APPENDIX 6:

Mini and Youth Report – 2021/22

It was amazing to get back to a full season of Rugby after the disruption caused by the COVID Pandemic. September 2021 saw some 370 kids return to Rugby at the club, albeit with some slight variations to the playing format.

Age grades would play the previous years rules until Christmas, before progressing into their own age grade rules. Whilst this did seem to slow progression, it did provide a safer, more gradual return for some players who may have been out of match-play for 18 months or more.

The U6 started with around 28 eager young kids on the first Sunday back. This is one of the largest starting cohorts I have seen in my time as Mini and Youth Chairman. They had their first "game" at the end of the season on the main pitch against local team Alty Kersall.

The U7 to U12 continued in their progression and development of Rugby at the Mini level. This is a crucial stage in the development of any player, and it's really good to hear that, at Macclesfield, there is a fully inclusive approach to the game.

U8s once again hosted a successful Cheshire Festival for their age group. Macclesfield is one of a number of clubs chosen to host the Cheshire Festival, and it is now a fixture in the calendar. Thanks to the hard work of the U8 Coaches, parents and volunteers some 25 clubs and 600 players enjoyed a great day of Rugby.

The U11 and U12 took part in the Landrover Cup, at the end of the season. For the U12s this is their first "official" competitive match! Sadly, due to an unfortunate 'administration error' they won but didn't win… Such is life, and they enjoyed a free trip to Sharks by way of Compensation!

The Youth section continues to go from strength to strength. With U13s and U14s getting their first taste of DPP for some players, and getting a taste of "grown up" rugby as for the first time they play on full pitches.

U13s enjoyed a tour to Scotland, beating a previously undefeated Dumfries on their own ground. U14s recently hosted a touring side from Warlingham RUFC, in a 4-way fixture with Lymm and Winnington Park. A great day and experience for all the lads.

U15s have 14 players in the Sharks DPP Programme, with 3 selected for additional training at Carrington. Their initial SDG selection is not announced (at the time of writing). Of course, with respect to tours, the U15 have always excelled, and this year was no exception as they headed off to Venice!!!

U16s have had a tremendous final season of Youth Rugby, losing only TWO games, winning the Cheshire Cup against Stockport (on their ground) and playing some astounding rugby all

season. 8 lads have been selected to represent the Club at County Level (more than any other club in the County) and have each earned 4 caps.

A further 8 players are in the DPP programme, and 10 lads are in the SDG/Sharks Academy programme, 3 of which play at U18 level.

U17s also had a successful season, finishing 3rd in a tough league, narrowly losing out in the Cheshire Cup to Stockport at the semi-final stage (Stockport went on to win the Cup). They also entered the League Cup, again losing in the semi-final to Sandbach. With three players representing County and one in the SDG there is plenty of skill coming through the ranks!

GIRLS RUGBY (Pip Gregory / Ric Cotton)

After an inaugural season beset by Covid interruptions, precautions etc. we started this season off with some trepidation but have maintained a strong squad of ~12 U15s and 4 die hard U13s.

At the start of 2022 we joined the Greater Manchester Girls Network which has proved great for joining fixtures with other clubs, however, was a (daunting) novelty to us after our first season in isolation.

We hosted our first ever Girls Pitch Up and Play on 3rd October, with ~ 160 girls from all over the Northwest coming to Priory Park. It was a fantastic day and the praise from visitors was universal. A second PU&P in April was equally successful!

Through the season we have been to Chester, Sedgley Park, Eccles and Winnington Park. Winnington Park have become our defacto teammates as the u15s have teamed up on 3 occasions to get to the required numbers.

Cheshire RFU have a very limited calendar for the girls, but 4 of our U15 players went for trials and despite the lack of experience, match time etc. one player, Lottie Dean (#15), was selected for the Cheshire squad.

The girls continue to show commitment to the club and launched some fundraising activities to purchase team kit. And they have also taken on some additional responsibilities around the club, with a number helping coach in the lower age grades of M&J.

We have managed to augment our team management with parents joining to provide admin and moral support and the addition of the amazing Charlie Hogg to the coaching team.

The season ended on a high, as we were invited to provide the honour guard for Sale Sharks Women's last home game of the season vs DMP at Heywood Road and playing a demonstration touch match at half time.

Next Season sees a shake up as we move to 4 age groups, U12, U14, U16 & U18, this works well for us as it means our current U13 & U15 squads can stay together for another season, but it does mean stretching the coaching staff.

Our focus for the new season will be on recruiting at the younger age grades as we are short of numbers to feed through securing more fixtures and concluding the season with our first ever girls tour.

FUTURE – PLAYER PATHWAY

Next season, the club should be running a Junior AND Senior Colts section. This is the first time in at least 5 years the club has managed to do this and is testament to the quality of the coaching throughout the age grades.

The numbers coming through from U13 to U16 would suggest this is likely to be the situation for the foreseeable future!

This puts the Club, and the Mini & Youth section in the position to begin implementation of the previously published "Player Pathway" (see appendix 1). This will see the first 'graduation' this season of the current U12 into the "Youth" rugby, receiving a club tie and clear expectations.

