

**CHESHIRE CRICKET BOARD LIMITED**  
**MINUTES OF A MEETING HELD AT CHESHIRE FA OFFICES, MOSS FARM**  
**ON FRIDAY 28 NOVEMBER 2025 – 10am**

1. **Attendance:** Nigel Muirhead (Chair), Di Totty (Vice Chair), Scott Elliott (Management Group Chair), Richard Newton (Managing Director), Mike Guest (Treasurer), David Sharp (Secretary), David Humpage (Clubs), Jim Law (County Club), Nick Brooks (Independent Non-Executive Director), Neeruj Luthra (Independent Non-Executive Director).

**Apologies:** Paul Brown (CYC), Lauren Forrester (Independent Non-Executive Director), Helen Nicholson (Independent Non-Executive Director), Joanna Seddon (Independent Non-Executive Director).

Nigel conveyed the Board's best wishes and congratulations to Lauren on the birth of a daughter Ava Rose.

2. **Minutes of the meeting 12 Sept 2025.** Agreed and then signed by the chair as a true record.

3. **Matters arising from the meeting 12 Sept 2025**

**3.1 Sale of The Hundred (item 4.2.1 of 12 Sept 2025 meeting refers).** The Board discussed possible projects for investment of anticipated income from the sale of The Hundred alongside the prospect of funding from the Game Changer Fund and in line with our Countywide Plan.

Richard clarified that suitable projects for the Game Changer Fund with a contribution of up to 50% from ECB were dependent upon Boards securing third party sponsorship. Board members were asked for ideas in sourcing social value pots which may be available within the private and public sectors.

4. **Management Group.** Members of the Management Group (MG) referred to items from the minutes of the MG meeting held on 3 November 2025 which had been circulated to the Directors and Member representatives prior to the Board meeting.

**4.1 CCB children's courses.** A summary of the numbers of children attending our courses since 2019 had been circulated. Whilst numbers on the Advanced, Excellence and District courses remained high, attendance on the Summer and Autumn courses had fallen and an effort to improve this situation would be made for 2026. It was suggested that the summary should include a split of boys and girls rather than a total number of children.

**4.2 Coaching in schools.** The possibility of a transformative project linked with the ECB Game Changer Fund would provide a stimulus in this sector where a reduction in funding is presenting challenges (see item 3.1 above).

**4.3 Accounts 2024/25.** The draft accounts for the year to 30 September 2025 had been circulated prior to the meeting. Following discussion the accounts were formally approved. Proposed by Di Totty. Seconded by Neeruj Luthra. The approved accounts will be submitted to Companies House by Murray Smith, our independent accounts examiner. The accounts are formally adopted at the Board AGM on ..... after which the filleted version is circulated and made available on the Board's website.

The accounts show a small surplus following a deficit in 2024. The forecast for 2026 shows a break-even situation.

**4.4 Government consultation.** The government consultation on reforming the role of statutory consultees in the planning system in England runs until 13 January 2026. The proposal could undermine current protections for cricket pitches, increasing the risk of them being lost to development. We are asking all partner organisations and clubs to respond to the consultation and sign the petition brought forward by the Sport and Recreation Alliance. A strong response is essential to encourage the UK Government to reconsider.

**Consultation in full** - <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/reforms-to-the-statutory-consultee-system/reforms-to-the-statutory-consultee-system>

**Sport and Recreation Alliance's petition:** <https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/735586>

5. **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI).** Neeruj continues to monitor all output from the ECB for EDI leads. He remains convinced that we are not 'missing any trick' with regards to EDI, but always retains an open-mind to ensure zero complacency in this area.

**5.1 Our EDI group** (Neeruj, Julie Rafferty, Richard, Gareth Moorhouse, Chris Edwards and Reehan Rather) met on 24 October. It is hoped that a representative from the Women's league will soon join the group.

**5.2 The 2025 EDI census.** The results had been shared with the Board and were discussed at the meeting. results were shared. Overall the results were positive. We are seeking clarity on whether the results covered CCB employees only or if board members were included.

**5.3 Communities Indoor League.** This year 18 teams are taking part, an increase from 12 teams last winter.

6. **Safeguarding.** Nick referred members to the Safeguarding report prepared by Julie Rafferty and circulated to Board members prior to the meeting (see **Appendix 1**).

**6.1 Proactive Support Plan 2026 (Cricket Regulator/ County Safeguarding Advisor).** The Cricket Regulator

/CSAs will introduce a “check in” process for their visits, and for support from a CSA within the Education & Support Team we have been graded as Standard Support Level (**see Appendix 1 item 1 for details**).

