Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> May and U12-U18 on Sunday 31<sup>st</sup> May or on completion of League and Cup games whichever comes first.
- 1.7 Craig reminded clubs of the Leagues stance on bad weather and advised that games are not generally cancelled across the league due to the large area we cover and the fact that weather warnings are notoriously unreliable. It is not for the league to decide if it is too cold or too windy or too wet for your team to play – teams can make that decision. Note, however, if a team decides not to play, they may be charged with failing to play a game as per league rules, especially if other games played at that venue.
- 1.8 Postponement Forms must be completed. WhatsApp messages or emails will not be accepted and, if games are cancelled within 7 days clubs may still be charged for the pitch and referee.
- 1.9 A reminder was given that the League has no deadline for signing players.
- 1.10 Match returns are required to be completed for every team from U9-U18 and should be completed on Full Time or the Match Day App by Wednesday night following the game.

## 2. Next Season

- 2.1 Craig reminded clubs of the various changes to the formats at each age group being implemented next season.
- 2.2 3v3 – this new format was discussed and the many benefits of it were highlighted including:
  - ✓ More chances to play
  - ✓ More decisions to make in each game
  - ✓ More chances to score
  - ✓ More chances to stop goals being scored
  - ✓ More Kids play rather than being stood on the touchline

There will be an on-line digital Conference for clubs in March (Mon 16<sup>th</sup> – Wed 18<sup>th</sup>) and clubs were encouraged to register for it. It was noted that a couple of other Youth leagues have signalled their intention not to organise 3v3 games for the U7 age group next season and plan

instead to run an U8 5v5 league for U7s. ELFA will be following the wishes of the FA and will continue to provide the 3v3 format for U7s. Clubs were reminded that where an U7 team is registered to 'play up' in an U8 league, any player who reaches the age of Six after 31<sup>st</sup> August 2026, can only play in the U7 age group.

### **3. Respect / Welfare**

- 3.1 Craig highlighted the RESPECT Summary document emailed to clubs which detailed the feedback given by a team opponent each week. As discussed previously RESPECT is a club issue as any incidents that occur reflect the clubs involved.
- 3.2 Craig Highlighted the different attitudes clubs have when sent a report highlighting some poor behaviour. Some clubs are proactive and work to resolve the issue within their club and speak to the opposition, whilst others seem to try to justify the poor behaviour of their coaches or parents by citing the behaviour of the opposition or the Referee

### **4. Governance**

- 4.1 A new LFA ROSE+ membership has now been launched and replaces the old 'legal membership'. It has been designed to allow clubs and leagues who have previously not been able to attend the LFA AGM to do so on the condition that they comply with a new Standards Framework. These new standards are expected to be achievable for the League by the June deadline.
- 4.2 The League submitted several questions to the LFA prior to its AGM in November and these were answered in writing at the AGM. All questions and answers have now been shared with clubs.

### **5. Referees**

- 5.1 An update on the number of Referees in the league was given, and clubs were reminded that they should not be making direct contact with a referee who is under 18 yrs old.

### **6. Finance**

- 6.1 Oct-Dec Fees will be collected this week. There were a few clubs whose Go Cardless payments had failed, and these clubs will be given a further 14 days to make payment, following which fixtures may be withheld until payments are received.

### **7. AOB**

There was none.

Meeting Closed at 8.30pm

Minutes of the

## Management Committee Meeting

Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> January 2026

held on-line at 7.00pm

**Present:** Chris Whalley, Craig Wilkinson, Eddie Harrison, Alan Hawkins, Chris Hughes, Peter Holden

**Apologies:** Andrew Gould

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### 1. Minutes of the Meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> October 2025

These were accepted as an appropriate record.

### 2. Matters Arising

Craig gave an update on the U7 3 v3 format reporting back that a few teams had decided to 'play up' in the U8 5 v5 in Part B. It was agreed that any club moving a team to U8 who had received free goals from the FA will be required to return these to the League.

### 3. Fixtures

3.1 Craig confirmed the venues for the cup finals and associated dates. All finals will be hosted by Great Harwood and Blackburn Eagles St Peter's. It was agreed to again provide finalists with mementos, as these were well received last season.

3.2 Part A – Craig advised that for the first time in memory, we had more Part A divisions undecided at this time of the season. Only 7 of 28 Divisions have been decided, clearly the sustained wet weather over November has played a big part in this – for example, an LFA cup game between two ELFA teams took four weeks to get played.

3.3 A revised fixture calendar was discussed, and it was agreed that, if necessary, League games at U12 - U18 should be scheduled over the Easter School holidays but free postponements would be available if any team was unable to play.

3.4 End of Season dates were confirmed as:

- U7-U11 - Sun 17<sup>th</sup> May
- U12 - U18 - Sun 31<sup>st</sup> May or, when all League and Cup games completed – whichever comes first

### 4. Discipline / Welfare

4.1 The various Discipline feedback forms and the Respect Summary report from Part A were discussed. From this several teams were identified to receive LMC visits on match days over the coming weeks

4.2 FA Disciplinary Proposals – proposed changes to the FA disciplinary process to create a fast-track system was discussed.

Action: [Craig to provide feedback on behalf of the League.](#)

### 5. League Governance

5.1 The LFA has now confirmed the conditions attached to Rose+ membership for Leagues which must be met to continue to be a 'legal' member of the LFA and be able to attend its AGM.

Our league is currently about 80% compliant with the conditions and any additional documents required are reasonably straight forward. The League should be able to be fully compliant by the June deadline.

5.2 An update was given on the LFA AGM attended by the League and the Committee were informed of a disturbing incident involving the LFA Chief Executive whose behaviour was thought to be very disappointing and inappropriate for someone in his position. A written

apology has since been received, and a meeting is to be held with the Chief Executive shortly to discuss our concerns and explore how the league can develop a more positive working relationship with the LFA.

Responses to questions presented to the LFA were provided to members at its AGM and these are to be shared with our own member clubs to show how the League is engaging with the LFA.

- 5.3 It was noted that certain youth leagues in the Northwest continue to breach the Standard Code of Rules (SCORY) and this has again been raised with the LFA and the FA. Craig's disappointment with the apparent inability of the governing bodies to challenge this non-compliance was shared by the committee.

## **6. Referees**

- 6.1 The league has 282 referees registered now, which is an increase of 130 from the start of the season. The number of games with a referee appointed has increased to 89.2 % of all games so far in September compared to 77% last year.
- 6.2 Craig advised he had not fully committed to using the Centre Circle app as yet, as there were some teething issues and a concern that it would not actually speed up the appointment process.

## **7. Finance**

- 7.1 Peter provided an update showing that the League continues to be in a healthy financial position. A large amount has been paid out to various 3G facilities for pitch hire, and we will receive contributions back from clubs at the end of January.

Reports generated from the new accounting software (Xero) are in line with the manual accounts prepared by Peter and the balances in both accounts are the same.

## **8. Any Other business**

- 8.1 Our current League sponsor has expressed a willingness to extend the agreement.  
[Action: Craig to confirm the terms of a new agreement and report back to the committee.](#)
- 8.2 It was agreed to hold the next Club Meeting (on 22<sup>nd</sup> January) on-line to prevent unnecessary travel in wintery conditions.

Meeting closed at 9.05 pm

Minutes of the

## **Management Committee Meeting**

**Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> October 2025 at 7.00pm**

held at Stanley Hub, Thorneyholme Rd, Accrington BB5 6BD at 7.00pm

**Present:** Chris Whalley, Craig Wilkinson, Eddie Harrison, Alan Hawkins, Chris Hughes

**Apologies:** Peter Holden, Andrew Gould

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### **9. Minutes of the Meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> August 2025**

These were accepted as an appropriate record.

### **10. Matters Arising**

A couple of questions were raised regarding the league's feedback forms and the pre-season referee meetings.

### **11. Fixtures**

3.1 Craig gave a positive update on the new 3v3 format. Now clubs are getting used to the format and the match schedule, it is running much smoother. Some team managers have taken on board the match rules better than others and there is still work to do to get parents to understand the new concept. We were visited by a senior FA coach development manager last Sunday who was very impressed at how the session played out. The FA and leagues have a big job to better prepare clubs for next season when the format is mandatory.

We agreed that the offer of help from the FA Regional Coaches should be accepted and that their focus should be with the parents and coaches to help build a better understanding of the concept.

3.2 Details of the Christmas Cups Competitions were shared, with all the finals set for Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> December at Witton Park. Trophies to be awarded to the winners and selection boxes for all participants.

3.3 It was agreed that the Part A league winner trophies will be presented at pitch sides to the various winners.

3.4 Craig expressed concern over getting some Part A leagues completed by Christmas after two wet weekends already. We may have to schedule some games on Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> December for teams who can still win the League in part A.

3.5 The challenge for young referees to make decisions about whether a council pitch is playable was discussed. It was agreed that this can be hard for any young referee, particularly when they may be pressurised to make a decision one way or another. It was therefore agreed that the Home team should make the decision, as it would for non-council venues.

### **12. Discipline / Welfare**

4.1 Various discipline related reports were distributed in advance of the meeting, including Misconduct, Red & Yellow Cards, Match Day Incidents, Referee Reports and Match Observer Reports. These were discussed in some detail, and it was clear that of greatest concern is the level of aggression and disrespect that is reported when an incident occurs. Whilst disciplinary matters are primarily managed by the Sanctioning Authority (the LFA), the League can and should take appropriate measures to manage poor behaviour. The League Secretary will continue to closely monitor all incidents and make arrangements for repeat offenders to be observed by members of the League Management Committee before any decision is made to intervene. It was noted that one team had been suspended in September due to safeguarding issues.

4.2 The summary for discipline in September was as follows:

- 5 Misconduct reports issued to the LFA by referees
- 9 reports received surrounding match day behaviour
- 25 reports received from referees regarding abusive touchlines etc
- 12 reports received from neutral RESPECT observers
- 15 matches awarded to the opposition due to teams failing to play a game
- 91 Yellow cards and 16 Red cards issued

4.3 The matter of what to do when a referee is not appointed by the league was discussed and it was agreed that this must be guided by Rule 23(B) which states:

*“In cases where there are no officially appointed Match Officials in attendance, the Clubs shall agree upon a referee. An individual thus agreed upon shall, for that Competition Match, have the full powers, status and authority of a registered referee.”*

As the rules do not account for no such agreement being made, should there be no agreement the teams are obliged to play the game without an appointed match official.

If either team refuse to play the game, the League Management Committee will decide whether the game is to be re-arranged or cancelled.

4.4 Craig raised his concerns about some managers and parents being far too argumentative about a referee’s decisions and felt that education was needed around the fact that football is a contact sport, fouls will happen, and players may get hurt. He said that blaming a referee for not protecting their child was straying into a very contentious area. It can be difficult for any referee to manage the level of physical contact in a game, and this is especially challenging for younger, less experienced referees and unqualified team managers or parents that volunteer to step in. There is a clear need for everyone to be much calmer in these circumstances.

### 13. League Governance

5.1 Craig provided some feedback from a meeting he attended at the LFA regarding draft proposals for minimum standards of governance for leagues wishing to be legal members of the LFA. This level of membership is to be branded as ‘Rose+’ and will allow attendance at the LFA AGM. None of the suggested criteria would present a problem for ELFA and we are already 90% compliant with the suggested requirements.

