



# The Future of Senior Cricket in Surrey

## Foreword

We are excited to be exploring what the future for Senior Men's & Women's Cricket could look like in Surrey. Working together as Leagues and with the Surrey Cricket Foundation, we have discussed player insight from the player surveys over the past 3 years and as a result have started to discuss ideas which could begin to shape what the future might look like.

During the project we will be transparent, consulting regularly to get your input at all stages of the process and we will also share how we plan to move this forward in the coming weeks and months. Our key goal is to grow & improve the health of the league cricket we all have the chance to play week to week for the coming year and beyond

*Surrey Championship, Surrey County League and The Surrey Cricket League*



## The Current Position

There are a number of well established cricket leagues that offer competitive cricket to open age cricketers:

- Surrey Championship
- Surrey County League
- The Surrey Cricket League
- The I'Anson Cricket League
- The Surrey Downs League
- Village Cricket League
- Surrey Slam
- British Tamil Cricket League (BTCL)
- South East Shires League
- Elite Premier Cricket League

This list is not exhaustive, and we estimate that across these various leagues there are over 500 teams participating with over 17,000 cricketers involved. Each league operates under its own governance arrangements, and each has its own structure. Some of the leagues (such as the Surrey Championship and the Surrey County League) have distinct divisional structures for 1st, 2nd and even 3rd XI teams, whilst other leagues (such as the Surrey Cricket League, Surrey Downs League and I'Anson) have a single divisional structure with all teams competing in the same pyramid.

A number of the current leagues operate on a county wide basis whilst others (the I'Anson and Surrey Downs League in particular) provide a more regionalised structure for their cricket with a limited geographic spread. Other leagues form part of larger regional structures with cricket played across a number of counties. The BTCL and the South East Shires League are good examples of this.

In addition to this there are also a number of leagues offering women's cricket. These are:

- Surrey Women's Cricket League
- Surrey Women's Slam
- Surrey Women's Smash IT League
- I'Anson Women's Softball League

Whilst the current proposal does not include the women's leagues in the short term plans, there is very much an ambition for any new structure to cover all adult cricket for both men and women eventually.

## Progress to Date

In 2020 Surrey Cricket Foundation began working with the senior leagues across Surrey to deliver an annual Player Survey for men and women playing adult cricket within the county. The data that has been gathered and shared with the leagues led to some initial discussions taking place.

The first informal conversations around the idea of considering a new structure began in September 2022 with individual meetings with a number of the league officials to understand the appetite to develop more substantial plans. These discussions were largely positive and led to the concept being taken forward to the next step.

Following discussions with each of the main leagues through our regular senior leagues meeting a steering group was formed. This initially consisted of representatives from the Surrey Championship, the Surrey County League, the Surrey Cricket Foundation and former Surrey Cricket Foundation trustee and past member of the Surrey County League committee, David Kingsmill. The Surrey Cricket League have subsequently joined the steering group following further discussions meaning that 3 leagues are actively participating in the project.

Further meetings and discussions have taken place with the Surrey Downs League and the I'Anson Cricket League regarding their involvement in the project. At the time of writing neither league is actively involved within the steering group though the Surrey Downs League intends to take a vote on involvement at their next AGM.

The other leagues across Surrey have not actively engaged within the discussions/ meetings and are therefore not involved within the scope of the project as this time.

Members of the Surrey Cricket Foundation team have delivered presentations about the emerging plans at various league AGMs and the Foundation also hosted a day with the Sussex Cricket League where representatives from Sussex came to share their experience of delivering a similar project in Sussex with members of the steering group.

## The Vision

Following initial discussions with the steering group the following vision for the project was developed and agreed:

**Maintain and grow the health of senior cricket in Surrey, whilst offering competition for more clubs and reducing overheads around travel and administration for clubs and committees.**

We will seek to do this through the creation of a single meritocratic structure in Surrey, consisting of a number of county wide divisions at the top with progressive regionalisation as you move further down the structure.

The new competition will seek to provide cricket that meets the needs of its players across this wide structure.