**6.2 Serious case review.** This review of a historic case involving a coach from the north east highlights the importance of culture, vigilance and leadership (see Appendix 1 item 2 for details)

**6.3 Safeguarding training.**

**6.3.1 Level 3.** A series of Safe Hands courses for Club SOs is taking place over the winter. And a Safeguarding in the Talent Pathway course will be delivered in early 2026 to new and existing staff members requiring the training.

**6.3.2 Anti-Discrimination.** Clubs will continue to be encouraged to complete the online ‘Introducing the Boundary’ and ‘Youth Boundary’ training packages available via the CCB website.

**6.3.3 Board members.** The evening video conference meeting to provide Board members with the appropriate level of safeguarding training will be arranged early in 2026.

**6.3.4 Mental health first aid training (MHFA).** Staff training has been arranged for 19 December 2025, and training for clubs will take place before the start of the 2026 season. Di confirmed her offer to help with club visits if needed.

**6.4 Safeguarding Steering & Support Group (SSSG).** The Board sub-group met on 25 November. Claire Ashworth has joined the group representing Women and Girls cricket. For the record the SSSG comprises:

Nick Brooks, Board Safeguarding Lead

Julie Rafferty, County Safeguarding Officer

Sarah Hallas, Deputy County Safeguarding Officer, Club Safeguarding Officer Hawk Green CC

Richard Newton

Gavin Colebourn and Jess Lewis - Cheshire CB Performance and Pathway

Sam Smith - Club Safeguarding Officer, Stockport CC

Liz Barrett - Club Safeguarding Officer, Alvanley CC

Claire Ashworth, Safeguarding Officer, Cheshire County Women's League

Lystra Landon, Designated Safeguarding Officer, Cheshire Football

**6.5 Referrals and Low-Level Concerns (LLC).** Nick referred to the referrals and LLCs mentioned in Julie's report (see appendix 1, item 6).

**7. Governance/Risk.** The working group (David, Helen, Richard, Nick, Lauren – supported by Gareth Moorhouse and Mike) met on 21 November and a report was circulated prior to the meeting (**see Appendix 2**).

**7.1 CPA Governance Framework.** The Board delegated authority to the working group to take any actions to conform with the CPA Governance Framework including making changes to our Rules.

**7.2 Skills matrix.** Board members have been invited to complete a skills matrix used to identify any gaps in our skill sets.

**7.3 Directors' identity verifications.** Directors are asked to go through an identification process, a new legal requirement for Directors to verify their identity under the Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency (ECCT) Act 2023 to reduce the risk of fraud and improve transparency.

**7.4 AGM 2026 Elections/Re-appointments.** Following our exercise to achieve staggered rotation, four Directors are scheduled for re-appointment at the February 2026 AGM: Helen, Joanna, Neeruj and Nick.

**8. Cheshire Women's Cricket League (CWCL).** In Joanna's absence Di referred members to the CWCL report circulated prior to the meeting (**see Appendix 3**).

**8.1 CWCL AGM.** A growth in the number of clubs participating in the hardball divisions (1-4) was finalised. Aligned with that growth a number of additional volunteer officers were appointed.

**8.2 Div 5 and below.** A refreshed lower division structure will strengthen the base of the pyramid and adds further opportunities to support the transition from softball to hardball. Thank you to Jess and the team.

**8.3 2026 Fixture scheduling.** Scheduling fixtures needs to balance league focus and growth with competing priorities.

**8.4 CWCL rules.** A meeting will take place on 14 January when team eligibility, overseas eligibility, rescheduling rules and player loan system will be discussed. The divisional structure may again need to be reviewed with the growing number of clubs and progression of teams through the divisions as performance levels rise. CWCL thanks the CCCL exec for its input on league structure and other topics.

**8.5 2025 season awards.** The award winners have been finalised and are listed in November issue of The Dazzler viewed on the Board's website.

**9. Cheshire County Cricket Club.** Jim referred members to the County Club report circulated prior to the meeting (**see Appendix 4**).

**9.1 Peter Babbage.** Peter Babbage stepped down this year as Head of Cricket. He had worked tirelessly for many years ensuring the best available players were selected each week. Peter is not being replaced. There are plans to share the load in 2026 as Peter takes on the role as President.

**9.2 2025 AGM.** The Accounts to 30 Sept 2024 were approved at the recent AGM and showed a modest surplus.

**9.3 2026 Fixtures.** The fixtures for the 2026 season are being finalized and are available to view on the website.

**9.4 Seniors.** The men's Over 50s competition will no longer be funded by ECB. This means that from 2026 all men's seniors cricket will be self-funded.

**10. Cheshire Clubs Cricket Committee (4Cs).** David H referred members to his Clubs Committee report circulated prior to the meeting (**see Appendix 5**). David H referred to the following:

**10.1 County League/ Cheshire League merger.** The CCCL and the CCL have meetings at the end of November when one of the items will be to seek the approval of the clubs for a merger of the two leagues. If approved, the aim is to have one organization from the start of the 2027 season.