5.2 Correspondence has been received from the LFA asking the league to support a “temporary” change to its Articles of Association which reduces the quorum required at its AGM to just 5 members if the number of legal members falls below 70. The current quorum is 20 and it was felt that should there be, for example, 69 legal members, a quorum of 5 was inappropriate. It is understood that this proposal has arisen out of concerns about the low level of interest in the new Rose+ membership and therefore the possibility of an inquorate AGM.

It was unanimously agreed that the proposal could not be supported, as the current quorum of 20 was thought to be already low, and the ‘temporary’ nature of the proposal presented was unclear.

Concerns were also expressed about the new LFA membership platform launched recently by the LFA and it remains to be seen how attractive a proposition this will prove to be, particularly for clubs that already use platforms such as Team Fee Pay.

5.3 Surrige’s sponsorship of the league is in its final year and Craig is to discuss with them whether they are interested in continuing their support and on what terms. Other options are also to be explored.

5.4 Craig shared a proposal on how we could start to engage with the teams within the league on social media by launching a Goal of the Month competition. Starting In November, monthly awards could be given after teams post their entries to the League’s Facebook page. A goal of the season award would also be given after being selected from the monthly winners. We would advertise with the clubs if anyone wished to assist the league in building their profile across the various social media platforms.

#### **14. Referees**

- 6.3 The league has 234 referees registered now, which is an increase of 83 from the start of the season. The number of games with a referee appointed has increased to 89.1 % of all game so far in September compared to 71.7% last September.
- 6.4 Craig shared details of a new referee appointments APP called Centre Circle that he is looking to use to help the appointment process. Better reporting tools will provide the league with greater insight into where issues lie and going forward clubs will be able to confirm games with the referees via the app.
- 6.5 A Referee mentor training session is being organised in conjunction with the ADJFL so senior referees will be trained on how to mentor young referees and help to develop those looking for promotion.

#### **15. Finance**

- 7.2 Peter provided a financial update showing the League in a healthy position due to league fees being received in advance of any significant expenditure being incurred. Craig confirmed that the new accounting software now being used reflected the figures contained within Peter's report. This will continue to be tracked throughout the season to prepare for a move to an online accounting system from season 2026/27 onwards.

#### **16. Any Other business**

- 8.3 It was agreed to move the next Club Meeting to January as many people find it difficult to attend a meeting during December.

Meeting closed at 9.05 pm

Minutes of the

## League Club Meeting

Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> August 2025

held at Enfield Cricket Club at 7.00pm

**Present:** 34 Club representatives.

**Not Present:** 41 clubs were not represented, of which 11 offered their apologies in advance of the meeting.

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Clubs were welcomed by the chairman who thanked those in attendance and wished everyone good luck for the season ahead.

### 8. Pre-Season Admin

- 1.11 Emails have been sent to clubs highlighting those teams that do not have the minimum number of players registered. Failure to do so by Sunday 31<sup>st</sup> August will result in their games being cancelled and further action may be taken.
- 1.12 A few teams are still showing as being un-affiliated with the County FA and these need sorting before 31<sup>st</sup> August or fixtures will be removed.
- 1.13 10 clubs still have not sent in their team contact numbers – chase up emails have been sent.
- 1.14 Fees for any additional teams entered will be added to the Go cardless payment system next week.
- 1.15 Clubs were reminded that any communications that require action, an email must be sent to the League Secretary. Whilst WhatsApp messages are fine, at times, there is a chance these will get missed and not actioned.

### 9. Fixtures

#### 2.3 Fixtures

- fixtures have been added to the FA Full Time System and provisional fixture lists for September have been sent to clubs so they can be checked for pitch clashes.
  - any requests for kick off changes can only come from the home team, as these will impact on that clubs' pitch availability.
  - fixture lists this season will be downloaded from the FA Full Time system, and therefore teams with no games will not appear on the fixture list.
  - postponement request forms must be submitted 7 clear days before the game i.e. by no later than Saturday night.
  - U12-U18 teams are now allowed 3 postponements per season, all other ages are allowed unlimited requests.
  - cup games cannot be postponed, and a fixture calendar has been issued to confirm when cup games are to be scheduled.
  - a weekly spreadsheet will continue to be issued on a Monday morning, and no changes can be made to fixtures once this has been issued.
  - the League does try to help clubs more than a lot of other leagues do, in terms of scheduling fixtures to ensure pitch clashes don't occur and dealing with requests to change divisions etc which creates pitch scheduling issues.
  - as results are not recorded for U7s, fixtures will not be uploaded to the FA Full Time system.
- 2.4 Clubs were reminded of the mandatory workshop for U7 Team Managers which will be held on Sunday 7th September, the details of which have been circulated.

## 2.5 LFA Cups

- these competitions are run by the LFA, not the League, so any issues should be directed to the LFA.
- all LFA Cup fixtures are uploaded to the FA Full Time system with a default KO time of 11.00 am. Craig will then alter that kick off time, if at home, to fit in with the schedule of games already at that venue. The home team must then inform the LFA and their opponents of the new time.
- Craig will appoint referees for all home ties up to the Quarter Finals.
- if a team is unable to field a side for a league match because it has players playing for a Saturday team in the LFA Cup, they will need to use one of their postponements or forfeit the match.

## 10. Player Registrations

- 3.3 Transfers will recommence on Monday 1<sup>st</sup> September where a £5 fee is due for each transfer. Clubs were reminded that 7 days' notice needs to be given to the team from whom they are requesting the player to be transferred from. They should not submit the transfer on the portal until 7 days after such notice has been given unless agreement has been received in writing from the other team. Teams who do not follow this process may be liable to disciplinary action.
- 3.4 Players can register for more than 1 team if the teams are in different age groups. However, the rules concerning maximum playing time in a day must always be followed.
- 3.5 Rule 18(J) allows teams to play a player from their club in a different age group to which they are currently registered, to ensure games are not cancelled due to player shortages. A team can use this option up to 4 times in the season.

At the foundation ages we are similarly happy to allow players to play for different teams in the same age group, if that helps teams to play a game rather than cancelling it. Any team found abusing this for competitive advantage will be liable to additional sanctions. PLEASE NOTE in Cup competitions a player can only play for one team.

- 3.6 Squad Lists (as downloaded from the Club Portal) must be available at every match for inspection, if requested. If a team manager is unable to provide a Squad List when requested, the Referee should be notified so that this can be included in their match report.

## 11. Match Day Protocols

- 4.3 Home team managers must make contact with their opposition at least 48 hrs before the game.
- 4.4 The home team is responsible for setting up the nets, corner flags, respect barriers and technical areas where a maximum of **TWO** team officials per team are allowed.
- 4.5 Post Match both teams are required to submit the result of the game by 5pm Sunday and 9pm for a midweek game. Additionally, they must fully complete their match return online by no later than Wednesday night. This applies to **EVERY TEAM** at **ALL AGES** bar Under 7.
- 4.6 NEW Rules introduced by the FA include
- the No Heading and Pass/ Dribble in rule has now been extended to cover the age groups of Under 7 - Under 10.
  - the 8 second rule for holding on to the ball by the Goalkeeper will be actioned.
  - A new 'Captains only' protocol will be introduced for U15 - U18s, which means only the captain (or nominated alternative) can approach the Referee for clarification or to question a decision. Any other player who does so will be cautioned for dissent.

## 12. Referees

12.1 We currently have 201 referees registered for the league of which 37 passed their course over the summer. At the end of last year, we had 292 referees registered – although some are still to submit their application forms.

12.2 Referee Fees are unchanged this season and are as follows:

- U7 / U8: **£10**
- U9 / U10: **£15**
- U11 / U12: **£24**
- U13 / U14: **£26**
- U15 / U16: **£30**
- U18: **£35**

Any club who fails to pay a referee in cash on the day will be fined an additional fee by the League.

12.3 Referee appointments will be issued as normal to club secretaries each Thursday and can be found on the League website – [www.elfaleague.co.uk](http://www.elfaleague.co.uk). Clubs are encouraged to support all referees and to use the Feedback form on a weekly basis to report those referees who did well and additionally those referees who could benefit from some additional support. Isy has assembled a team of 12 experienced Referees who will be asked to mentor and report on referees over the season.

## 13. Respect / Welfare

13.1 A reminder that the LFA will deal with any incidents involving parents/spectators challenging the sex of a player during a game. Clubs are advised that any such behaviour is unacceptable and will not be tolerated.

13.2 Clubs are reminded that all managers in attendance must have a valid DBS check in place. Those teams who are not compliant with the safeguarding requirements of the sport will have their fixtures withdrawn until they are compliant.

13.3 Match Day visits will be conducted by members of the League Management Committee where they will be checking that the team officials present match the details on the Club Portal. Random checks will also be made on the player squad lists and additional observations made on RESPECT guidelines and Standards of Behaviour.

13.4 Clubs were also advised that teams will be independently monitored throughout the season for their compliance with the sport's Codes of Conduct and RESPECT Guidelines. These will be collated via the match reports completed online by team officials, post-match.

13.5 As per last season, there is a google form available that anyone can submit after a game when an incident has occurred that the League needs to be made aware of.

## 14. Discipline

7.1 The main areas where clubs may breach the League rules and face disciplinary action are

- Results not being submitted by 5pm Sun Night - £5 fine
- Match Return not completed by Wed Night - £10 Fine
- Games not being played

7.2 If a player is sent off in any game the suspension starts the following Sunday. A reminder was given that it is the teams responsibility to monitor this and if the charge does not appear in the Club Portal by Tuesday night, then they should contact the LFA.

## 15. AOB

8.1 The meeting was asked to consider if it was important to hold meetings and would email communication outlining important points suffice. Some were in favour of retaining face to face meetings because it provided an opportunity to meet other club officials. Others felt that face to face meetings may not be necessary as all the information that clubs require can be

provided by email. Further consideration is to be given to this and the pre-Christmas meeting will be held on a video conferencing app such as Teams or Zoom.

- 8.2 Craig explained that whilst fines are issued to Clubs for not attending league meetings, the League has no wish to profit from this. The League Management Committee decided therefore to return these funds to the members in the form of a Prize Draw. The prize fund will reflect the fines levied for non-attendance at the previous meeting and would only be awarded to a club that was present at the meeting when the draw is made.

The first club to be drawn that was present at the meeting was Fulledge Colts, who were awarded £250 for their club funds. Astley & Buckshaw and Preston City were initially drawn but neither club was present at the meeting and therefore did not qualify.

Meeting Closed at 20.15

Minutes of the

## Management Committee Meeting

Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> August 2025 at 7.00pm

held at Stanley Hub, Thorneyholme Rd, Accrington BB5 6BD at 7.00pm

**Present:** Chris Whalley, Craig Wilkinson, Eddie Harrison, Alan Hawkins, Peter Holden, Andrew Gould

**Apologies:** Chris Hughes

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### 17. Minutes of the Meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> June 2025

These were accepted as an appropriate record.

### 18. Matters Arising

There was none.

### 19. Governance / League Development

3.6 The level and nature of fines were considered. It was agreed to continue the push for teams to complete Match Returns on Full Time for all age groups from U8 to U18 as the information collected enables a better understanding of what is happening on match days. The level of fines will remain unchanged from the previous season and Craig will continue to send out a weekly reminder to try and ensure greater compliance. A fine of £10 will be levied to those failing to complete a Match Return.

It was agreed a fine of £5 would be levied to teams failing to submit a match score. Scores should be submitted by Sunday night and any team failing to do so will be sent a final reminder on Monday morning, following which fines will be issued to any team that has failed to provide a result.

3.7 Various league forms were shared in advance of the meeting, and a few amendments were suggested prior to and during the meeting. Links to these online google forms will be issued to clubs ahead of the season along with some guidance on how to complete each of them.