## The Rationale for Change

There are a number of reasons behind the proposal to work towards the creation of a new structure with more details below. Over the past 3 years we have been conducting a player survey across Surrey in order to hear the views of players at all levels of the game and insight from this survey is shared with the leagues year on year.

Some of this insight has informed some of the rationale for change and will also be used to help shape elements of the new competition (playing formats, start times and so on) and we will continue to seek insight and feedback if the project progresses.

### Reduced Travel/ Increased Regionalisation

There is clear insight from players that travel can be a barrier to participation. At the highest levels players are happy to travel across the county in order to get the best possible games of cricket, but some of the current structures see county wide travel for 2nd and even 3rd XIs and this is certainly something that players would like to see change.

The most recent player survey suggests that just 11% of players are willing to travel more than an hour to participate in games, with less than 1 in 4 being happy travelling 45-60 minutes for games. The general trend in the data suggests that the lower the level, the more local players want to stay.

Reducing travel will have a positive impact on the environment as the new structure will see journey distances reduced, which should in turn reduce the amount of harmful emissions created as a result of participation in the league. This will have a secondary effect of reducing the costs associated with travel to cricket matches for many players and officials.

### Single Structure

Creating a single structure within the new league will deliver a number of benefits to clubs and teams. It will facilitate the delivery of a more regionalised structure as all club XIs will sit within the same overarching pyramid, enabling the creation of much more local divisions as we move down the structure.

A new single structure will be meritocratic meaning that every club/team has the ability to work its way up the pyramid to the very top, subject to meeting any specific requirements around facilities and governance that may be linked with the ECB Premier League requirements.

A single structure will also enable a new league to accept new entries from clubs and teams, including one team entries. This structure will in essence enable and facilitate growth within the game by being able to accept new entries (subject to meeting minimum requirements around safeguarding and governance). Within the current structure this has not been possible across all of the leagues in the past.



Just 11% of  
players happy to  
travel 60 mins plus



58% want to travel  
45 minutes or  
less to play

## Reduced Administration

In the current structure a number of clubs enter teams in multiple leagues and with this comes multiple entry fees, playing conditions, league meetings and more. This was a very similar issue within the junior leagues reform and the single structure covering all cricket has been very well received.

There are also multiple league committees and a number of duplicated processes within the current set up that would be reduced within the new merged league structure, enabling those league volunteers to focus on other important areas where the league can be developed and grown.

The proposed financial model would include the provision of a 0.75 full time equivalent league administrator (employed by the Surrey Cricket Foundation) who would oversee and deliver as much of the league administration as possible. This would be very similar to the role played within the Surrey Junior Cricket Championship where there is a full time Competition Officer who oversees the day to day operations of the league.

## Economies of Scale/Increased Revenues

We believe the new league structure will offer cricket to upwards of 120 clubs and well over 350 teams. This will provide an opportunity for the league administration to drive better value for money for its member clubs in areas such as the purchase of cricket balls and more.

A larger structure will also provide more lucrative opportunities when it comes to sponsorship. We hope to maintain and develop relationships with current sponsors whilst also being able to drive and develop new sponsor relationships with support from Surrey County Cricket Club's Commercial Department.

The increased size of the league will almost certainly enable the new league to drive stronger revenue through sponsorship.

## Easier To Respond to Player Need

The creation of one larger, single structure will make it easier to respond to player needs through the ongoing development of the annual Player Survey.

In the current structures there will be a number of clubs whose players are participating in different formats across different leagues on a week to week basis. The new structure will offer 3-4 different playing formats from top to bottom and with this consolidation changes can be considered as part of the wider structure rather than in isolation as can currently happen.

## Extending Progress

In recent years the Sports Surrey Championship and the Surrey County League have worked more closely together in developing a combined, regionalised league structure for 3rd, 4th, 5th XIs and this has landed positively. The new structure would in essence extend the progress already made on a much larger scale.