**10.2 Girls' teams.** ECB has announced that countrywide all teams in Premier Leagues and Division 1s must have a girls' team that has played at least one game recorded on play-cricket by the end of March 2026, and that any club without a formal girl's team cannot play in either of those divisions from the end of the 2026 season. Gareth and Jess are working with those clubs that currently do not comply, and it is hoped to achieve full compliance by the deadline.

**10.3 Clubs' well being.** A number of smaller clubs are under pressure both playing wise and financially. Leagues and Board officers are working to tackle the issues. On the flip side some clubs are expanding and offering assistance and shelter for those in need.

**10.4 ACO (for Umpires and Scorers).** At a time when the majority of games played across the leagues are umpired by the players the Cheshire ACO is working to try to attract more umpires. With the plan to have panel umpires for Division 1 of the Women's League from 2026 it is important the qualification level for umpiring in Men's and Women's do not conflict with one another.

**11. Cheshire Youth Cricket (CYC).** In Paul's absence Richard referred members to the notes prepared by Paul from the recent CYC Committee meeting and circulated prior to the meeting (**see Appendix 6**).

**11.1 Youth Ambassadors.** It is proposed to appoint an ambassador for each of the age group teams in 2026.

**11.2 Girls representative cricket.** Players moving onto representative cricket would no longer be on a regional basis and there is no longer an expectation for Lancashire to provide access to an EPP programme in Cheshire for regional players.

**11.3 District age-group matches 2026.** Some matches in the district festivals would see coaches also acting as umpires to give feedback to players on a real time basis

**12. AOB.**

**12.1 Over 50s.** Nigel advised that the ECB will not be funding the men's 50s competition on 2026 (see 9.4 above for neatness)

**13. 2026 meetings.**

10am Friday 20 February 2026 at Booths Park, Chelford Road, Knutsford WA16 8GS – AGM followed by Board meeting. **Venue to be confirmed**

Friday 22 May 2026, **time and venue to be advised** – Board meeting

10am Friday 18 September 2026 at Hartford House – Board meeting

10am Friday 4 December 2026 at Hartford House – Board meeting

Signed .....

Appendices follow below.

## **Appendix 1. Safeguarding Report (Julie Rafferty)**

### **1. Proactive Safeguarding Support Plan 2026 (Cricket Regulator/ County Safeguarding Advisor)**

On 22 October 2025, we were informed of the safeguarding support plan for 2026.

It was explained that in our journey of moving from compliance to culture, the plans for 2026 will take on a different outlook where the Cricket Regulator / CSA's will introduce a "**check in**" process for our visits. To do this, they have graded each board in one of the following categories:

- **High Support Level**
- **Medium Support Level**
- **Standard Support Level**

With '**check ins**' taking place between:

- Check in 1: January – April
- Check in 2: May – August

- QAC: September – December

To grade each board, the following criteria were considered:

- ✓ QAC results in 2024, and actions completed since
- ✓ Q1 visits, reports, and action plan completion
- ✓ CSA feedback following culture visits (Q2, Q3), CSO resource and support needs throughout 2025
- ✓ Smartsheet's tracking and compliance with evidence uploading

The information was reviewed by the Education & Support Team and the CCB has been graded as **Standard Support Level**. This means that as we enter 2026, you shall receive the following support from a CSA within the Education & Support Team:

**Standard Support Level**  
 2 online check in visits by a CSA unless an in-person visit is requested / required  
 by CSO, CSA or Senior E&S Advisor  
 Quality Assurance Check

## 2. Serious Case Review – MS

The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) and the Cricket Regulator have recently published their external safeguarding case review into the historic offending of a coach (MS) from the North East of England, who was convicted of multiple sexual offences against under-age boys.

The ECB has stated that “*safeguarding is at the forefront of our agenda.*” The review identifies behaviours that should never have been normalised or excused. The coach’s conduct included:

- Hosting sleepovers with young players when his wife was away.
- Distributing pornographic material in changing rooms.
- Touching young people during training.
- Sitting in his towel for long periods among boys and young men.
- Grooming parents who trusted him implicitly with their children.

This review highlights the importance of culture, vigilance and leadership. The key points being:

- **Behavioural warning signs matter.** Don’t wait for policy breaches — challenge early, even if it feels uncomfortable.
- **Empower people to speak.** Players, parents and volunteers need to know that low-level concerns will be taken seriously.
- **Safeguarding is strategic.** Boards must treat safeguarding reports with the same weight as financial or operational risk.
- **Transparency builds trust.** Honest reflection, clear reporting and visible accountability prevent repetition.