The forms discussed were as follows:

- Match Postponement Request – to be used to request a match postponement.
- Match Complaint Form – to advise the League of any matchday behaviour that did not meet the FA's Standards of Behaviour.
- Referee Feedback Form – to provide helpful feedback on a referee's conduct and general management of a match.
- League Matchday Feedback Form – to provide the League with a report containing essential information about a match and an assessment of each team's compliance with all relevant rules, guidelines and codes of conduct. This report will be completed by members of the LMC.
- Referee Match Report – to provide the league with match day feedback from the referee's perspective.

A new form is to be created for teams wishing to notify the league of any opponents that made the match day environment and everyone's experience as positive as it could be.

**Action:** [Craig to draft this form for further consideration.](#)

3.8 Craig provided an update on the new 3v3 format for U7s next season and confirmed that Witton Park 3G has agreed to store the goals and set up the pitches every week. The FA have confirmed that new goalposts are to be provided for both the central venue, and subsequently to those clubs with U7s taking part in the early adoption of the 3v3 format.

3.9 A Contract for Service for the League Secretary was considered, setting out the terms of the League Secretary's engagement and the services to be delivered. The contract was approved

by the committee and signed by Craig and the Chairman, Chris Whalley, in the presence of other committee members.

## 20. Fixtures

4.1 Craig reported that the master fixture list had been produced, and fixtures are to be uploaded to Full Time over the next 10 days. For U12 - U18 all Part A fixtures are to be uploaded, and for U8 - U11 matches fixtures for Sept and Oct will be initially uploaded. Nov & Dec fixtures will be uploaded mid-October. A weekly spreadsheet will continue to be issued to Club Secretaries every Monday, which should match what is on Full Time and the Match Day App. This spreadsheet will, as always, be the bible to go by.

Referee appointments will again be shared with Club Secretaries every Thursday and will now be uploaded to the League's website. Craig advised that the Full-Time email notifications have been stopped.

Craig expressed some concern about getting all games played in certain age groups following changes that were made to Division structures after feedback from clubs. There are several factors to consider including larger division sizes, an extra week off at Xmas and Easter, the decision taken by members to increase the number of postponements allowed, and the removal of late kick off times at 3G venues.

It was noted that on a weekly basis we will be scheduling around 11 less games at 11 v 11 on 3G.

Clubs will be advised that 21<sup>st</sup> December, 4<sup>th</sup> January and 29<sup>th</sup> March will be made available for teams at U12 - U18 who are behind and need to catch up on games.

In terms of 3G venues the increasing cost of hire is putting pressure on how much the League can subsidise the fees paid by teams. It was agreed that we should budget for pitch fees to remain unchanged this coming season but to consider increasing the fees for season 2026/27.

It was also agreed that we should not book St Wilfrid's 3G due to the weekly hire fee and the harsh terms and conditions of booking which mean we still pay for a pitch even if a game is called off due to bad weather.

A fixture timetable was shared which showed potential dates for Cup rounds etc and all agreed that this would be welcomed by the clubs.

4.2 The subject of making changes to kick off times was discussed, and it was agreed that kick off times cannot be changed, and times are set as per the Home Pitch Details form sent in by each club. This document will be shared with clubs ahead of the season.

It was agreed that it is very difficult to change a kick off time for one team, due to the knock-on effect that this may have on other games at that venue and on referee allocations.

## 21. Welfare / Safeguarding

5.5 Standards of Behaviour – The 'RESPECT' feedback provided within match returns was discussed and it was agreed that we should use this feedback again to identify issues across the league. The number of match day visits by members of the League Management Committee is to be increased next season which will involve:

- an observation of behaviour on and around the pitch
- a check that the identity of the club officials present matches the records held on the Club portal.
- a check that a randomly selected player from each team appears on their team's Squad list as downloaded from the Club portal.

5.6 Adults In Junior Football (AIJF) Workshop - A mandatory workshop is to be held for all U7 team managers / assistant managers on Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> September at St Peters Social Club in Blackburn at 10 am.

## **22. Match Officiating & Discipline**

- 6.6 Two Pre-Season meetings are to be held in September to review any new FA initiatives and remind referees of what is expected of them. Craig has asked the LFA to attend but we have not had a response from them yet.
- 6.7 12 senior referees have expressed an interest in helping Isby with a mentor / development programme and Craig will continue to work with him to identify those referees who may need additional support.
- 6.8 Craig advised we currently had 151 referees who have submitted a form to participate in the league next season. At the end of last season, we had 282 names on our register, so there are still a lot of referees who need to re-affiliate and register with us again.

## **23. FINANCE**

- 7.3 Peter provided a financial update showing the League in a healthy position due to league fees being received in advance of any significant expenditure being incurred. Craig confirmed that the new accounting software now being used reflected the figures contained within Peter's report. This will continue to be tracked throughout the season to prepare for a move to an online accounting system from season 2026/27 onwards.
- 7.4 Craig presented a budget forecast for the season, which was approved by the committee. It was noted that based on the forecast a very small surplus may be achieved by the year end.
- 7.5 Craig confirmed that a fee of £4 will be charged for each team of 3 participating in the U7s 3v3 format on Witton Park 3G.

Meeting closed at 9.05 pm

Minutes of the

## **Annual General Meeting of the East Lancashire Football Alliance**

**Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> July 2025**

held at Enfield Cricket Club at 7.00 pm

**Members Present:** 39 Clubs represented; 4 Management Committee members.

**Not Present:** 35 Clubs not represented

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*Prior to the start of the meeting the League Secretary explained how the League awards its **Club of the Year**, and Chairman, Chris Whalley, then presented this season's award to **Whalley Juniors**.*

### **1. Minutes of the Previous Meeting held on 19<sup>th</sup> June 2024**

These were accepted as an appropriate record. (*Prop: Lammack, Sec: Mill Hill Juniors*)

### **2. Matters Arising**

There were none.

### **3. League Secretary Report**

We've had another very successful year with a record number of 662 teams registering with the League, spread across 90 clubs.

Over 8,600 matches were scheduled, which was over 1,000 more than last season, thanks to a very mild Winter and 17,426 goals were scored.

1,404 games were postponed and not rescheduled for various reasons compared with 1,094 games last season due largely to the rule change that allowed postponements up until Wednesday night without consequence. Despite this extra time being allowed, 231 games were still awarded as a 'walkover' compared to 187 in the previous season.

Full use was again made of the various 3G pitches across the League and the cost of using these pitches was again subsidised by the league.

In terms of sporting success, 34 different clubs won a trophy last season, which represents 38% of the members. Several clubs were successful in the County Cups where 20 teams reached their respective quarter final with 6 progressing to the semis and 3 teams making the final.

By the end of last season, we had 293 referees registered with the League, an increase of 80 on the previous season. This meant 78.3% of games enjoyed the service of a league appointed referee which was a significant improvement against last season when only 61.5% of games were covered. We continue to work with the LFA to attract more new referees. Referee retention is also a priority, and we continue to improve our feedback to support young referees and try to help them improve and enjoy their matchday experience.

In terms of the matchday experience clubs reported that the behaviour on the pitch by players had improved but the behaviour displayed around the pitch by Coaches and spectators had deteriorated. The number of games involving regular incidents of poor behaviour increased from 85 to 179, which represents 1.6% of games played.

The number of matchday reports received increased by 35% year on year, which is fantastic, but we still have far too many match reports not being completed. This is something we will look to focus on next season. We encourage all clubs to address this with their teams and

remind all coaches and spectators of the standards of behaviour required around the pitch on match day. Congratulations to the 106 teams who had no reports of poor behaviour on or off the pitch all season.

This season we were one of a few leagues nationally who helped the FA trial the new 3v3 format ahead of the mandatory changes being implemented from season 2026/27. Our feedback has helped the FA shape their plans and further observations will happen next season as the League has been selected to be an early adopter of the 3v3 format at Under 7.

Additionally, the League Management Committee worked hard over the season reviewing the league's constitution to ensure it was suitable for our needs going forward. Various meetings were held with the FA and legal advisors which has led to a proposal introducing new clauses to our Constitution and Rules. We would like to place on record our thanks to Kevin Lister from Bury FC U15 who has helped in this matter.

Financially the league is in a healthy position and as part of our modernisation we will be making use of new accounting software next season.

We thank all our member clubs for their continued support and hope all our teams have enjoyed their season.

We look forward to welcoming everyone back next season.

#### 4. Finance

A financial summary was sent out to members and questions submitted and answered prior to the meeting. The League Treasurer highlighted some salient points, and no further questions were raised and the accounts were duly accepted

Dave Crook (Clitheroe Wolves) was re-appointed to verify the League's financial statement for 2025/26.

#### 5. Alteration of Rules

5.1 Mandatory changes issued by the FA were noted.

5.2 Additional clauses proposed by the League Management Committee were unanimously accepted.

5.3 The following proposed amendments were voted upon by the meeting:

5.3.1. **Rule 5(B): Management, Nomination, Election** (Proposed by: Management Committee)

Amend the first paragraph as follows:

"Retiring Officers shall be eligible to become candidates for re-election without nomination provided that the Officer notifies the Secretary in writing not later than ~~31st May~~ **35 days prior to the date of the AGM** in each year."

Amend the first sentence of the second paragraph, as follows:

"All other candidates for election as Officers of the Competition shall be nominated to the Secretary in writing, signed by the secretaries of two Clubs, not later than ~~31st May~~ **21 days prior to the date of the AGM** in each year."

*Rationale: To set appropriate deadlines relative to the date of the AGM which is subject to change.*

**CARRIED**

5.3.2. **Rule 18(A)2.: Qualification of Players** (Proposed by: Management Committee)

Amend as follows:

"The registration process must incorporate a ~~current passport-size~~ **recent** photograph (taken not less than 12 months before the date of registration), of the Player seeking registration together with confirmation that the Player's proof of date of birth has been checked by the Club and is accurate.

All players must be approved **by the Competition** before any scheduled fixture for them to play in any Competition match. Failure to comply with this rule will result in a fine in accordance with the Fines Tariff.” ⚠

*Rationale:* To be more specific about how recent the photograph must be.

**CARRIED**

5.3.3. **Rule 20(A): Conditions of Play** (Proposed by: Management Committee)

Amend the first sentence after the table as follows:

“Competition Matches for age groups from U7 to U10 can be played in either quarters or halves. This Competition uses ~~quarters / halves. (delete as appropriate).~~”

*Rationale:* To reflect current practice.

**CARRIED**

5.3.4. **Rule 20(K): Conditions of Play** (Proposed by: Mill Hill JFC)

Amend as follows:

“A current **printed** Squad List (as downloaded from the FA Player Registration System) ~~must, if requested,~~ be made available to the opposing manager, the Referee or any Competition Official prior to, during or after the match, to enable player eligibility to be checked. Failure to comply with this rule will result in ~~a fine in accordance with the Fines Tariff~~ **the following consequences:**

- U7 - U11: the team failing to produce a Squad List will be fined in accordance with the Fines tariff and a reminder of the rules will be sent to the club.
- U12-U18: the team failing to produce a Squad List will forfeit the game, be deducted 3pts and be fined in accordance with the Fines tariff. The game may be played in a friendly format, if both teams agree.
- Cup Competitions: the team failing to produce a Squad List will forfeit the game. The game may be played in a friendly format, if both teams agree.

