



**Council of Military Education Committees  
of the Universities of the United Kingdom**

**COMEC 2017**

**Annual General Meeting**

**Minutes**

**Tuesday 12 September 2017**

Held at  
Royal Military Academy Sandhurst

**1. Minutes**

RECEIVED: The minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 7 September 2016 (CAGM001).

**2. Matters arising**

NOTED: There was no attendance list attached to the Minutes.

RESOLVED: Attendees would be included in the current and future Minutes.

CONSIDERED: Circulating Minutes earlier in the year in order that those MECs that met only once or twice would have the opportunity to consider them well ahead of the AGM and comment accordingly.

RESOLVED:

- a. To accept the Minutes as a true record.
- b. Minutes would be circulated earlier in the year.

**3. Chairman's Statement**

REPORTED:

a. Appointments

The Executive had identified a candidate to replace General Sir Mike Jackson as President of COMEC and another to replace Robin Thomas as Secretary of COMEC. Both these matters were to be reported later in the meeting at Item 7 and 9 respectively.

b. University Service Units

The Executive continues to work closely with the Staff Officers in support of the USUs:

- The Devon URNU had been established and would offer valuable experience on the potential expansion of the URNU, including in Northern Ireland.
- Command Selection Boards would appoint URNU COs but gapping continued to be a challenge.
- The UOTC had growth pilot Detachments in Brighton, Caterbury, Lancaster and the Haldane Company in London.
- UOTC centralised summer camps had been established.
- The Bursary scheme was being re-invigorated by the UAS successfully.
- The transition to the new Military Flying Training system was in progress for UASs.
- There were uncertainties arising for UASs from the Defence Infrastructure Organization Basing Review.
- All three Services were experiencing problems with the timeliness of Medicals and staff gapping.
- A more disturbing issue had arisen in respect of the withdrawal of DTUS from engagement at COMEC events. High staff turnover and gapping had placed an exacting burden on capacity. Previously, the Defence Academy had made strenuous efforts to develop the relationship with COMEC and MECs and it would be unfortunate to lose the benefits of sharing experience, collaboration and recognition.
- The Defence Engineering Champion's Strategic Review Report to ensure delivery of value for money was being implemented by the MoD and would be passed to DTOEES for the education delivery mechanism. If the Review was radical and was to be implemented successfully, it must be addressed in close collaboration with universities.
- COMEC remained ready to resume communication or recraft the working relationship whenever it would be expedient and the Chairman would continue his contact with the Defence Academy.

c. Website

- The future direction of the website had been considered with valuable input from the Greater London RFCA.
- The design of the website was consistent with an informational site as a source of reference and of referral to other related sites.
- The site should clarify what COMEC was, what it and MECs did and for whom, and the information should be frequently updated,
- A dynamic impression should be created by incorporating twitter feeds, screen grabbers and news items, and
- Minutes of meetings should be published.
- These changes would take effect later this year.

d. Networking

- Much of the Executive's effort this year had been directed at developing relations with Defence and reinvigorating the network of alliances with Defence People (and Reserves), the Defence Academy, the Council of RFCAs (Chief Executive, Major General Jamie Gordon, was attending the Conference the following day) and related organizations. Joint interests, including common allies and supporters,

and modernization agendas were identified. Discussions included FR20 and the Offer Right? Report, which appear at item 4.

- Bryden Ritchie was embarking on a consultation and review of COMEC's working relationships with MECs and the currency of the Constitution.

e. Publications

- The following Occasional Papers had been published recently:
- No. 10: COMEC Rejoinder. The Value of the University Armed Service Units by Patrick Mileham
- No. 9: War in Peacetime by Christopher Donnelly
- No. 8: Air Power by Michael Graydon and Andrew Lambert would be published soon and two Occasionals on the Conference 2017 proceedings would follow.
- It was intended to update the COMEC Conspectus 2004 and to maintain it in electronic form to publicise to our allies and others what COMEC did and for whom, together with Memorandums of good practice.

NOTED: The appointment of a Webmaster was not considered necessary at the present time.

**4. Treasurer's report**

RECEIVED: The Annual Statement of Accounts 2016-17 (CAGM002).