## 3. Safeguarding training

### Level 3 training:

- The delivery of the Safe Hands course started this month (November 2025) and will commence again in Feb to April 2026. With approximately 80-90 CSO’s requiring the training, five further courses will be delivered across the area
- A further “Safeguarding in the Talent Pathway” will be delivered to new and existing staff members requiring the training, in early 2026

### Anti-Discrimination training:

- ‘Introducing the Boundary’ and ‘Youth Boundary’ training, are training packages relating to anti-discrimination. Promotion will continue with clubs to encourage completion, which is available on the CCB website. Most CCB staff have now completed the training

### Board Safeguarding training

- Further Board safeguarding training needs to be organised in early 2026 to ensure that all board members have had the most up to date training (Culture training)

### Mental Health First Aid (MHFA)

- MHFA training (accredited course) will be delivered to up to 16 staff on 19 December 2025, funded by the Cricket Regulator
- MHFA awareness training is currently being planned and will be delivered to club champions before the start of the 2026 season and funded by the Cheshire Cricket Trust.

#### **4. CCB Safeguarding Steering and Support Group (SSSG) update**

The SSSG convened for its second meeting on Tuesday 25 November 2025. During the session, members approved the amended Terms of Reference, which now include a modest budget to support essential group expenses. The group also confirmed an expansion of its membership to strengthen representation from women and girls, welcoming Claire Ainsworth from the Cheshire Women's Cricket League as a new member.

A significant portion of the meeting focused on the theme of "Listening" (CPA2 3.5), with discussion centred on how the organisation can better hear and act upon the views of children. Members explored ways to embed a "you said, we did" approach, ensuring that young people's feedback is both valued and visibly influential. It was noted that the CCB Player Ambassador role is being extended so that each age group will have a dedicated representative. The group agreed that it is important for the process to also include junior players who are not part of the talent pathway, ensuring a broad and inclusive range of voices.

Finally, the group reflected on good practice from other sports, recognising opportunities to learn from initiatives such as Football's *Play Safe* campaign and Tennis' *Emerging Leaders* and *Young Ambassadors* programmes.

#### **5. Club Safeguarding Officer (CSO) networking**

In the absence of end of season network meetings, a questionnaire has been sent to all Club Safeguarding Officers to establish the challenges and the triumphs of the 2025 season. The results will be shared in the next board report and may influence key pieces of work with clubs.

#### **6. Safeguarding Themes – Referrals and Low-Level Concerns (LLC)**

##### **LLCs:**

2 x cases relating to junior cricketers on CCB courses who are neuro divergent, exhibited aggression and 'melt down'. In conjunction with the junior cricketers and their parents, a player profile was completed and a support plan put in place, with no further issues being reported.

Research conducted from Advanced Course participants identified 29 junior cricketers with ADHD and/or autism mentioned on their registration forms. The County Safeguarding Officer (CoSO) is currently in the process of contacting the parents of the participants regarding their specific needs and whether a player profile needs to be completed.

An allegation of sexual assault was reported involving junior cricketers at a Wirral club, further investigation discovered that there was no sexual assault but issues of supervision. Discussed lessons learnt with relevant club.

##### **Independent Safeguarding panels:**

16 October 2025 – A Wirral captain and player was suspended from all cricketing activities for 12 months, after this period he will be permitted to apply for the suspension to be lifted but would be expected to provide independent evidence of insight into his drinking and exposure issues. A self-funded report from an independent expert will have to be produced at a future panel hearing.

17 November 2025 – A South Cheshire player, who has been previously suspended, changed his name and registered at a club. The club were unaware of his previous sexual offending with female. The result of the independent safeguarding panel has not yet been shared.

15 December 2025 – A player and coach who was suspended from all cricketing activities due to convictions for harassment, breached the suspension for interacting and attending clubs. The hearing is yet to take place.

##### **Threshold:**

Stockport – a captain and player arrested for actual bodily harm and given a conditional caution

Tameside – a coach and player assaulted a member of the same club by pulling out a chunk of hair. Investigation is ongoing with referrals made to the Cricket Regulator, Police, LADO and Children's Social Care.

South Cheshire – a dynamos coach was arrested for possession/ distribution of indecent images. The coach is subject to an interim suspension from all cricketing activities. There is an ongoing police investigation and LADO reviews.

Wirral – Allegations of drug taking involving two players who also have responsibilities as a captain and coach. A video and pictures were shared. The information was shared with the Cricket Regulator and the police.