*Rationale:* Playing ineligible players is rife and we have never known it so bad. Standards have dropped and the clubs that aim to abide by league rules are now being punished by either teams cheating / being threatened or made to look like we are in the wrong when asking for squad lists. Now the FA has removed all squad lists it makes it easier to play players who are not signed by the club and, most importantly, not insured by the club. Now the county FA has removed players who are suspended, we can no longer see this information, so teams can easily play suspended players as all information is now hidden from the opponent. It's too much of a grey area, we need to make it a 'must' rule', at the minute it's more like an 'if you like' rule and that's what is causing confrontation or cheating, as coaches don't want to be put in that situation.

**LOST**

5.3.5. **Rule 20(M): Postponements** (Proposed by: Management Committee)

Amend the second sentence as follows:

“Each team ~~will be able to~~ **may** request the following number of postponements no later than ~~3-7~~ **clear** days prior to the match being played.”

*Rationale:* The change made last year to allow postponements to be requested up to 3 days prior to a match has proved to be too disruptive to the fixture schedule and created a greater level of frustration and disappointment for teams having their games cancelled at short notice.

**CARRIED**

5.3.6. **Rule 20(M): Postponements** (Proposed by: Langho JFC)

Amend the second bullet point as follows:

- “U12 – U18: each team will be allowed ~~2~~ **3** requests at any time throughout the season.

*Rationale:* Given the current scheduling and the numbers who can't play football over school holidays, Easter etc, we look to either extend the number of postponements allowed or not to schedule league games during these periods.

## CARRIED

### 5.3.7. **Rule 20(M): Postponements** (Proposed by: Langho JFC)

Add new sentence after the second bullet point as follows:

“For school educational visits a further postponement is allowed.”

*Rationale: Self-explanatory.*

## LOST

### 5.3.8. **Appendix (C): Qualification of Players** (Proposed by: Mill Hill JFC)

Add new sentence, as follows:

“To play in an U12-U18 Semi-Final or Final a player must have been registered with the club on or before the date of the Quarter-Final.”

*Rationale: It would line up with the County FA rule and stop teams trying to win at all costs by signing players on so late in the season to advance in the Cup Competition.*

## LOST

## 6. Election of Clubs

The following clubs were accepted as members of the league:

- Cherrybrook
- Danehouse
- FC Hyndburn
- Footy Zone
- Hindley Jnrs
- Rising Star FC
- Rossendale FC

## 7. Structure & Operation of the League

- 7.1 **U7** - The league has been selected as an early adopter of the 3v3 format for **U7s** and all games in Part A will be played at a central venue. Games in Part B will then be scheduled as ‘Home and Away’ fixtures.
- 7.2 **U8-U11** will play Home and Away development games all season – there will be **two** cup competitions next season, one before Christmas and the traditional one at the end of the season.
- 7.3 **U12-U18** - Mixed leagues will be split into Part A and Part B. Teams will play each other once in both part A and Part B.
- 7.4 Any discrepancy in **Division sizes** will be rectified via promotion and relegation in part B.
- 7.5 A **cup competition** will be held for every team
- 7.6 **Girls Leagues** – The structure and format for the girls’ groups is being looked at and further information will be provided once we have agreed on the new formats, which will be designed to ensure girls teams have a variety of games along with opportunities to play in several competitive games and give more teams a chance to win a trophy.
- 7.7 The playing season will start on Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> September 2025 and finish no later than 31<sup>st</sup> May 2026.
- 7.8 Games are allowed to be scheduled between 9am and 2.30pm.
- 7.9 The league will continue to block-book 3G pitches from early November to the 1<sup>st</sup> March. Pitch fees are to be shared by home and away teams and precise costs will be confirmed at the pre-season league meeting. As requested by clubs, all 3G games will be scheduled to be completed by 2pm.

## **8. Election of Officers**

Members of the League Management Committee were elected as follows:

- Chairman – Chris Whalley
- Treasurer – Peter Holden
- Welfare – Andrew Gould
- Development – Alan Hawkins
- Secretary – Craig Wilkinson
- Club Rep – Chris Hughes
- Club Rep – Eddie Harrison

The Management Committee will be supported by additional officers who were appointed as follows:

- Referee Development and Recruitment - Ismail Esat
- Referee Support - Bilal Gulma
- Girls Lead – Chris Bentley

Additional roles may be added in the future

## **9. Any Other Business**

There was none.

Meeting closed at 7.50pm

Minutes of the

## Management Committee Meeting

Wednesday 11th June 2025 at 7.00pm

held at Stanley Hub, Thorneyholme Rd, Accrington BB5 6BD at 7.00pm

**Present:** Chris Whalley, Craig Wilkinson, Eddie Harrison, Alan Hawkins, Peter Holden, Chris Hughes, Bilal Gulma, Chris Bentley. **Apologies:** Ismail Esat, Andrew Gould

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### 1. Minutes of the Meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> April 2025

These were accepted as an appropriate record.

### 2. Matters Arising

There was none.

### 3. Governance / League Development

3.1 AGM – 11 clubs have formally resigned from the league and a further 10 clubs have not yet confirmed their intentions for next season.

3.2 League Policies – All league policies will be reviewed over the summer to ensure they continue to be fit for purpose and compliant with FA requirements.

### 4. League Administration

4.1 3v3 Early Adoption – an all-day workshop will be delivered on Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> and Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> July at the Townfield Mobility Arena, Great Harwood, for which all U7 team managers have been asked to register on-line. To demonstrate the 3v3 format, 24 players will be required for an hour each day.

Action: Craig to email clubs involved to ask for their support in providing players.

The League will use both a 'central venue' and a 'home and away' model for its U7 fixture programme over the season, starting with a central venue so that everyone can fully understand the format in a mutually supportive environment.

Action: Craig to arrange a suitable venue and confirm a fixture programme in due course.

It was agreed to appoint a Referee to manage the fixture programme on match day, to ensure games start and finish on time and in unison.

4.2 Season 2025/26 - Part A Groups – The proposed groupings for the new season were shared and Craig advised that he had reduced the number of Divisions in most ages to ensure each division had a larger number of teams following feedback from clubs. These will be issued to clubs later this week.

The season will start for all age groups except the U7s on Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> September. U7s will start on Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> September.

### 5. Welfare / Safeguarding

5.1 Standards of Behaviour – The 'RESPECT' feedback provided within match returns were discussed and ways to improve next season were considered. It was agreed that those clubs scoring highly and whose conduct is consistently reported as positive and compliant with our Standards of Behaviour should be appropriately recognised. Further consideration is to be given to how clubs might be rewarded in some way for demonstrating the right ethos and providing a fun and safe matchday experience.

Craig explained how a range of criteria has been used to identify our Club of the Year which includes match day behaviour, disciplinary records and a club's diligence in completing match returns.

Action: Craig to share this with clubs later this week

5.2 Adults In Junior Football (AIJF) Workshop - A workshop is to be held for all U7 team managers / assistant managers on Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> September, where the main features of the new 3v3 format will be explained so that everyone involved is fully aware of what the expectations will be.

Action: Craig to arrange a venue for this workshop.

## 6. Match Officiating & Discipline

6.1 Two Pre-Season meetings are to be held in September to review any new FA initiatives and remind referees of what is expected of them.

6.2 Ishy is looking at setting up a support and development programme where we can tailor some support for new inexperienced referees and for those looking to progress their ability levels.

## 7. Finance

Peter provided a summary of Income and expenditure, and this prompted some discussion around the detail.

- The subsidisation of Pitch Fees increased dramatically this season due to various reasons including undercharging U7 teams on 3G to retain the costs as they applied previously at the Soccerdome.
- An increased number of games being cancelled on a Wednesday night by teams on 3G causing difficulties in rescheduling teams to fill those slots.
- Strict cancellation policies by some providers meant that costs were still incurred even when the weather prevented the game from being played.
- Fines have increased significantly due to a stricter application of the rules and the simplification of the fines procedure for failing to complete a Match Return.
- Additional one-off expenses were higher this season and included higher than expected set up costs for the league's new website, prizes for clubs and referees with the Euro sweepstake and Fantasy League.

Action: Peter to prepare a detailed account for members ahead of the AGM.

## 8. Any Other Business

There was none.

Meeting closed at 9.05 pm

Minutes of the

## League Club Meeting

Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> May 2025

held at Enfield Cricket Club at 7.00pm

**Present:** Chris Whalley (Chair), Craig Wilkinson (Secretary), 42 Club representatives.

**Not Present:** 45 clubs were not represented, of which 21 offered their apologies in advance of the meeting.

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### 1. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Minutes of the Club Meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> December 2024, previously distributed, were accepted as an appropriate record.

### 2. Matters Arising

There were none.

### 3. Governance

#### 3.1 Proposed Rule Alterations

Additions and amendments to the League's Constitution and Rules were distributed prior to the meeting for members' consideration.

RA1. ELFA Constitution & Rules: following a thorough review, several new clauses are to be proposed for the good governance of the League.

RA2. Rule 5(A): a minor amendment to avoid a breach of the rules if only one member is elected to the committee. There will continue to be two positions on the committee for members.

RA3. Rule 5(B): specific date deadlines are to be replaced with the number of days' notice required which will more readily allow a change to the date of the AGM.

RA4. Rule 18(A)2: the proposed change to require player photographs to be "6 months before the date of registration" was considered and it was agreed to amend the proposal to "12 months" in line with the requirements of the ADJFL.

RA5. Rule 20(A): this minor amendment simply confirms the practice of games being played in halves.

RA6. Rule 20(K): this proposal was discussed in some depth and is presented in the belief that the playing of ineligible players is rife. Some felt that the rules are sufficient as they are and that the proposal was over complicated and unlikely to be successfully implemented.

RA7. Rule 20(M): the League Secretary advised that the change made last year to reduce the deadline for postponements to 3 days had caused a lot of problems and there had already been over 1,000 postponements causing a lot of disruption and additional work. A deadline of "7 clear days" is to be proposed.

RA8. Rule 20(M): a proposal has been made to increase the number of postponements allowed from 2 to 3 or alternatively to no longer schedule games over school holidays.

RA9. Rule 20(M): a further proposal has been submitted to allow an additional postponement where a school educational visit prevents players being available to play. This was discussed in some detail and some concern expressed about how such events would be defined and evidenced. Some questioned why these events couldn't be covered under the existing allowance and it was noted that the ADJFL have a clause in their rules that covers such events. The Secretary is to consider whether the inclusion of the same clause can be proposed.

RA10. Appendix (C): this proposal requires a player to be registered with a club on or before the date of their Quarter Final. This would be in line with County FA rules and was met with general approval.

RA11. Members were reminded of the proposal that went before an inquorate Special General Meeting last year, to make the Girls' section open only to Girls. This will also be presented to members at the AGM.

3.2 The League's Annual General Meeting is to be held on Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> July.

3.3 Amendments to any of the abovementioned proposals must be submitted to the Secretary by 1<sup>st</sup> June following which a copy of all proposed alterations will be sent to the Lancashire FA for their approval.

3.4 The Secretary encouraged any member interested in getting involved with the management of the League to get in touch with him and to consider being nominated for a position on the Management Committee. Current members of the committee must confirm their intention to stand for re-election, and all other nominations must be received, by 31<sup>st</sup> May.

#### 4. Season 2025/26

Important information and deadlines for next season were provided:

4.1 League Forms - Club Application Forms must be returned by 1st June, all team fees and home pitch details must be submitted by 30<sup>th</sup> June, and the Team Contacts sheet must be submitted by the end of August.

4.2 Part A Groups - will be drafted mid-June and set by 30th June, following which a full fixture schedule will be drafted during July. Fixtures will then be uploaded to Full Time in August.