The Colts will be moving under the Adult Rugby umbrella with a new coaching arrangement, aimed at fully integrating the U17/U18 players into the adult rugby pathway. This coaching style will be trickled down to the U16/U15 and U14 over time, so when those players move into Colts, there are no sudden changes.

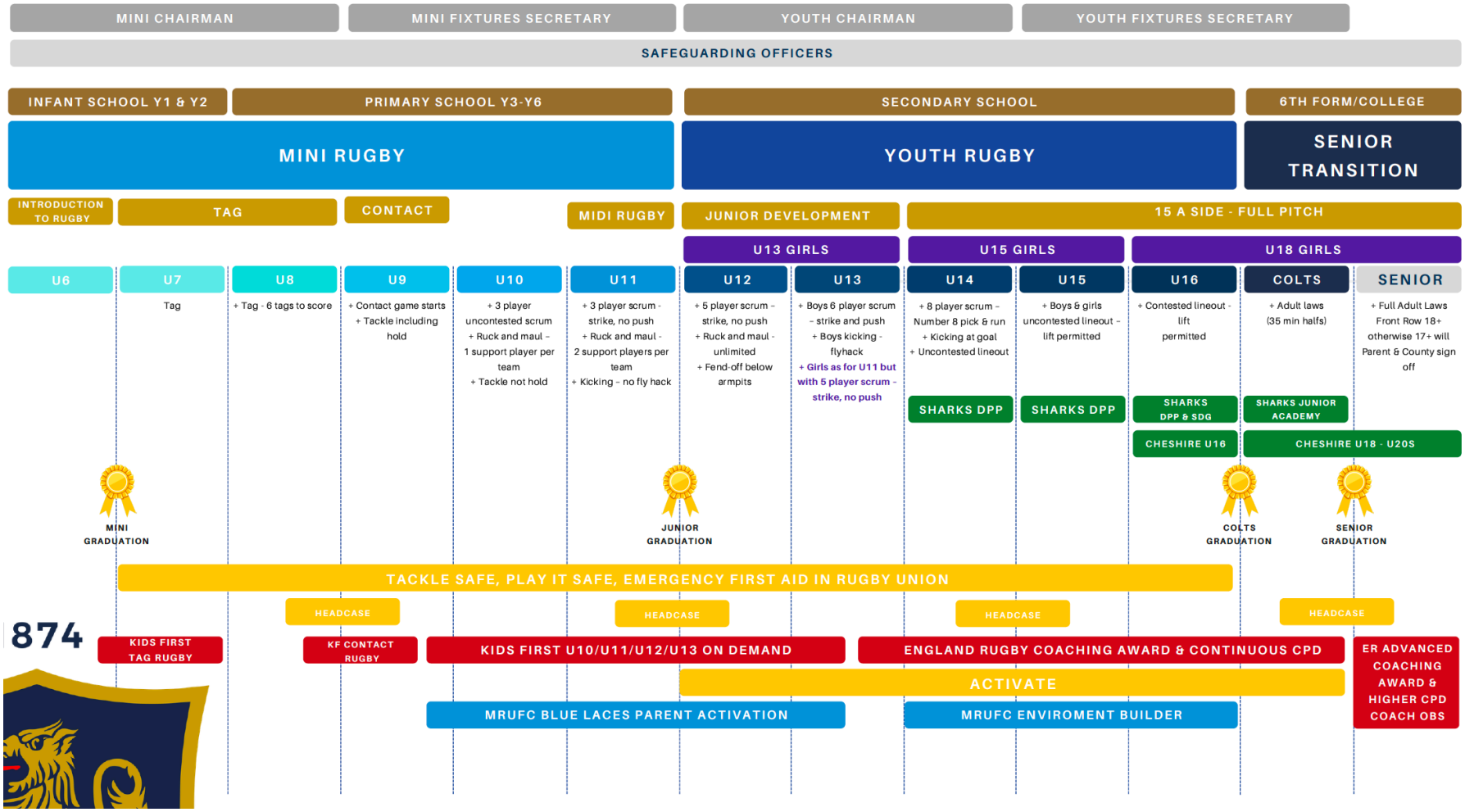
FINALLY

I have been honoured to hold the post of Mini and Youth Chairman for the last 6 seasons (I believe the longest tenure to date). I do this because I enjoy it. Coming down to the club on any Sunday and seeing upwards of 200 young players at any one time from U6 to U17 thriving, laughing, smiling, and totally enjoying their chosen sport is what makes it all worthwhile!

Obviously, I couldn't do this without the help of an army of helpers in the form of coaches, team managers, volunteers (first-aid, safeguarding, Blue Laces). There are far too many to name here and my thanks goes to you ALL

Just a-few key mentions (in no particular order)!

- **Pip Gregory** – for taking on the Girls Rugby and making it such a success
- **Vicky Brierley** – Standing Down as Fixture Secretary after 5 seasons

- **Graeme Eddie** – For standing UP as firstly Mini Fixture secretary and now Youth Fixture Secretary
- **Maggie & Barry &Team** – For being so flexible accommodating the many needs over the season, and feeding the kids (and adults)
- **Tristan Wood** – For Safeguarding Support

Appendix 1: PLAYER PATHWAY