## Success of Surrey Junior Cricket Championship

In 2019 Surrey Cricket Foundation worked with the various junior leagues across Surrey to create the Surrey Junior Cricket Championship. This is now the largest single league structure anywhere in the country and has been seen as a great success by the vast majority of clubs.

We believe this previous experience will be hugely beneficial as we seek to deliver a similar project with the senior leagues currently involved.



## The Workstreams

The process of creating one single structure from the 3 existing organisations is a complicated project. The Steering Group has developed a number of key workstreams that are responsible for specific elements required to deliver a new structure. These workstreams are largely led by a member of the Steering Group and have been supplemented with a range of volunteers from across the recreational game with specific interest and/or expertise in each area. The information below will provide a short synopsis of the role of each group along with progress to date.

1. Divisional Make Up and Regionalisation
2. Rules and Playing Conditions
3. Finance and Sponsorship
4. Facilities
5. Governance
6. Officials

### 1. Divisional Make Up and Regionalisation

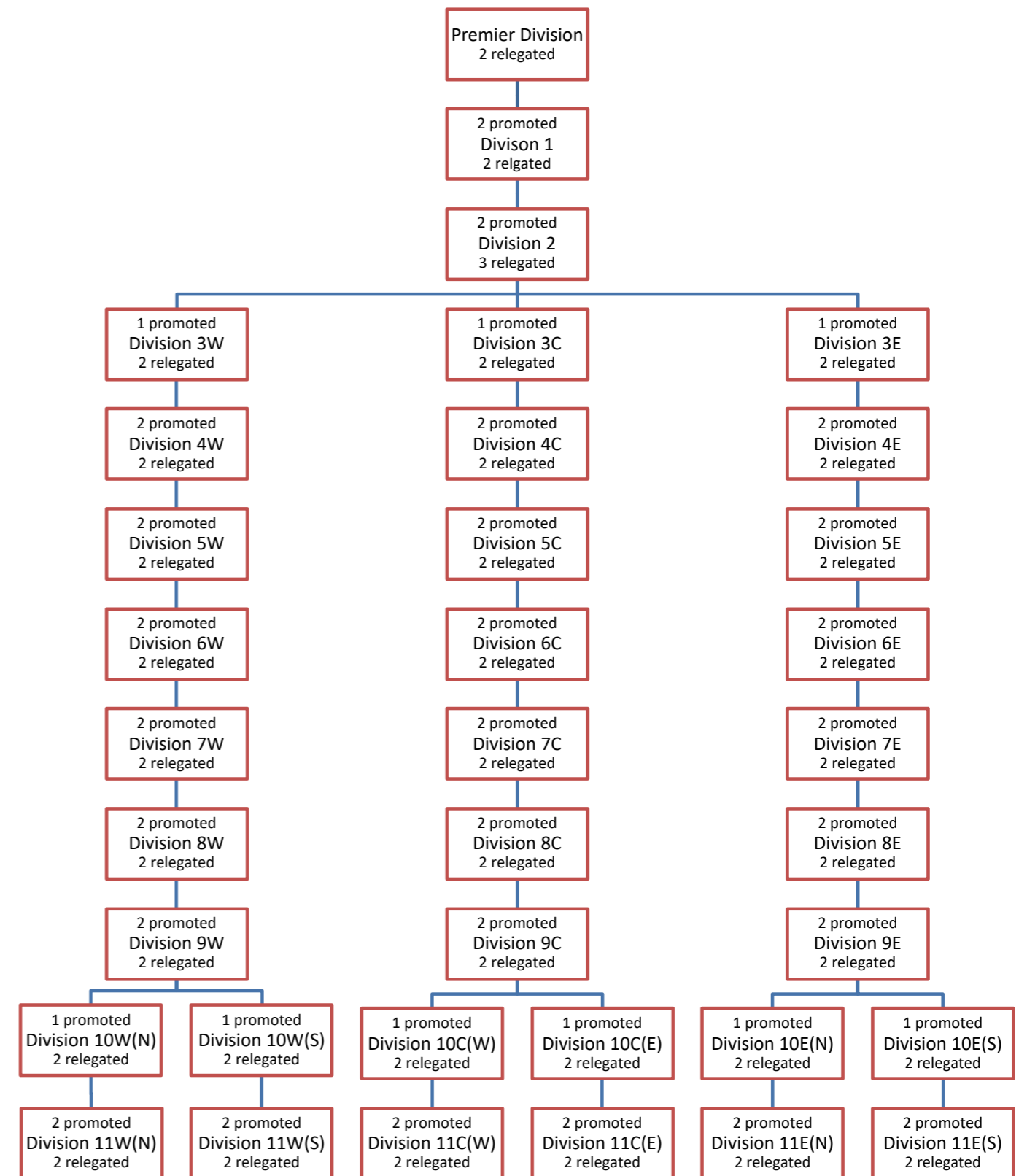
The role of this workstream is to develop a number of divisional structures that could be implemented within the new league ready for consultation. A secondary role will see this group take responsibility for aligning teams against the new structure once agreed so that clubs and teams know where they are likely to sit in a new structure as well as understanding the impact of promotion and relegation in the 2024 season should the project go ahead from the 2025 season.