4.3 Fixture Breaks - the Secretary confirmed there will be two fixture breaks next season, at Christmas and Easter, each of which will be for 3 weeks. There will therefore be 31 weeks during which fixtures will be scheduled. Re-arranged fixtures may still be played during fixture breaks by arrangement between the teams concerned.

4.4 3G Block Bookings - will be arranged from Week 9 (2/11/25) to Week 23 (1/3/25) and, due to the unpopularity of a late kick off, 2pm will be the latest finish time.

4.5 Part B Groups - will be set and fixtures uploaded to Full Time during the Christmas break.

4.6 Group / Division Sizes – will be increased next season to a minimum of 10 in the U12-U18s, and every effort will be made to make the number of teams in each group an even number, to avoid teams having weeks with no game.

4.7 Fixture Spreadsheet – whilst fixtures will be uploaded in advance to Full Time, the customary fixture spreadsheet will continue to be issued on a Monday. The spreadsheet will be available on the League website to view or download and referee appointments will be added to it on a Thursday.

4.8 3v3 Early Adopters – the FA have invited expressions of interest (EOI) from leagues around the country to be early adopters of the 3v3 format for U7s which will be a mandatory format from Season 2026/27 onwards. The League has submitted an EOI with a view to introducing the format using central venues. The background to the introduction of 3v3 was discussed and the League's Management Committee is very supportive of this new format for U7s.

4.9 Match Returns – some clubs are regularly failing to complete a Match Return on the Full-Time system and to date only 25% of clubs have completed all their Match Returns. The Secretary asked everyone to pay more attention to this requirement as it was essential to gather as much information as possible from all games. This enables the league to understand what is happening on match day and respond better to any issues arising.

4.10 Referees - There has been an increase in the number of referees serving the league this season with about 78% of games being covered. It was suggested that 5v5 games may not really need a referee and perhaps next season referees could be allocated to 7v7 games upwards.

## 5. Welfare / RESPECT

- 5.1 Match Observations – next season more matches will be observed by members of the management committee and the secretary will also explore the possibility of asking the parents of young referees to provide the league with feedback.
- 5.2 Behaviour Questions - A change is to be made to the questions the league asks in the Match Return regarding the behaviour of those around the pitch to differentiate between team officials and parents/spectators.
- 5.3 Referees - about 70% of referees working for the league are Under 18 years of age and 'respect' and safeguarding remains an issue.
- 5.4 DBS Process – members may be aware that the way a DBS is obtained through FA systems has now been upgraded. Utilising the new England Football Portals and Digital ID Self-verification, the new DBS process will significantly reduce the time to process the check.

The new process will, on average, reduce the total time for applications to be completed by 50%, or up to 15 days per application. As part of the improved service, DBS applicants will be provided with access to a 'Self Verification' tool, removing the need to meet a verifier to complete an application, which will save time for both applicants and Club Officials.

Self-Verification means you can scan your own documents, and your face, using your mobile device. Additionally, once a DBS is held in the new system you will also be able to start your own DBS renewal within the 'MyAccount' area.

## 6. Any Other Business

There was none.

Meeting closed at 9.00 pm

Minutes of the

## Management Committee Meeting

Thursday 10th April 2025 at 7.00pm

held at Stanley Hub, Thorneyholme Rd, Accrington BB5 6BD at 7.00pm

**Present:** Chris Whalley, Craig Wilkinson, Eddie Harrison, Alan Hawkins, Peter Holden, Andrew Gould, Bilal Gulma. **Apologies:** Ismail Esat

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### 1. Minutes of the Meeting on 29<sup>th</sup> January 2025

These were accepted as an appropriate record.

### 2. Matters Arising

2.1 The matter of restricting the use of bank interest for charitable purposes in line with Islamic law has been discussed with relevant clubs and is no longer thought to be a concern.

### 3. Governance / League Development

3.1 Constitution & Rules - as part of the League Accreditation process the Management Committee has completed a thorough review of the League's rules and, in so doing, consulted with the Lancashire Football Association, an FA appointed consultant, and our own legal advisor. The League is an Unincorporated Association and the Constitution and Rulebook to be submitted to the Lancashire FA and recommended to members is an appropriate legal document with which to govern the association.

3.2 Rule Alterations – proposals from the management committee were approved and those received from members were discussed. All proposals have been sent to clubs for consideration. Any amendments to these proposals must be submitted to the Secretary by 1<sup>st</sup> June following which a copy of all proposed alterations will be sent to the Lancashire FA for their approval prior to the League's AGM (as per Rule 14). Clubs will be given a chance to discuss these rules at the next planned Clubs meeting, which will allow sufficient time for any alterations to be made.

3.3 League Management Committee – members of the committee must confirm to the Secretary their intention to stand for re-election, and all other nominations must be received, by 31<sup>st</sup> May. (as per Rule 5B)

### 4. League Administration

#### 4.1 Next Season 2025/26

4.1.1 League Application Forms – will be issued to clubs on 5th May, to be returned by 1st June and fees payable by 30th June (as per Rule 4B)

4.1.2 Part A Groups – will be drafted mid-June and set by 30<sup>th</sup> June, following which a full fixture schedule will be drafted during July. Fixtures will then be uploaded to Full Time in August.

4.1.3 Mid-Season Breaks – it was agreed to have two breaks in the fixture schedule next season: one at Christmas and one at Easter. This will mean there will be 31 weeks when fixtures will be scheduled. Games may, however, be played during the fixture breaks by arrangement between team managers.

4.1.4 Kick Off times – due to the unpopularity of a late kick off it was decided to make 2pm the latest finish time on the league's 3G block bookings next season.

4.1.5 Part B Groups – will be set and fixtures uploaded to Full Time during the Christmas break.

4.1.6 Spreadsheets – whilst fixtures will be uploaded in advance to Full Time, the Secretary will continue to issue the customary fixture spreadsheet on a Monday. The spreadsheet

will be available on the League website to view or download and referee appointments will be added to it on a Thursday.

4.1.7 3G – pitches will be block booked from Week 9 (2/11/25) to Week 23 (1/3/25).

4.2 3v3 Early Adopters – the FA are inviting expressions of interest (EOI) from leagues around the country to be early adopters of the 3v3 format for U7s which will be a mandatory format from Season 2026/27 onwards. It was agreed to submit an EOI with a view to introducing the format using two central venues, one in the Blackburn area and one in the Burnley area.

4.3 Cup Finals – are due to be held over four weekends (27/4, 4/5, 11/5 & 18/5) and members of the committee were asked to make themselves available for choosing and awarding the Player of the Match for each final.

## 5. Welfare / Safeguarding

5.1 Standards of Behaviour – the questions asked of Team Managers on the Full Time Match Return were discussed and it was agreed to revise these questions next season, if possible, to differentiate between team officials and spectators around the pitch, which in the FA's own questions are treated as one group. The behaviour of each group of participants (Players, Team Officials & Spectators) will be marked in one of three ways:

- Positive throughout
- Occasionally poor
- Regularly poor and/or one or more act(s) of Gross Misconduct

Action: Craig to discuss with the FA the changes that we wish to make and how that may impact on the FA's own mandatory questions.

A new Guide to Standards of Behaviour will be produced and shared with team managers at the beginning of the season and regularly throughout the season to keep awareness high.

Action: Craig to arrange an Adults In Junior Football Workshop for all U7 Team Managers on the first Sunday in September.

In addition, the Away Team Manager will be asked to confirm that a Respect barrier was in place.

There is a concern that the requirement to place a Respect barrier is no longer met as it once was, and as a result, encroachment by spectators along the touchline was increasingly an issue. The consequences of not having a Respect barrier in place was discussed and it was generally felt that a significant fine needed to be issued for frequent offenders.

5.2 Match Observation - the possibility of having matches observed independently was discussed and it was suggested that the parents of young referees may be willing to help.

Action: Craig to ask parents of young referees whether they would be prepared to report match day behaviour back to the league.

Members of the Management Committee were also asked to attend up to half a dozen matches during the season and to complete a Match Observation Report. Whilst the number of such games observed would be relatively small this should still send a positive message to clubs.

## 6. Match Officiating & Discipline

6.1 Referee Appointments – so far this season referee coverage is at 78% which is a significant improvement on last season, when only 61.5% of matches had an appointed referee.

6.2 Referee Match Reports – Craig confirmed he had received a report from less than half of the games refereed. Even though there is always a shortage of referees, there is a view that there ought to be a consequence for not submitting a match report. The referee is after all the only truly independent observer of what takes place at a match and without a match report the league may inevitably be compromised in its ability to oversee and manage discipline.

Action: Craig to explore whether referees could have fixtures, or their fees, withheld if match reports are not submitted.

It was, however, noted that unless referees are paid centrally by bank transfer it would be impossible to withhold fees, and the FA may not permit this anyway.

- 6.3 Referee Training – Craig will arrange to meet with the LFA's Referee Development Officer, Jacob Lehane, at the end of the season to discuss in more detail how we can work together.
- 6.4 Red Cards, Cautions & Misconduct – Craig reported, so far this season, 60 Red Cards, 11 Misconduct Charges and 319 Yellow Cards had been issued. This data will be collated at the end of the season and reported back to members at the AGM.

## **7. Finance**

- 7.1 Peter provided a financial update, and various items of expenditure were explained. It was agreed that registration fees should again be waived for U7s next season and, as the league has a healthy bank balance, there will be no increase in fees for any age group.

## **8. Any Other Business**

- 8.1 Website - a meeting with the developer was postponed due to illness and this is to be re-arranged shortly.
- 8.2 North Bury JFL – have applied to the LFA to organise a Sunday League and Craig has objected on the grounds that this may take teams away from the East Lancashire Football Alliance.

Meeting closed at 9.20 pm

Minutes of the

## Management Committee Meeting

Wednesday 29th January 2025

held at Stanley Hub, Thorneyholme Rd, Accrington BB5 6BD at 7.00pm

**Present:** Chris Whalley, Craig Wilkinson, Eddie Harrison, Alan Hawkins, Peter Holden, Andrew Gould, Bilal Gulma, Ismail Esat, Chris Hughes (part). **Apologies:** Chris Bentley

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### 1. Minutes of the Meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> December 2024

These were accepted as an appropriate record.

### 2. Matters Arising

2.1 Questions to LFA – a more detailed response has been received, and it was agreed to share these with our members in an appendix to these minutes.

2.2 League Constitution & Rules – a meeting has been arranged with the LFA's Chief Operating Officer to discuss general governance matters and, specifically, to receive guidance on the drafting of a League Constitution tailored to our needs.

2.3 Contract for Service – this has now been drafted.

2.4 Volunteer CPD – whilst further clarification is to be sought on how the League might work with the LFA to offer / deliver CPD to team managers, it was generally felt that this was not really something that the League would be directly involved with.

2.5 3v3 Trials – the LFA have agreed to make a financial contribution to the costs involved.

### 3. LFA Membership Scheme

A questionnaire was completed and submitted to the LFA during the meeting. The proposed new membership scheme will involve an option to pay an additional membership fee in exchange for certain benefits. Specific benefits are not yet determined although clubs have been asked what kind of additional membership fee, they would be happy to pay.

### 4. Fixtures

4.1 Cup Competitions – U9/U10 Quarter Finals are to be put back until after half term.

4.2 Postponements / Alternative Fixture Timetable - the increasing workload produced by postponement requests was discussed and Craig advised that he spends 6-8 hours a week re-arranging fixtures. It was suggested that postponements in the U12-U18 age groups should be restricted to those caused by LFA Cup matches and unfit pitch conditions or bad weather. In other words, those factors that are out of the League's control. Craig shared an alternative fixture timetable which would remove routine fixtures from half term holidays during which re-arranged fixtures could be played.

