



Proposed changes to The TravelBag Surrey Championship 3rd and 4th XI Leagues.

Please note – your club’s response is required by 28 September.

The Executive of The Surrey Championship have been consulting on proposed changes to the 3rd XI and 4th XI leagues. The consultations have included an extremely well attended 3rd XI and 4th XI Captains meeting, and a survey of nearly 450 3rd XI and 4th XI players. We have discussed our plans with the Fullers League. What we have particularly drawn from consultation is that 3rd and 4th XI players would like competitive cricket against teams of a similar standard but without travelling a long way across Surrey. This is why we are bringing forward a proposition to bring 3rd and 4th XIs within the same “linear” structure.

We intend to bring forward some proposals at The Council meeting on 15th October – which if approved by yourselves will be assumed to have been passed for the purposes of our constitution and playing conditions. We need to establish this now, so that if the decision is to make the change for 2019, fixture setting can proceed with minimum delay and the appropriate changes to the constitution and playing conditions can be prepared in good time. Part of the Council meeting will be established as a Special General Meeting, solely for the purposes of setting the new structure for the 3rd XI and 4th XI Leagues. Formal notice of this will be sent out shortly, but this letter is to provide as much detail as possible so you can consider the changes, consult within your clubs, and advise us of any concerns you have about the placement of teams in the structure.

The questions you will be asked to respond to on 15th October are:

- Do you agree in principle that it would be beneficial to the league to restructure on the lines proposed? If no the next two questions potentially fall, but if yes:
- Would you support a proposal to do this in 2019? If no:
- Would you support a proposal to do this in 2020?

All proposed changes in this note to you are solely about 3rd and 4th XIs. There are no proposed structural changes to the 1st and 2nd XI Leagues.

The Proposed new Structure:

- a) Premier 3rd XI Division – relegation – 2 down
- b) 3rd XI Division 1 – relegation and promotion 2 up and 2 down
- c) Surrey Championship East and West League, each comprising 4 divisions of 10 teams – 2 up and 2 down, except in the 2nd divisions from each of which one club will be promoted.

The proposals for allocation of teams based on 2018 league positions is set out in an accompanying file. Once you have reviewed the placement of your team(s) in the structure it is very important that you respond to Mark Babb by 28 September informing us of your consent (or alternative preference). If you do not respond we will assume that the division/region is acceptable to your club. If changes are requested we will attempt to accommodate them before we set the fixtures up – but please respond urgently so we can start the fixture setting. We are more likely to be willing to make



some accommodation around regional allocation than about the divisional “tier” in which teams are placed. Once fixtures are set, it is unlikely we will make further changes.

We expect clubs to have quite a lot of questions about what is planned and have set out what we think are the most likely questions, along with their answers, in the briefing below. If you have further questions, please address them to league chairman Peter Murphy.

Why is the new structure better than what we have at present?

From consulting players and captains, we believe that reducing journey times is important but also that players want games to be as evenly contested as possible within the divisions they are in. The mixing of third and fourth XIs over time should help achieve the latter without requiring teams to travel across the county to find well-matched opposition.

Why not also regionalise the top two divisions?

We thought that the strongest teams in the new structure would be prepared to continue to travel further, as they do now. This could be looked at again at any time.

Is not the same true of the strongest 4th XIs?

The challenge for the traditionally stronger 4th XIs, who currently have only one champions’ spot to aim for each season, will be to see how they can exploit the potential to climb higher in the new structure – potentially as far as the new Division 1.

How have you decided which clubs are East and which are West?

We have not looked at clubs but at teams. The groups of teams forming the 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th “tiers” in the structure are all different, so we have not elected to draw a single fixed boundary across the county but to make decisions on regional allocations for each tier based on the clubs within it. That process can be repeated each year.

Does this mean that a club could have one team in East and the other in West?

Just for the teams in the more central parts of the county that can and will on occasion happen, depending on the spread of clubs within the respective tiers. By the same token a team may find that it is not in the same region as it was in 2018 – that of course will apply to any club that was in the Central 3rd XI Division in 2018.

Why that approach?

With a single, fixed boundary it would be necessary in some or all tiers to place teams in a higher division than others that had done better than them the year before to get the right number of teams in a regional division. To balance the numbers there needs to be some flexibility either on merit or region. We have gone for the latter.



Why not retain the concept of Central divisions?

We considered doing that, but three regions would not conveniently accommodate the 80 teams we need to fit in to the regionalised part of the structure and the promotion and relegation arrangements become more complicated with 3 regions.

So if merit has been the main factor in allocating clubs how have you done it?

The spreadsheet shows our proposal for placing teams based on 2018 final tables with indications of where every team finished. There is not a uniquely right way of doing this but we think the approach is as fair as it can be and stands up to scrutiny. Where we have needed to allocate teams finishing in the same positions in the three 3rd XI regional divisions final tables to higher or lower divisions the spreadsheet shows the points tallies which determined our placements.

Presumably clubs can't have two sides in the same division?

No, 4th XIs will have to stay at least one division below their 3rd XI counterparts and will be denied promotion on those grounds if necessary.

What if a 3rd XI's relegation would take it to a division in which its 4th XI is playing?

We think the logic is that the 4th XI will also have to go down rather than the 3rd XI being "saved".

For the past 3 seasons we have had regional 3rds playing under Fullers' rules. What is happening about that?

Clearly the integration of 3rd and 4th XIs means that the distinct identity of the regional 3rd XI divisions, set up when Fullers and TSC 3rd XIs merged in 2015, will disappear. This will help speed us in a direction we were already wanting to go in by having full convergence of basic playing conditions across all 3rd and 4th XIs. The intention is to form a joint board of the Championship and Fullers Leagues to oversee the playing of 3rd and 4th XI cricket in the future.

So will all divisions in the new structure have the same start times, length of matches etc?

No, we will bring forward proposals on playing conditions separately for discussion at the Council meeting, including variations between tiers in the length of matches. However, regulations on things like league points, conceded matches, players dropped from higher sides in late season and use of D/L will be harmonised. We are in discussion with the Fullers about the use of one type of ball and the funding thereof. We are also discussing the setting up of a joint group formed from the two leagues to provide oversight of cricket within the structure.

Talking of concessions there seemed to be a lot of these in 2018. Do you have proposals for dealing with this?

We hope and expect that better structuring of the 3rd and 4th XI leagues and less travel will help clubs with availability. Beyond that there are not easy answers but we will be sharing some new thinking about how we apply the playing condition on taking teams out of divisions in-season, with a view to



treating struggling clubs sympathetically but also taking account of the impact concessions, and sudden removal of teams from a division, have on other teams in the division.

Playing conditions will be an important part of the overall “package”. How will they be decided?

Wherever practicable they will be decided for each of the various tiers of the structure by the clubs with teams in those tiers, so for example it will be natural for matches at the lower end of the structure to be shorter than those in Premier and Division 1 and perhaps have different start times. Formal voting on this need not be taken before the AGM but we will be sharing the Executive’s thinking on those matters in advance of the Council meeting and seeking guidance.