Key Deliverables:

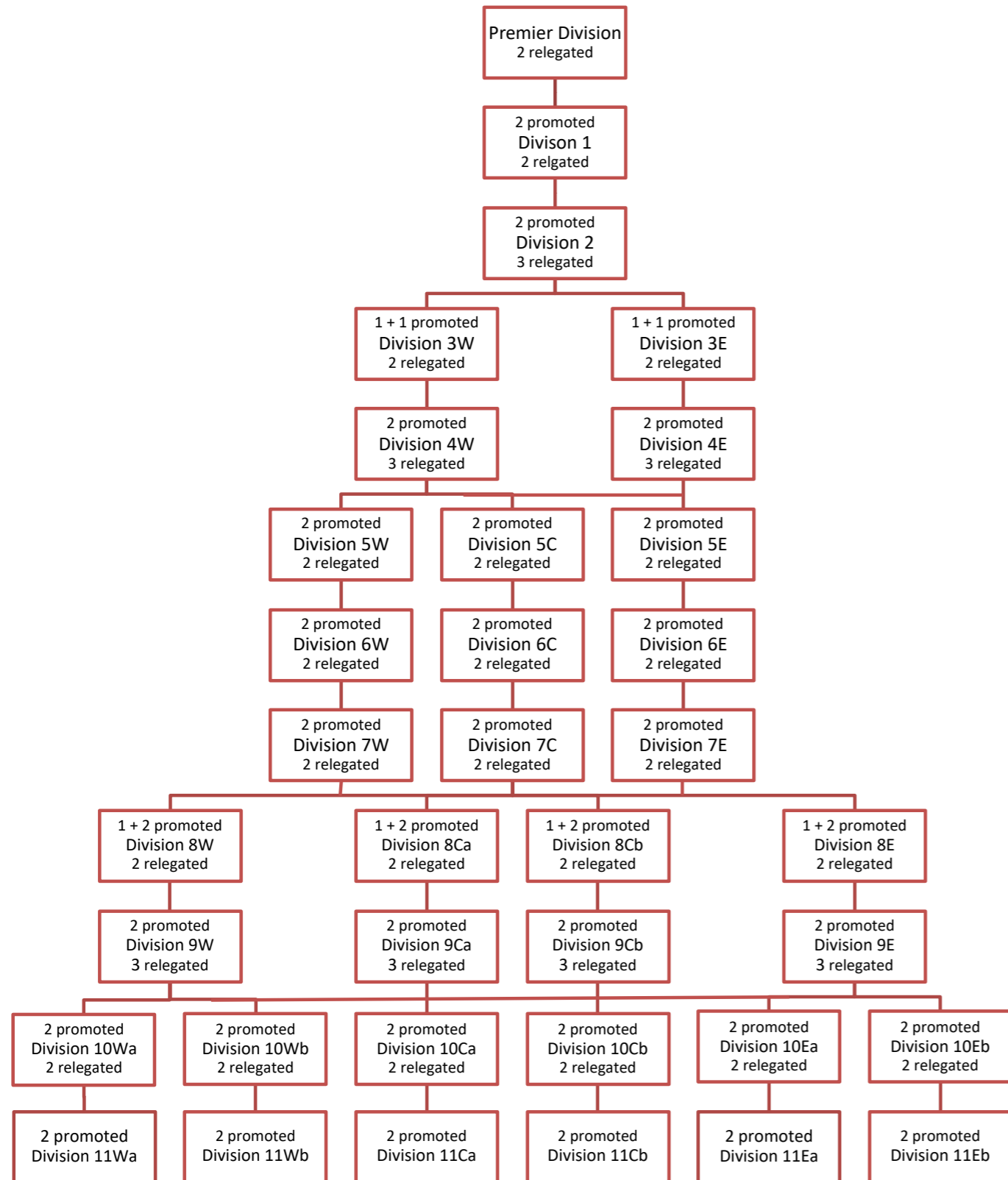
- Create a number of possible structures, offering 3 options for initial consultation (see right).
- Working with Rules and Playing Conditions to ensure alignment with playing formats.