#### **Appendix 2 – Governance (Helen, Lauren, Nick, Mike, Richard, Gareth and David S)**

**Risk Register** – reviewed in May 2025 – next review May 2026



**Skills matrix** – circulated May 2025 – 8 Board members have completed the matrix

**Stakeholder agreements** – under consideration

**CPA2 Governance Framework** - Under the County Governance Framework of CPA 2 each Recreational Cricket Board (RCB) must:

- demonstrate full compliance with the Gold level by Jan 2028;
- demonstrate ongoing compliance with Bronze and Silver levels throughout the term of CPA 2;
- implement and demonstrate full compliance with the revised diversity targets for Boards of min 40% male and 40% female, and minimum of one person from an ethnically diverse community by 31 May 2026

Under CPA 2 at some point before Jan 2028 each county is invited to go through the Governance Gold Accreditation Scheme. When counties are at or close to full compliance they contact I Trust Sport or ECB to plan their accreditation process.

The CCB governance sub-group has so far found the following in the Framework where some action and/or a rule change is needed:

G02.4c CPA2 (Gold) a change from 'a min of one' to 'up to two ex-officio, executive directors'. We have three based on min of one in CPA1 and in our Rules. Amendment needed to Rules.

G02.5e CPA2 (Gold) recommends a Senior iNED. We don't have one and there's no mention in the Rules. Addition to the Rules needed.

G03.3a CPA2 (Silver) a change from 'a director may serve on the Board for a maximum of 12 years if appointed as chair of the organisation' to 'a Director can serve on Board for 12 years if appointed Chair during first six years'. Amendment needed to Rules.

G05.3 CPA (Bronze) a minimum of one Director to oversee sub-groups but 20.1.1 of our Rules states that a majority of Directors should be on committees. Amendment needed to Rules.

G09.2 CPA (Silver) Nominations Committee should not include Chief Executive – no mention in Rules. Amendment needed to Rules.

G09.3 CPA (Gold) a change from 'members of the Nominations Committee shall be appointed by the Board' to 'a majority of members of the Nominations Committee shall be appointed by the Board'. Amendment needed to Rules.

G09.6 CPA2 (Gold) '*The Board shall arrange for periodic and staggered rotation and maintain a succession plan for identifying and supporting future leaders of the organisation (e.g. mentoring and Board advisors)*'. Whilst we have addressed staggered rotation we don't have a specific succession plan. Addition to the Rules needed.

**Identity verification for Directors from 18 November 2025** - new legal requirement for Directors to verify their identity under the Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency (ECCT) Act 2023 to reduce the risk of fraud and improve transparency. *I'll circulate the details and would ask each Director to go through the process as soon as convenient please*

**AGM 2026 Elections/Re-appointments** – *there are four Directors scheduled for re-appointment at the AGM.*

Neeruj Luthra, iNED – for two years. Neeruj was first appointed as a Director, 18 February 2022

Nick Brooks, iNED – for two years. Nick was first appointed as a Director 9 Sept 2022.

Joanna Seddon iNED – for two years. Joanna was first appointed as a Director, 10 Feb 2023.

Helen Nicholson iNED – for two years. Helen was first appointed as a Director, 10 Feb 2023.

### **Appendix 3 Women and Girls (Joanna Seddon)**

#### **Cheshire Women's Cricket League**

The CWCL remains busy in the off season both wrapping up formalities of 2025 and looking ahead to preparation for the 2026 season. CWCL AGM was held last week (19<sup>th</sup> November) and finalised the club participation for the main hardball divisions of the league (Div 1 – Div 4) for 2026. Again a story of growth with Aston, Crewe Vagrants and Romiley making the step into hardball Div 4 from their success in Div 5 softball, and New Mills & HP North adding a second hardball team to join in Div 4 after their 1<sup>st</sup> team gained promotion to Div 3 following the 2025 season.

The league has also, aligned with that growth, managed to appoint a number of additional volunteer officers to roles including four new divisional representatives, and new faces taking the disciplinary and safeguarding roles to support the existing league executive. Essential to keep a focus on this increased volunteer pool given the league is more than five times the size it was with a similar sized executive committee only a few years ago.

Excitingly, there are further developments in Div 5 and below as well, very ably led and driven by Jess Lewis and the team. Div 5 will now shift from a softball league to a "hardball pairs" format, enabling a greater number of

women and girls to manage the transition from soft to hardball in a format of the game more suited to development cricket. Div 6 and Div 7 will be newly added to the league, with Div 6 likely being a softball “out you’re out” format, and Div 7 replicating the current Div 5 using softball but retaining the pairs format. Hopefully the refreshed lower division structure continues to strengthen the base of the pyramid which has proved really successful in recent years, but adds further opportunities to support the transition from softball to hardball which has been identified as a key area of focus for continued strengthening of the female offer. A huge thank you to Jess and the team for continuing to drive and champion this with such energy.