Action: Craig to canvass feedback from clubs and place on the agenda for further discussion at the next meeting.

### 5. Welfare / Safeguarding

An interim report on RESPECT feedback provided by team managers in their Match Returns has been shared with Club Secretaries. Two teams are to be drawn from Foundation teams with the best scores to enjoy a 'Guard of Honour' experience at Ewood Park.

Action: More thought to be given to how those with the best scores overall, across the whole season, can be rewarded and suitably recognised.

There is a concern about how effectively poor behaviour is addressed.

Action: Craig to periodically review the RESPECT feedback, discuss poor results with the relevant club and arrange for chief offenders to be monitored.

## 6. Match Officiating & Discipline

- 5.1 Referee Training – the possibility of asking teams for specific feedback on young referees was discussed as there is a concern that many seem to have little interest in doing a good job.

With regard to working with the LFA to deliver a Referee Training Course in East Lancashire the LFA have offered a contribution of £350 to the costs. Some concern was expressed about who 'owned' this training and how it felt like the responsibility for it was being passed on to the league.

Action: Craig to arrange a meeting with the LFA's Referee Development Officer, Jacob Lehane, to discuss in more detail how we can work together.

## 7. Finance

- 7.1 Peter provided a financial update and made note of the need to make use of professional accounting software in the next financial year.

- 7.2 The non-payment of fees and fines was discussed. A small number of clubs have failed to provide payment, two of which (Glenside & Blackburn Allstars) owe significant sums.

Action: It was agreed to proceed in accordance with the rules and to notify these clubs that fixtures are to be suspended.

- 7.3 Ismail drew the committee's attention to an Islamic ruling that requires interest paid by banks to be given to some charitable purpose.

Action: It was agreed to consider this further and ask members at the next AGM whether they wished to restrict the use of such funds for charitable purposes in line with Islamic law.

## 8. Any Other Business

- 7.1 Website

It was noted that the League's new website is not fulfilling its potential and more attention needs to be paid to it.

Action: Craig to discuss with the developer how the site can be self-managed and not be dependent on others for its maintenance.

Meeting closed at 8.50 pm

Minutes of the

## Management Committee Meeting

Thursday 12th December 2024

held at Enfield Cricket Club at 8.30 pm

**Present:** Chris Whalley (Chair), Craig Wilkinson (Secretary), Peter Holden (Treasurer), Eddie Harrison, Alan Hawkins.

**Apologies:** Chris Hughes, Andrew Gould, Bilal Gulma

**Not In Attendance:** Chris Bentley, Ismail Esat

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### 1. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

These were accepted as an appropriate record.

### 2. Matters Arising

2.1 Girls Teams Numbers – a poll of the Girls teams has determined that the 9v9 format would continue in to Part B.

2.2 Inactive Referees – [Action \(carried forward\): Craig to write to inactive referees to understand better why they are no longer active.](#)

2.3 Finance – [Action \(carried forward\): Craig to investigate the purchase of professional accounting software.](#)

### 3. Governance / League Development

3.1 Sanctioning Authority – Following the submission of several questions to the Lancashire FA prior to its AGM, it was felt that whilst the questions asked were answered in part during a presentation by the Chief Executive, Simon Gerrard, a more detailed response would be appreciated.

[Action: Craig to correspond further to see if a more detailed response could be provided.](#)

3.2 League Constitution & Rules – Craig & Alan met with Kevin Lister, Bury FC, who is a Barrister and happy to help us with our work on reviewing the League's Constitution and Rules. Work is ongoing with a view to presenting a draft Constitution for consideration early in the new year.

It was agreed that a further meeting with the LFA to discuss our proposed Constitution would be beneficial.

[Action: Craig to arrange a meeting with the LFA in the new year.](#)

A new rule is to be proposed that will facilitate the automatic retirement of any committee member who is consistently inactive and does not attend meetings of the League Management Committee. The rule will be incorporated into a re-draft of the League's Constitution which will be proposed to members at the next AGM.

3.3 Contract for Service – A Contract for Service for the League Secretary is to be drafted and will be ready for consideration in the new year.

3.4 Volunteer CPD - Craig shared details of an email received from the LFA about the League partnering up with them to provide tailor made CPD courses for our team managers. This is to be discussed further in the new year to ascertain what exactly this should look like.

### 4. WELFARE (incl. RESPECT & Safeguarding)

It was agreed to review the RESPECT feedback from the Full-Time Match Report system at the end of Part A and share the results with clubs in the new year.

## 5. Discipline

5.1 Serious Match Day Issues – Craig provided an update on the three serious match day issues reported at the last meeting:

- U9: AHF v West Coast (a Blackpool team) – the West Coast U9s have now left the League and AHF have been observed at a subsequent match during which all spectator and coach behaviour was seen to be compliant with our Codes of Conduct.
- U13: Clitheroe Wolves v Fulfilled Colts – LFA Found Fulfilled Guilty of causing the game to be abandoned and were fined accordingly.
- U15: Darwen v Mellor – All Red Card and misconduct charges raised by LFA and fines issued.

5.2 Referee Training – the LFA have offered to hold a Referee Training Course in East Lancashire, if the League can provide a venue. Before this can be progressed, clarification on a few things will be required:

- Would the provision of a venue be at a cost (if there is one) to the League? – and if a venue can be provided, would the cost of the course be reduced?
- Would the delivery of such a training course be a 'trial' with respect to its organisation / logistics and the recruitment of 'quality' candidates?
- Applicants have previously been required to complete an application form before being accepted on to a course – would the League want to qualify candidates in the same way before giving them a place on the course?
- What incentives are there for the League to get involved in the training of match officials?

Action: Craig to clarify these points for further discussion.

It was agreed that we should not incentivise anyone to attend a course, and candidates needed to be committed to officiating the older age groups in the League.

## 6. Finance

Peter provided a financial report which continues to show the league is in a good financial position. Whilst a healthy bank balance created through affiliation fees reduces during the season, as the League settles its invoices for facility hire, it is expected that a small surplus may be achieved by the end of the season.

It was agreed that such surplus should be re-invested in the League to improve its operations and where possible to limit the impact of cost increases to the members.

## 7. Any Other Business

7.1 U8 Girls 3v3 Trial

This trial being held at the request of the FA is going well.

Action: Craig to ask the LFA for a contribution to the 3G pitch hire costs.

7.2 Future Meetings

Scheduled to start at 7pm on the following dates, venue to be confirmed:

- Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> February 2025
- Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> April 2025

Meeting closed at 9.45 pm

Minutes of the

## League Club Meeting

Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> December 2024

held at Enfield Cricket Club at 7.00pm

**Present:** 59 Club representatives, Chris Whalley (Chair), Craig Wilkinson (Secretary), Peter Holden (Treasurer). **Not Present:** 30 clubs were not represented, of which 6 offered their apologies in advance of the meeting.

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### 1. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Minutes of the Club Meeting held on 29<sup>th</sup> August 2024 were accepted.

### 2. Matters Arising

#### 2.1 Financial Year End

It was agreed to defer the proposal to change the year end until the next AGM.

### 3. Fixtures

#### 3.1 Part A / Part B

There are still several Part A games not yet played to decide some of the league winners. Teams in contention to win a league will have their remaining fixtures scheduled in the new year, all other teams will start Part B.

#### 3.2 Cup Competitions

Cup fixtures will also be prioritised in January. Dates for the finals have been shared with clubs and there will be no deviations from the dates set.

Clubs were reminded that LFA County Cup games are not managed by the League (ELFA) and any matters concerning these games are managed by Lancashire FA. Contact numbers for the responsible officers at the LFA can be found on the fixture confirmations issued by the Full-Time system.

#### 3.3 Postponements

Several teams have already used their 2 postponement requests in Part A and will therefore be unable to have any fixtures in Part B re-arranged. The large number of postponement requests received, and the subsequent re-arrangement of fixtures, creates a lot of work, and it was suggested that postponements for U12-U18s should be limited to those caused by Cup competitions and poor weather or pitch conditions. The League Secretary said that this would only work if no games were scheduled over the school holidays, and he agreed to prepare a draft fixture schedule to see how this might work.

#### 3.4 Full Time / Match Day App

A request was made to not upload fixtures on to Full Time too early as parents can take these as gospel and make plans accordingly.

Members were reminded that the League are running a programme of Sunday League fixtures for the season and that kick off times can be anytime between 9am – 2pm. All teams should be ready to play a game each Sunday even if a fixture is not scheduled in advance, as the Secretary will normally try to arrange 'friendly/development' games where possible.

#### 3.5 3G Match Timings

Clubs were asked to remind their teams that the timings on 3G pitches were tight and games needed to start on time. Half-time should be a maximum of 5 mins and when the game finishes teams need to leave the pitch immediately.

Some venues have complained about games over running and if this is not corrected, we may be charged an additional hour, which will obviously have a significant impact on the league's costs.

### 3.6 Team Registrations

Clubs were advised that during the Foundation years (U7-U11), as more players are recruited during the season, additional teams can be registered at any time.

## 4. **Referees**

Whilst the number of referees has increased this season, 70% of them are under 18 years of age.

The League would like to raise the standards of our referees and asks all clubs to provide the League Secretary with constructive feedback so that young referees can be helped to develop their skills. We would also like to know whether the referee was properly dressed and wearing a referee's kit, whether they arrived on time and had the correct equipment (whistle, watch, flags etc.).

We now have a few referee mentors out watching both new and experienced referees to help with their development. Members were assured that all referees have a valid DBS certificate, if required.

It was noted that some referees were being targeted with unwarranted gossip and speculation, and this was not acceptable. The League Secretary urged clubs with concerns about the ability of any referee to provide constructive feedback and not to complain, for example, about free kicks or penalties not given.

## 5. **Finance**

Members were advised that all fees and fines covering Oct-Dec would be collated over Christmas and sent to clubs giving notice of collection.

## 6. **Discipline**

Members were reminded that **every team** must complete a Match Report either on the Match Day App or on the Full-Time system. This includes answering the Respect questions concerning the behaviour of the opposition and providing a referee rating.

This is essential if we are to build a picture of what happens on match day, how match officials perform and how compliant everyone is with respect to our Codes of Conduct and guidelines.

This then allows us to build up a better picture of what is happening.

## 7. **Qualification of Players**

Attention was drawn to Appendix C of the League's Rules which states that "No player shall be eligible to play for more than one team in any cup competition."

## 8. **Governance / League Development**

Work on the League's general governance is ongoing and Kevin Lister, Bury FC, was thanked for his invaluable support in reviewing our Constitution and Rules.

Members were asked to consider what the League does well and what it could potentially do better - if one thing could be changed, what would that be?

Members were asked to speak to their team managers and send any feedback to the League Secretary. If clubs would like to speak with the League Secretary, he would be happy to attend any Club meetings to discuss how the league is managed.

## 9. **Welfare / RESPECT**

The RESPECT feedback from the Full-Time Match Report system is to be reviewed and an update will be provided to clubs in the new year.

## 10. **Any Other Business**

There was none.