NOTED:

- Income consisted of a subscription of £350 from 20 MECs.
- There had been an increase in travel costs during the year due to office bearers meeting and representing COMEC. The Working Party formed a considerable element that would not recur in future years.
- Expenditure exceeded income. The policy to draw down assets to £7000 continued. It would not be necessary to increase subscriptions for 2017-18.

CONSIDERED:

- Activity should not be restricted by finance and fees to COMEC might be increased to £500.
- There were hidden subsidies from some universities and individuals that supplemented the subscription.
- MoD had financially supported COMEC events previously and, whilst Defence People had listened sympathetically, the benefits of expenditure needed to be verifiable and quantifiable.

RESOLVED:

- To approve the Statement of Accounts 2016-17.
- To refer the level of the MEC subscription to Mr Ritchie's review of relationships with MECs.

**5. COMEC Prize**

REPORTED: The COMEC prize Winner 2017 was 2Lt Hannah Clancy of Queen's UOTC. The Runner-Up is JUO Gibbons of Cambridge UOTC.

**6. Future of the Reserves**

RECEIVED: 'The University Service Units: Is the Offer Right?'

NOTED: The Report, and parallel COMEC Occasional No 10 ‘COMEC Rejoinder: The Value of the Armed Service Units’, were submitted in response to a presentation at the COMEC 2015 Conference by Brigadier Mark van der Lande, Head Reserves, Defence People Directorate, MOD. The Conference had been informed of the increased needs for Reserve officers to meet Future Force 2020 establishment, and how the MOD was proposing to extend a more intense engagement with the civil population and, in particular Higher Education, to meet the need for officer and enlisted recruitment. The broad thrust of the Report would be the subject of the Defence Conference the following day at which the three syndicates would consider specific questions arising from the documents.

RESOLVED: That the recommendations of the Report together with COMEC Occasional paper No10 be considered at the COMEC Conference on 13 September for the MOD and Single Services to carry forward in the future.

#### **7. COMEC President**

REPORTED: General Sir Peter Wall had accepted the Executive’s invitation to be President of COMEC.

APPROVED: The appointment of General Sir Peter Wall as President of COMEC for a term of three years.

#### **8. Membership of Executive**

REPORTED:

- a. The Vice Chairman was stepping down after the AGM.
- b. No Terms of Office of Executive Members were due to end in 2017. However, one vacancy existed which was unfilled in 2016

NOTED:

- a. Nominations to the post of Vice Chairman had been received in respect of:
  - Ms A Lyon (Exeter)
  - Mr B Ritchie (Edinburgh)
  - Rev Professor J P Taylor (Queen’s)
- b. There being three nominations by the due date, an election was held.
- c. Nominations to Executive Committee Member had been received by the due date in respect of the following:
- d. Ms C Kinkead (Queen’s)

RESOLVED:

- a. Mr Ritchie was duly declared elected as Vice Chairman by ballot.
- b. There being one nomination received by the due date Ms Kinkead was duly declared elected to the Executive Committee as an Ordinary Member.

NOTED FURTHER:

- a. As Mr Ritchie was elected to the role of Vice Chair, a vacancy for a Member was created. Nominations to the role of Member in the event of this occurring had been invited.
- b. No further nominations to the Member vacancy had been received.

FURTHER RESOLVED: The Committee Member vacancy created by Mr Ritchie’s election would be left vacant and nominations requested for the next AGM.

**9. Appointment of Secretary to COMEC**

REPORTED: Mr Jason Norris, Head of Global Engagement & Recruitment at the University of Dundee, had been appointed by the Executive as Secretary to COMEC to replace Robin Thomas.

APPROVED: The appointment of Mr Jason Norris as Secretary to COMEC for a period of four years in the first instance.

**10. Freshers' Fairs**

NOTED: Tayforth UOTC reported its difficulty to obtain places at Freshers' Fairs. Fees charged by different Students' Unions varied.

CONSIDERED:

- Lobbying at NUS level to achieve common ground among all the SUs stressing that USUs were non-profit organizations and the purpose of USU presence at Freshers' Fairs was not to recruit into the Regular or Reserve Services.
- Not all SUs were members of the NUS and the NUS did not have authority over SUs, the relationship being similar to that of COMEC and its constituent MECs.