The CWCL rules meeting will take place 14<sup>th</sup> January – we expect further debate and discussion again on 2<sup>nd</sup> (and 3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup>) team eligibility criteria building on the first year of a ‘starred player’ system in 2025. Other topics which have arisen through 2025 which may trigger further proposals and discussion include overseas player eligibility, rescheduling rules (big challenge given senior and county fixture clashes), player loan system.

In addition, with the growing number of clubs and progression of teams through the divisions as performance levels rise, the divisional structure may again need to be reviewed. Division 2 is now reaching a stronger position than in previous years with 7 teams expected to compete; Division 3 continues to be “East heavy” and will remain regionalised although the West may need review to ensure quality and variety of fixtures for a smaller group. Division 4 continues to grow and may need rebalancing across regions given the new team entries. CWCL thanks the CCCL exec for a good constructive discussion on league structure and other dilemmas held earlier in the Autumn which provided some good food for thought as we head into finalising plans for the coming year.

With the release of County fixtures, National Knock-out schedules, international T20 world cup ‘supporters’ and ‘clubs’ plans, and confirmation the Thunder Cup will continue in 2026 in the same format as 2025, it is clear that one of the biggest challenges for next year will be scheduling fixtures to balance league focus and growth with competing priorities. Some hard work still to be done on getting the balance right and producing a fixture schedule to enable cricket at all levels.

#### **Appendix 4 Cheshire County Cricket Club (Jim Law)**

*(Adapted from the Chair’s annual statement at the Cheshire CCC AGM, 24 November 2025).*

Following the Cheshire CCC AGM held on 24 November 2025, the following officials were elected:

President: Peter Babbage

Chair: Jim Law

Secretary: John Petch

Treasurer: Stuart Anderson

Management committee: Above plus Julie Rafferty, Nick Brooks, Inge Bevers, Di Babbage, Andy Newton

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Another challenging year as ever but fortunately, more ups than downs.

Administrative demands don’t lessen and sometimes it feels that behind the scenes work plays second fiddle to the cricket!

While National Counties Cricket is the pinnacle of our recreational game, juggling its demands with those of club sides fitting around the domestic schedule places huge demands on administrators and players.

Success naturally means more cricket. With c22 ‘club Saturdays’ and Sunday cup runs, a successful Cheshire CCC season could add up to 17 Sundays and eight midweek dates. Demands, just like our first-class counterparts, can be hefty. Change is unlikely.

2025 saw the 1st XI was again led admirably by Sam Perry, Harry Dearden and David Wainwright across formats, working closely with coach, Gavin Colebourn who’s made a major impact this year. Special mention too for the gravitas and authority from David Wainwright who’s had a significant input to our cricket over the last seven years.

Our ‘season snorter’ came early with a ten-wicket trouncing in our first 50 over game of the season down in Hertfordshire. Despite then spectacularly turning things round in our next three group games, we misfired at Berkshire in the quarterfinals.

The T20 saw up and down performances as we were continually forced to chop and change our side. We won four games and lost four, not qualifying for the Super 12s.

Although no 'showcase' game, we were invited to what was an excellent day at Sedburgh School, narrowly missing out to a Lancashire side that pretty much represented them in the National 50 over competition. Nice to see a couple of Cheshire 'old boys' too!

The Western Division Championship produced some excellent three-day cricket where our fighting spirit came to the fore. We've not always adapted well to this format, but this year really showed our mettle with games at Alderley Edge, Whitchurch and Chester going to the wire. Tenth wicket stands against Wiltshire and Dorset determined the outcome of the table as we finished a credible, unbeaten third with some fine individual performances.

Much of this progress was down to the youth development through our age group and 2<sup>nd</sup> XI programme. Nick Brooks took on the role of 2<sup>nd</sup> XI manager working closely with Gavin and Andy Dufty, got a real spirit going amongst our 2s. Less but more focused cricket saw the emergence and further development of several players including Henry Murray, who crowned a fine season with a Championship century.

This bodes well for 2026. I often talk about the importance of our young players 'seeing the purple vision' from early on through to senior cricket and it really feels this is coming along. I'm sure too that we'll continue to produce further talent for the first-class game.

My 'thank yous' this year once again reflect the significant voluntary efforts behind the scenes. Treasurer, Stuart Anderson's attention to detail ensured our finances remain positive. He should also consider a second career as a 'travel adviser'.

John Petch as secretary continues to fight his way admirably through the NCCA obstacle course. Julie Rafferty and Di Babbage ensure our governance and EDI stance is first class.

David Bailey's 'ambassadorial charm' is a huge bonus. His stint as president ends this year. I know he'll still be champing at the bit next year though – and long may that continue.

As well as managing a wide range of matchday roles, Inge Bevers tirelessly assists with admin and much more including match streaming which continues to develop under her leadership, ensuring we remain one of the best national counties in this field. Website support and membership/200 Club management (with Stuart) are additional skills.