Meeting closed at 8.30 pm

Minutes of the

## Management Committee Meeting

Thursday 17th October 2024

held at Stanley Hub, Thorneyholme Rd, Accrington BB5 6BD at 7.00pm

**Present:** Chris Whalley (Chair), Craig Wilkinson (Secretary), Eddie Harrison, Alan Hawkins, Bilal Gulma.

**Apologies:** Peter Holden, Chris Hughes, Andrew Gould

**Not In Attendance:** Chris Bentley, Ismail Esat

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### 1. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

These were accepted as an appropriate record.

### 2. Matters Arising

2.1 Special General Meeting – it was agreed to defer the matters concerning the Girls League and the change of the financial year to the next AGM.

2.2 Website – committee members were reminded to provide a short biography and photo for inclusion on the website.

### 3. Fixtures

#### 3.1 Fixture Calendar

Craig provided an update on Part A and confirmed that Part B will be scheduled to start on 5<sup>th</sup> January.

Debate took place over the large amount of postponement requests received (currently 300 YTD) and was there an alternative way – do clubs have to try harder to get games played?

Whilst it had previously been decided to run the Girls league as 9v9 in Part A and then 11v11 in Part B, Craig was aware that some teams would now like Part B to remain as 9v9. A poll amongst those involved would therefore be conducted to make sure the league is organised as the majority want it to be. (In accordance with Rule 14, to change the previous decision made, a two thirds majority of those involved in the league will be required).

Cup games for U11-U18s will be scheduled for December and fixture calendar including venues for cup finals will be confirmed shortly.

Action: [Craig to consult with Girls teams to decide on team numbers for Part B.](#)

#### 3.2 3v3

Craig will be unable to attend the 3v3 event at Witton Park on November 3rd and therefore asked committee members to help with the organisation.

Action: [Craig to share costings for the event.](#)

### 4. RESPECT / Welfare

Responses provided on the Full Time Match Reports were discussed and it was agreed to recognise teams receiving the best scores / feedback at the end of the season. Arrangements are to be made to give tickets for Blackburn Rovers' last home game at which the league will have an opportunity to draw attention to good practice within the grassroots game and give the winners a great day out.

In the meantime, it was agreed to monitor the Respect scores and be pro-active in the monitoring of any teams consistently receiving poor scores and feedback.

The League's questions on the Full Time Match Report are focused on communications to and by the home team manager, and are as follows:

- Did the Referee make contact with you before the game to check the match details etc. ?

- Did the Home team manager ring you midweek to confirm match day details?

Questions asked by the FA remain focused on the behaviour of the opposition, and are as follows:

- How would you describe the behaviour that the opposition showed **on the pitch** today? Think about behaviour towards other players and match officials.
- How would you describe the behaviour that the opposition showed **around the pitch** today? Think about behaviour towards other coaches, spectators and match officials

## 5. Discipline

### 5.1 Serious Match Day Issues

There have been three such issues so far this season, one involving a pitch brawl involving five red cards.

The three matches concerned were:

- U9: AHF v West Coast (a Blackpool team)
- U13: Clitheroe Wolves v Fulfilled Colts
- U15: Darwen v Mellor

All three are in the hands of the LFA and we await the outcome of the disciplinary process.

### 5.2 Match Reports

Craig reported that around 100 fines have been issued over the last three weeks despite repeated reminders being sent. The leniency shown by the league secretary was discussed and it was suggested that perhaps a stricter implementation of the rule, requiring match reports to be completed no later than the Wednesday following the fixture, may be beneficial in the long term. It was felt that the requirement to provide a match report on Full Time was not unreasonable and clubs need to decide whether they wish to use their club funds to pay for their failure to comply. The information provided by the match reports is considered important and provides essential data for the good management of the sport. It takes only five minutes to complete a match report.

## 6. Referees

There are now around 200 referees registered although only around 130 are thought to be active. 65% of those registered are U18.

[Action: Craig to write to inactive referees to understand better why they are no longer active.](#)

A mentoring scheme has now been organised and two experienced referees have been appointed to assess referee performance and provide helpful feedback. Those providing this service are paid half of a match fee.

A reward scheme has been established that involves points being awarded for positive feedback received and a 10% discount is available to referees from The Ref Stop which sells referee kit and equipment.

## 7. Finance

In Peter's absence, a financial report was shared which showed the league to be in a healthy position.

[Action: Craig to investigate the purchase of professional accounting software.](#)

## 8. League Development / England Football Accreditation

A meeting has been held with Jo Ashworth and others at the LFA and whilst ongoing assistance has been offered with our governance review, there is no access to any funded legal advice. Craig has asked for offers of help from anyone legally qualified amongst the club membership and has been contacted by four lawyers offering their assistance.

[Action: Alan to speak with each of the lawyers and arrange meetings as appropriate.](#)

There remains a concern about committee members not attending meetings or making a significant contribution to the work of the league.

[Action: Craig to draft a rule amendment for consideration that would effectively mean a committee member would be automatically retired if they were consistently inactive and did not attend the meetings of the League Management Committee.](#)

## **9. Any Other Business**

### **9.1 Transfers**

Craig raised an issue around the processing of player transfers and advised clubs need to complete a 7-day notice of approach to the club they wish to transfer the player from before they process the transfer on WGS.

[Action: Craig to email clubs with updated procedure.](#)

### **9.2 Future Meetings**

Scheduled to start at 7pm on the following dates:

- Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> December 2024
- Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> February 2025
- Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> April 2025

Meeting closed at 9.00 pm

Minutes of the

## League Club Meeting

Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> August 2024

held at Enfield Cricket Club, Dill Hall Ln, Church, Accrington BB5 4DQ at 7.00pm

**Present:** 41 Club represented (at the start of the meeting), Chris Whalley (Chair), Craig Wilkinson (Secretary), Peter Holden (Treasurer).

**Not Present:** 49 clubs were not represented, of which 14 offered their apologies in advance of the meeting.

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### 1. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Notes of the AGM held on 19<sup>th</sup> June 2024 were previously circulated to clubs.

### 2. Matters Arising

#### 2.1 Girls Football

Following a change to the FA's policy on Girls' football, a Special General Meeting had been called to decide whether to make the league's Girls section accessible to Girls Only.

#### 2.2 Financial Year End

As the season now seems to extend into May due to poor weather, a rule change is required to change the league's financial year end to 31<sup>st</sup> May and ensure it falls after the season ends.

***Note: as there were insufficient attendees to achieve a quorum for a General Meeting these matters were deferred and are to be dealt with at a reconvened Special General Meeting held online.***

### 3. Fixtures

#### 3.1 September Fixtures

A provisional fixture list for the month has been circulated and fixtures for each week will be sent to club secretaries on a Monday which will be subject to any late changes that need to be made. Initial October Fixtures will be distributed 1<sup>st</sup> week of September.

#### 3.2 Postponements

Postponement requests must now be made by no later than the Wednesday prior to the fixture date using the new Google Form. Postponements sent in any other format will not be actioned. A final fixture list will be distributed on Thursdays with referee appointments.

The number of postponements allowed for U7-U11 remains unlimited but for U12-U18 this will continue to be a maximum of 2 per season but can now be taken at any time i.e. they will no longer be restricted to 1 in Part A and 1 in Part B.

#### 3.3 Full Time / Match Day App

All Part A games are now loaded onto Full Time for U12 to U18. Fixtures for U7-U11s will be input monthly.

#### 3.4 Match Day Guide

Home team managers must be reminded to make contact with their opponents by no later than Friday night to confirm venue arrangements, referee plan and potential kit clashes. An updated contact list will be distributed shortly. This list will also be available on the league's new website.

Referees should make contact with the Home Team manager by Sat 5pm latest but Team Managers should make contact themselves if this has not happened.

Home Team Responsibilities are to put up nets, flags, respect barriers, greet the opposition, Both teams must ensure the referee is paid in cash before the game, provide a linesperson Every age group should conduct a respect handshake, have a maximum of 2 coaches in the technical area, ensure all parents are on the opposite side of the pitch to the 2 coaching teams. No-one should be stood behind the goal. If a Squad list is requested by either team this must

be shown and, if not, the referee should be informed. The game should go ahead, and the offending team will be dealt with as per league rules.

Reports from local councils last season has highlighted a problem with rubbish being left on the field. Clubs are asked to ensure that all their teams clear their rubbish from around the pitch before they leave.

Post Match, Team Managers must submit their results through the Match Day App, Full Time or the SMS service by 5pm Sunday. All Managers must submit their team lineup and answer the League feedback questions by Wednesday 5pm latest. If teams wish to report any issues, they should do this through the ELFA feedback form.

FA Updates - Attention was drawn to rule changes made by the FA, including 'kick-ins' to replace throw-ins and the removal of deliberate headers for U7-U9s, and changes to Sin Bins which, in addition to the time spent off the field, are now a yellow card offence carrying a financial penalty of £12.

### 3.5 3v3

A new game format of 3v3 is to be trialled for Under 7s on one Sunday each month and this is planned to be held at Witton Park. The FA have advised that this new format will be introduced in the future to deliver a much better development experience for children in the Foundation Phase that involves significantly more touches on the ball for each child. The trial will use inflatable pitches hired in, and this cost will be covered by the league.

## 4. **Welfare / RESPECT**

### 4.1 Girls Football

The League is aware of a couple of incidents involving parents/spectators challenging the sex of a player during a game. Clubs are advised that any such behaviour is unacceptable and will not be tolerated.

### 4.2 DBS Checks

There are some club officials who have not yet been cleared through the DBS system to work with children. Those teams who are not compliant with the safeguarding requirements of the sport will have their fixtures withdrawn until all required DBS certification is presented. Some technical issues were reported with the DBS service, so Clubs are asked to advise the League Secretary of any DBS status that is incorrect on the Whole Game System (WGS).

### 4.3 Match Day Visits

Team Officials will be checked throughout the season and clubs are reminded that only two team officials are permitted on one side of the pitch with their substitutes, and all others, including spectators, must remain on the opposite side of the pitch. Neither spectators nor team officials are permitted to watch a game from behind the goal line.

### 4.4 RESPECT monitoring

Clubs were also advised that teams will also be independently monitored throughout the season for their compliance with the sport's Codes of Conduct and RESPECT Guidelines.

## 5. **League Operations**

### 5.1 Player Registrations

Transfers will become live as of Sunday with a £5 fee charged to the receiving Club.

### 5.2 Results & 'Match Card' Reporting

Scores must be submitted by no later than 5pm on Sunday and 'match cards' completed by no later than 5pm on a Wednesday.

### 5.3 Website

The league now has a new website, details of which will be issued to clubs soon.

## 6. Discipline

The main areas of focus for potential disciplinary action or fines are to be:

- Results not submitted – these are needed to ensure games have been played and in the Foundation Phase, to provide a record of comparative ability which helps the league to place teams in an appropriate division.
- 'Match Cards' not received – these are needed so that we can monitor everyone's compliance with our Codes of conduct and RESPECT guidelines.
- Games not played – games postponed after the 72hr deadline still incur pitch hire costs which need to be recovered.
- Misconduct – where players are sent off, clubs must ensure the player does not play in the following fixture and the sending off is properly recorded by the LFA. The absence of confirmation from the LFA does not mean the sending off is not valid.

## 7. Finance

The treasurer reported that the introduction of the 'Go Cardless' payment system has been a great help and saved a lot of volunteer time. He also confirmed that the league has deposited funds in an interest earning account to make best use of the monies received from clubs at the beginning of the season before it is then paid out to pitch providers.

## 8. Any Other Business

### 8.1 Referees

There are 20 new referees. 161 referees have registered so far, compared with 203 at the end of last season.