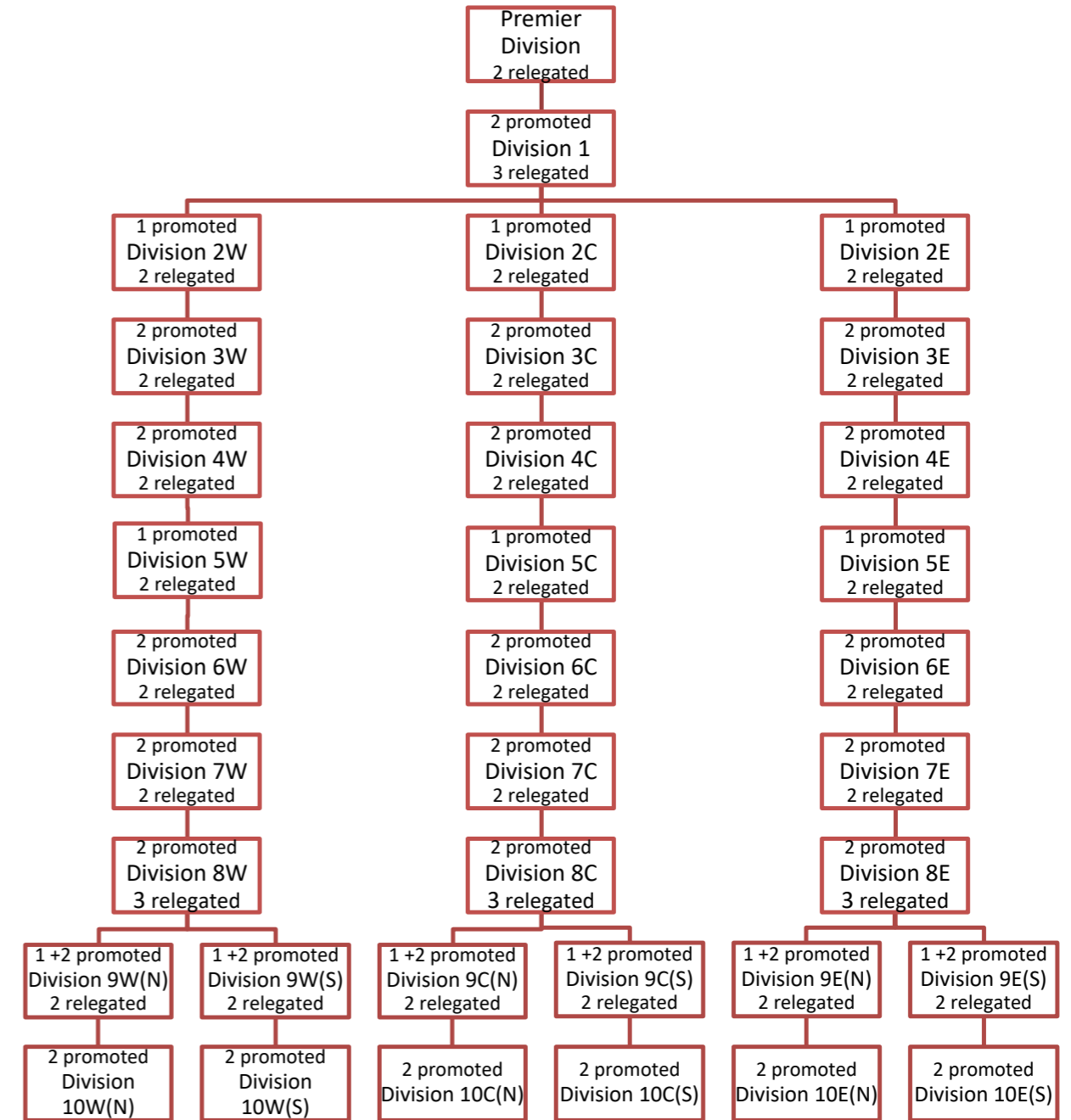
## Divisional Structure 1



## Divisional Structure 2



## Divisional Structure 3



## 2. Rules and Playing Conditions

This workstream will create a consolidated and simplified set of playing conditions that meet the needs of players across the whole structure, using data lead insight from the player survey to do this.

### Key Deliverables:

- Identify the key areas of importance to players (format, game length, start times, provision of officials etc) utilising existing insight from previous player surveys.
- Review and compare existing playing conditions across the 3 leagues.
- Version 1 draft playing conditions created for review based on the 2023 player survey data.
- Working with the Divisional Make Up and Regionalisation team to ensure alignment with the draft structure.

## 3. Finance and Sponsorship

This workstream will consider and develop a sustainable financial model that can deliver the new structure in the long term.

### Key Deliverables:

- Having reviewed the existing financial arrangements of the 3 leagues involved in the project, considering all income and expenditure (entry fees, sponsorship, fines, ball costs, admin support etc) then create a draft proposal outlining the key financial principles to be considered & adopted within a new structure.

## 4. Facilities

This workstream will create a clear and transparent facilities framework that outlines the grounds and facility requirements for participation across the new structure.

### Key Deliverables:

- Rationalise the requirements to ensure they are facility/ground focussed.
- Create a tiered approach to facility requirements across the structure.
- Identify other aspects for consideration within the framework (such as assessment of grounds, use of technology etc).