We're blessed with David Sharp, John Pickup and Derrick Hasting's contributions, and with Andy Newton's enthusiasm, advice and support.

Peter Babbage stepped down this year as Head of Cricket. He's worked tirelessly for many years ensuring we put out our best available players each week. I could write a book about the trials and tribulations of this, particularly when he's not always in the best of health.

We're not replacing Peter because we can't. We have new plans for 2026 (as we 'share the load') and will see him at our games in a new presidential role.

2025 saw us work more closely with the Woman and Disability divisions within Cheshire Cricket. They, and the men's senior sides are covered elsewhere as they too have well-defined and expertly run units that manage themselves within the Board's remit.

No annual review would be complete without acknowledging the support of our clubs across the county. We recognise the availability of players, flexibility re match timings and the provision of some of the best grounds in the country.

Finally, our appreciation to the Cheshire Cricket Board and the tremendous support we receive. We've an excellent working relationship and it's exciting times as Nigel Muirhead moves Cheshire Cricket into the next era, with a vibrant unit.

#### **Appendix 4 - Cheshire Clubs Cricket Committee (David Humpage)**

With the 2025 season now consigned to history, we are now looking ahead to 2026 and even beyond.

We are into the season of potential rule changes and preparation for 2026. Both the CCCL and the CCL are having club meetings w/c 24<sup>th</sup> November so at time of writing I am unable to comment on the outcomes. No major changes are expected but such items as shorter games lower down the structure, e-mail voting, and divisional voting are on the table.



The main topic going forward is that talks have begun to merge the two leagues, with the aim of going into 2027 as one organization. Firstly however this move needs to be approved by the clubs at the meetings referred to above. If that approval is given then the work begins on such matters as Constitution, Rules, etc. Much to do indeed!

One matter causing some concern is that ECB in their wisdom have decreed that country wide all teams in Premier Leagues and Division 1 must have a girls team that has played at least one game recorded on Play Cricket by the end of March 2026, and that going forward no club that does not have a formal girl's team can play in either of those divisions from the end of the 2026 season. The CCCL is probably as well placed as any league in the country to comply, but work needs to be done over the winter. Gareth and Jess are working with those clubs that currently do not comply and we are hopeful to achieving full compliance by the time of the deadline utilizing the schedule of indoor winter tournaments that has been organized.

I referred last time to problems we had had with the ECB, and still feel that the divide between them and the clubs is huge. Changes seem to be brought forward with little or no consultation with those in the field as exemplified by the plan detailed above on girl's cricket now being put forward as the ECB plan to increase female participation. We have one of the strongest female leagues in the country yet no one at ECB thought to ask us how it came about. I have had lengthy correspondence with ECB on this but to no avail – they claim to know best.

We are ever mindful that some clubs are struggling to survive for various reasons, and a number of smaller clubs are under real pressure both playing wise and financially. Lack of players, ground tenure and even parking issues are causing concerns and the leagues and board officers are working hard to tackle these issues. On the flip side some clubs are expanding and offering assistance and indeed a shelter those in need.

I commented last time that Lindow CC have acquired the land next to their ground and are planning to create a second square and ground there. In addition Stockport Georgians have acquired the rights to the land adjacent to their current ground and are planning to create a second pitch there. These moves will enable these expanding clubs to create more teams - positive moves, but needed to offset potential losses elsewhere.

I will, as always, leave Di and Jo to report in detail on the Women's League, but suffice to say that side of the game continues to grow with a number of new clubs joining the hardball section in 2026.

The Cheshire ACO are working hard over the close season to try to attract more umpires. It is a fact that the majority of games played across the leagues are umpired by the players themselves which brings its own problems. It is planned that Division 1 of the Women's League will have panel umpires from 2026. The fact that ECB regard umpiring the male and female games as separate is causing some frustration to our local ACO over cross code levels of qualification. Even some umpires on the CCCL premier panel are deemed not good enough by ECB to umpire female games!

25 pitch inspections have been held this summer under the auspices of the Groundsmen's Association, and well over 50% of clubs have now had a visit. As I said before whilst the inspections themselves and the subsequent reports are extremely useful in themselves, progress can only be made if clubs actually carry out the recommendations. The Association has laid on a number of courses this season including one aimed at younger players.

Finally the now customary thanks to Gareth, Jess and Dave - well deserved.

## **Appendix 5 - Cheshire Youth Cricket (Paul Brown)**

### **CYC Committee Meeting 16 October 2025**

#### **Chairman's remarks**

On the basis of the various reports Tim noted that the number of children who had been reached by the board, the number of children on district courses and festivals and the performance of the county age group teams were all a huge credit to Richard, Gavin and the team.