### 8.2 Attendance at Club Meetings

Attention was drawn to certain clubs that persistently failed to attend the league's club meetings which was generally felt to be unacceptable. The League Secretary was urged to issue fines to clubs failing to attend, which on this occasion will cause further work to arrange another Special General Meeting required to make important rule changes.

### 8.3 Mini Shin Pads

There was some concern about the use of mini shin pads and clubs were encouraged to amend their own rules to prevent the use of such shin pads which are not considered to provide adequate protection.

### 8.4 Match Officiating

It was noted that a Manchester league had a policy of not requiring volunteer assistant referees to flag for offside and to leave this to the judgement of the referee. Concern was expressed about the mobility of some referees and without assistance from someone following the line of play, making a correct judgement was inevitably compromised. Our league does not have such a policy, and it was generally agreed that this is a difficult area and there is no perfect solution. Referees are, however, entitled to ask volunteer assistants to leave any close calls to the referee and to only flag for clear and obvious offsides.

Meeting closed at 8.30 pm

Minutes of the

## Management Committee Meeting

Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> August 2024

held at Stanley Hub, Thorneyholme Rd, Accrington BB5 6BD at 7.00pm

**Present:** Chris Whalley (Chair), Craig Wilkinson (Secretary), Peter Holden (Treasurer), Andrew Gould, Alan Hawkins, Bilal Gulma.

**Apologies:** Chris Hughes, Eddie Harrison, Ismail Esat. **Not In Attendance:** Chris Bentley

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### 1. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

These were accepted as an appropriate record.

### 2. Matters Arising

None.

### 3. Fixtures

#### 3.1 Fixture Calendar

Craig advised that master fixtures for part A had been completed, and Sept Fixtures had been issued to clubs. Several changes have been made due to teams leaving and new teams coming in.

Cup Final dates were discussed and agreed that Sun 29th May is not suitable due to being start of the Half term holidays. Venues were discussed and our existing grounds used were deemed acceptable.

The mini soccer Finals would be moved to April before Easter, and the Sundays in May would be re allocated.

It was agreed, as all cup competitions were tiered to begin with, that 'Consolation' Cup competitions would not be held.

Action: [Craig to update fixture calendar and send to clubs.](#)

It was agreed that fixtures will be withdrawn for teams not affiliated or without the minimum number of players registered by August 31<sup>st</sup>.

#### 3.2 3v3

The introduction of 3v3 for Under 7s on one Sunday each month at a central venue was discussed. Proposed months were – October, November, February, March, April.

Action: [Craig to progress idea with potential hire company and produce costings.](#)

### 4. RESPECT

Ideas were considered for recognising teams that deliver an exceptional match day environment, although scoring teams was thought to be subjective and potentially flawed as a means of rewarding and recognising good behaviour.

The need to monitor teams that behave poorly was also discussed and the need for there to be a real consequence for teams whose poor behaviour is persistently reported.

'Match Card' data shows most teams are generally well-behaved, and Alan felt that the focus should perhaps be on ensuring teams behaving poorly are identified as early as possible and advised of the possible consequences of further poor behaviour. He didn't think that teams should be rewarded necessarily for behaving appropriately and in line with the FA's Code of Conduct.

It was agreed that further thought was needed on how behavioural issues are monitored and managed and whether the appointment of neutral RESPECT ambassadors would be helpful.

Action: [Alan agreed to review the questions that team managers are required to answer on the FA Full-time 'Match Card' to ensure the league can gather useful data and effectively manage behavioural issues in the sport.](#)

## 5. Welfare

### 5.1 Team Manager / Coach Qualification Issues

Craig updated the committee on the recently issued report detailing the number of potential issues with team managers and coaches who did not appear to have the necessary qualifications in place, whether that be a valid DBS or in-date safeguarding.

Some clubs have responded positively, and it was agreed to review this again at the end of the month. However, any team who failed to show the necessary safeguarding requirements were in place, will have their fixtures withdrawn. It was agreed that the league's over-riding concern is the safeguarding of the children who play the sport.

Matchday checks will be completed throughout the season to check who is managing teams and whether their details match those registered on the Whole Game System.

### 5.2 Girls Only Leagues

The ramifications of changing girls' leagues from mixed to female only was discussed, and it was agreed to adopt this change. The league's position is that only those whose gender is recorded as female on their birth certificate can be registered for a team playing in a 'girls only' league.

Action: Clubs will be asked to vote on this proposal at the Pre-season meeting.

## 6. Discipline

### 6.1 Disciplinary Action / Fines

The main areas of focus for potential disciplinary action or fines are to be:

- Games cancelled after the 72hr deadline where costs may have been incurred for pitch hire etc.
- 'Match Cards' not received – needed by teams so we can monitor RESPECT
- Scores not submitted – needed to ensure games have been played and at Foundation ages, to have an accurate record of ability

### 6.2 Clubs in Arrears

Craig advised of the need to ensure the League follow the Rulebook in terms of outstanding fees. In previous years some teams have been allowed to have some large amounts owing to the League, but such practice will not continue.

#### Rule 6(1):

Subject to a Club's right of appeal in accordance with Rule 7 below, all fines and charges must be paid within 14 days of the date of notification of the decision.

Any Club failing to do so will be fined in accordance with the Fines Tariff. Further failure to pay the fine including the additional fine within a further 14 days will result in fixtures being withdrawn until such time as the outstanding fines are paid. Failure to comply with this Rule will result in a fine in accordance with the Fines Tariff.

## 7. Referees

Pleasing to see 15 new referees apply, but as of 20<sup>th</sup> August there are 149 referees registered compared to 216 at the end of last season. We are chasing and application forms are being received daily.

Two pre-season meetings have been organised to go through new initiatives and remind referees of match day protocols.

Ishy is setting up a Mentor scheme for the league where experienced older referees can help new younger referees and observe referees where teams indicate there may be an issue.

## 8. Finance

Peter provided an update on the league's financial position, which is healthy. A record income on league registration fees due to an increasing number of teams entering the League.

Free entry for Under 7 has saved clubs over £1,500.

Funds have been transferred to a high interest account to help league funds via monthly interest payments.

## **9. League Development / England Football Accreditation**

Craig provided an update on where the league stands in terms of developing its policies and procedures. A meeting with the LFA has been arranged for early September to discuss the league's development and ascertain if any help can be given. Big question is what does 'good' look like in terms of a well-run league.

Action: A small working group is to be formed to create a League Development Plan and start addressing immediate priorities.

## **10. Any Other Business**

### 10.1 League Website

A new domain has been obtained: [www.elfaleague.co.uk](http://www.elfaleague.co.uk)

Action: Management Committee members to send Craig a photo and a short biography for inclusion on the website, so that coaches and parents know who the committee members are.

### 10.2 Clothing

Orders were taken for League coats so exec members would be recognisable on matchdays.

### 10.3 Future Meetings

Scheduled to start at 7pm on the following dates:

- Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> October 2024
- Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> December 2024
- Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> February 2025
- Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> April 2025

Meeting closed at 8.50 pm

Minutes of the

## Annual General Meeting

Thursday 19th June 2024

held at Enfield Cricket Club at 7.00 pm

**Members Present:** 55 Clubs represented; 4 Management Committee members.

**Apologies:** ??

**Non-Attendees:** ??

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### 1. Minutes of the Previous Meeting held on 13<sup>th</sup> June 2023

These were accepted as an appropriate record. (*Prop: Lammack, Sec: Mill Hill Juniors*)

### 2. Matters Arising

There were none.

### 3. Finance

A financial summary was sent out to members and questions submitted and answered prior to the meeting.

It was agreed the AGM should be scheduled a little later next year to enable a completed financial statement to be presented to members for approval.

A draft financial statement was accepted by members subject to a final statement being distributed that is close to the financial position set out in the draft. (*Prop: Padiham Juniors, Sec: Mill Hill Juniors*)

### 4. Election of Clubs

The following clubs were elected as members of the league:

- Award Football Academy (formerly Oswaldtwistle St Mary's U14)
- Bury FC U15
- Lancashire United (formerly members of Huncoat Utd)
- Radcliffe JFC Foundation (formerly Bury FC Foundation U14)
- Roman Road Centurions (formerly Poppy Mai)

### 5. Structure & Operation of the League

5.1 Members agreed to maintain the current 2-part season for all divisions

5.2 Further details were confirmed as follows:

- U7 Boys, U7/U8 Girls – to be played at central 3G venues all season.
- U8 Boys – U9/U10/U11 – a mixture of development games to be played at home venues and 3G bookings over winter
- U12-U18 – a 2-part league system with teams playing each other once in each part at home venues and 3G pitches over winter
- U13 girls – Part A 9v9, Part B 11v11
- U17/U18 Girls to form one Under 18 division
- U15 Girls to play in U16 Girls or U14 Boys league
- U14/U16/U18 Girls to be one season long competition

5.3 It was unanimously agreed that the league should continue to block book 3G pitches from early November to the end of March (excluding 22/12 and 29/12). Pitch fees are to be shared by home and away teams and precise costs confirmed at the pre-season league meeting.

## 6. Election of Officers

The following Officers agreed to stand for a further year and were unanimously re-elected:

Role	Name	Role	Name
President	John McGregor	Referee Development	Ismail Esat
Chairman	Chris Whalley	Girls Lead	Chris Bentley
Secretary	Craig Wilkinson	Fixtures Support	Chris Hughes
Treasurer	Peter Holden	Respect support	Yasir Sufi
Welfare Officer	Andrew Gould	Club Rep	Eddie Harrison
Referee Officer	Bilal Gulma		

The following roles were vacant and, in the absence of any proposals from the floor, any club officials interested in supporting the league and fulfilling one of these roles were encouraged to speak with the League Secretary outside of the meeting:

Comms Support	vacant	Club Rep	vacant
Ops/Dev Support	vacant	Club Rep	vacant

## 7. Appointment of Auditors

Dave Crook (Clitheroe Wolves) was re-appointed to verify the League's financial statement for 2024/25.

## 8. Alteration of Rules

### 8.1 Rule 20(L): Postponements (Proposed by: Management Committee)

Amend as follows:

Any team wishing to change the date of a fixture or wishing to apply to keep a free date open must give ~~14 (fourteen) days~~ **72 hours'** notice in writing to the League Secretary.

Each team will be able to request the following number of postponements no later than ~~44~~ **3** days prior to the match being played.

- U7 – U11: an unlimited number of postponements per season
- U12 – U18: each team will be allowed a maximum of ~~4 postponement in Part A and a maximum of 1 postponement in part B~~ **2 requests at any time throughout the season.**

*Rationale: Sometimes teams have struggled during school holidays due to the limited nature of only 1 postponement in part A and Part B – additionally parents are often late in telling managers they are not available, hence the reduction in notice time.*

**CARRIED**

### 8.2 Rule 20(L): Postponements (Proposed by: Management Committee)

*Contingent upon 8.1 being carried.*

Amend second bullet point as follows:

- U12 – U18: each team will be allowed a maximum of ~~2~~ **3** requests at any time throughout the season.

*Rationale: On the basis that clubs may wish to have yet more flexibility.*

**LOST**

8.3 Referee Fees

Amend fees as follows:

U7	U8	U9	U10	U11	U12	U13	U14	U15	U16	U18
£10		£15		<del>£22</del> £24		<del>£24</del> £26		<del>£28</del> £30		£35

**CARRIED**

**9. Playing Season**

9.1 The 2024/25 season will commence on Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> September 2024 and end on Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> May 2025.

9.2 Kick off times will continue to be between 9.00 am and 2.30 pm.

**10. Any Other Business**

There was none.

Meeting closed at 8.30 pm