## 5. Governance

This workstream will work to define the management of the new structure (including the name of the new league!) and take responsibility for creating a constitution and the associated governance, ensuring we meet the requirements laid out by both the ECB and Sport England. It must align the current policies and procedures around behaviour, discipline, and safeguarding, ultimately driving positive behaviours across all cricket.

### Key Deliverables

- Defining how current leagues disband whilst concurrently creating the new league structure.
- Determine what may be needed within the new structure around club governance, safeguarding, and other cricket policies such as GCR/RCR.

## 6. Officials

This workstream will develop a framework for Umpiring and Scoring across the new competition.

### Key Deliverables:

- Create a structure for umpiring across the new competition which incorporates and manages a panel element, club-based umpiring, and player umpires.
- Create and develop plans to increase the number of umpires and scorers at clubs across the new structure.



## Timelines

At this stage there are no concrete timelines in place for delivering the project as it was felt important that wide consultation takes place before putting these in place. In the event that there is a clear mandate from the consultation to deliver the project to create a merged league we will be working to the broad timeline below:

### • October/November 2023

Club and Player Consultation.

### • November 2023 – April 2024

Further consultation on specific details associated with the new league (e.g. divisional structures, playing formats etc).

### • January 2024

League AGMs where intent to deliver the new structure is confirmed.

### • May 2024

Divisional structures and team make up for 2025 confirmed along with clarification on the impact of 2024 promotion and relegation on the 2025 structure.

### • September 2024

Entries open for 2025 season

### • January 2025

Current leagues dissolve and new league structure created.

### • May 2025

First matches played in the new structure.