There was a discussion about how best to allocate coaching resources taking into account ECB competitions years and the much expanded district programme – this is currently being worked on by Richard, Gavin and Jess. There continues to be huge demand for courses which is an extremely positive sign, but at the same time early engagement is going to be challenging in the future given the absence of an under 12s CAG side from next year onwards. The expanded district programme is the response to this in order to give as good an offering as possible for younger players (see later).

There is still a concern about children playing too much cricket with parents and clubs needing to take responsibility for this.

## **Approval of minutes of meeting 2 April 2025**

These were approved

### **Matters arising not covered below**

There were meetings in the near future with Surridge with a view to progressing this in good time to allow parents/players to purchase kit in time for next season

### **Safeguarding**

Julie's report was circulated before the meeting. In it Julie noted a big increase in low level concerns being reported, although the consensus was this was as a result of a greater focus on these matters as opposed to a material deterioration in play behaviour etc. However it was critically important to keep in top of these. Similarly there had been an increase in blemished DBS. Issues had arisen where applicants had failed to send blemished DBS to the cricket regulator to risk assess, but where this had happened there had been no issues identified following risk assessment.

There was a discussion of the best way to deliver the new Youth Boundary training for Under 13s and upwards. It was agreed the best approach would ideally be face to face, perhaps to be delivered by managers/coaches on course following suitable education sessions to the managers/coaches by Julie.

There was also a discussion on how best to maximise the value from the youth ambassador programme. Julie suggested a representative from each age group/gender to make it easier for players to give feedback, raise concerns – the plan would be to be able to capture courses from advanced onward. It was felt this would be a very positive step and should be developed further. Julie would also be rolling out her leaflets for junior players encouraging feedback as well as providing coaches with QR codes for players to use for this purpose.

### **ECB national Club competitions**

Jane had previously provided her report – it was positive in terms of numbers though there remains a question of the extent to which clubs enter sides but then forfeit games. There is also to be an ECB comp for girls sides from 2027 onwards

### **Boys County Age Groups/District cricket**

It was agreed that it would be best practice to develop a clear plan in advance for sides staying away to cover expectations around behaviour, safeguarding and logistics. This should be extended to the county men's first and second teams and the county women's sides in order to ensure that the interests of under 18 players in each were protected.

The early engagement programme was being developed with the aim of making this as attractive and accessible as possible. The programme would focus on skills acquisition and fitness. It would be useful to emphasise that 2 or 3 of the players currently on county academies had started their CYC career on the district programme showing clear potential for progression.

Part of the new district festival would see coaches also acting as umpires which it would be felt would benefit the players by having the coaches able to give feedback and input on a real time basis. Dates would also be staggered to maximise staff involvement in any given game.

### **Girls cricket**

Jess explained that there had been a change in players moving onto representative cricket. This was no longer on a regional basis and there was no longer an expectation for Lancashire to provide access to an EPP programme for regional players. There now seemed to be a tendency for Lancs to favour its own players and there was concern it would be harder for our talented players to progress.

It was suggested there was merit in exploring opportunities with other first-class counties – this had worked well for the boys in the past. The creation of a girl's EPP should be considered and there was also the possibility of some of the girls joining sessions which were to be run for boys who were just below the EPP level.

### **Club junior leagues**

Dave had sent his report in double quick time given the league meeting was just the day before, and it was agreed we should be mindful of the timing of the leagues meeting when setting the date for the Autumn meeting.

It was noted that Stewart McCleod, Kate Barratt and Albert Condliffe were stepping down from their roles with the South Cheshire junior leagues – each had made a great contribution to the league over many years and committee wanted to acknowledge and recognise this with thanks. Replacements in their respective roles were being sought.

### **Coaches Association**

It was noted that Andrew Jackson had taken responsibility for this after many years of fine service by Graham Rickman.

### **Schools cricket**

There had been cuts in ECB funding although the thought was there may be replacement funding in the pipeline. There would be extra money from the Greater Manchester programme although the money had not been released yet. Incentives for schools to engage were being considered (free sessions etc) and the hope continued to be that

the Board would be able to maintain and even increase school engagement. The suggestion of increasing funding for the schools programme from the Hundred money was also discussed – potentially to feed back at the next CCB board meeting.

### **Marketing**

Gavin would follow up on the proposed social media campaigns which Neeruj had suggested previously

### **Treasurers/ Secretary update**

Mike noted that there was less money from ECB this year, while match expenses and admin expenses had increased slightly, the latter relating to some equipment purchases. The new under 12s district programme would potentially be more expensive the CAG side.

**AOB** None

### **Date of next meeting**

AGM – February (date TBC)

Committee – Wednesday 15 April (Paul to check with Cheshire FA)

The next CYC Committee meeting is scheduled for early September.

END