RECOMMENDED: USUs and partner universities make the USU role and status very clear to local SUs and make transparent that the purpose is not to recruit into the Regular or Reserve Forces.

**11. Leadership in Practice**

REPORTED: The delivery of Leadership in Practice was proving difficult owing to lack of personnel. There was a significant cost to contracting out.

CONSIDERED: University staff might be in a position to fill the function.

**12. Date of next meeting**

NOTED: The next Defence Conference and COMEC AGM was scheduled to be hosted by the Defence Academy, Shrivenham. As DTOEES was withdrawing its involvement from COMEC, the Royal Navy had been requested to host the event and options were being considered. The provisional dates were 5-7 September 2018, the AGM recently being held on the first day.

CONSIDERED: Whether Universities should be approached to host the Defence Conference as part of the rotation. It was agreed that the idea would be examined by the Executive Committee.

**13. Executive Secretary**

The Chairman thanked Mr Robin Thomas for his eleven years of service as Secretary to COMEC. With Territorial, University and MEC experience, he had brought professionalism, stability and continuity within a framework of good governance. As a mark of his commitment, he had stayed on a year longer than he intended to see through the transition to new President and Chairman. A book shortly to be published would serve as a small token of thanks for his service. The Meeting expressed their gratitude for his contribution and wished him well for his retirement.

**COMEC 2017 Delegates registered to attend AGM**

**Executive Committee**

Prof Elizabeth Archibald (Northumbrian),  
Prof Ian Ball (Tayforth),  
Mr James Castle (Glasgow & Strathclyde),  
Prof Simon Denny (East Midlands),  
Mr Ross Hall (Wales),  
Ms Carol Kinkead (Queen's Belfast),  
Mr Roderick Livingston (Chairman; Glasgow & Strathclyde),  
Dr Patrick Mileham (Vice-Chairman),  
Mr Jason Norris (Tayforth),  
Mr Bryden Ritchie (Edinburgh),  
Prof Patton Taylor (Treasurer),  
Mr Robin Thomas (Secretary),

**Aberdeen**

Prof Margaret Ross (Aberdeen),

**Bristol**

Prof James Davenport (Bristol),

**Cambridge**

Mr Matthew Moss (Cambridge),

**Edinburgh**

Mr Duncan Ferguson (Edinburgh),  
Miss Karen Osterburg (Edinburgh),  
Ms Fiona Forrest-Anderson (Edinburgh),

**Glasgow and Strathclyde**

Dr Andrew McLaren (Glasgow & Strathclyde),

**Leeds**

Col Alan Roberts (Leeds),  
Prof Edward Spiers (Leeds),  
Maj Ian M Sloney (Leeds),

**Manchester and Salford**

Prof Clive Agnew (Manchester & Salford),

**Oxford**

Prof Niall Moore (Oxford),  
Prof Andrew Neil (Oxford),  
Mr Ian Wright (Oxford)

**Queen's Belfast**

Mr Alistair Finlay (Queen's Belfast),

**Wales**

Mr Peter Neville (Wales),

**West Midlands**

Dr Michael Smith (West Midlands),

**URNU**

Cdr Andrew McLennan (Commander Universities),  
Lt Alex Kelley RN (Wales URNU),

Maj Giles Cooper (Yorkshire OTR),

**UOTC**

Col Myszka Guzkowska (AD OTC),

Lt Col Al Jarvis (Tayforth UOTC),

Lt Col Brian Johnston (Queen's UOTC),

Lt Col David Londons (Cambridge UOTC),

Lt Col Kev Rafferty (NW OTR),

Lt Col Rory Shannon (Glasgow & Strathclyde UOTC),

Lt Col Karl Parfitt (Exeter UOTC)

Brig Bill Wright (DComdt RMAS)

**UAS**

Gp Capt A Dickens (Comdt 6FTS),

Wg Cdr David Hooton (UAS North),

Sqn Ldr Ged Sheppeck (Birmingham UAS),

DRAFT