



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

Annual General Meeting 2018

held on Tuesday 11th September 2018 at 1400hrs

at ULOTC, Yeomanry House, Handel Street, London, WC1N 1NP

Minutes

Present

General Sir Peter Wall (President); Mr R G Livingston (Chairman, Glasgow & Strathclyde); Mr B Ritchie (Vice Chairman, Edinburgh); Rev Professor J P Taylor (Treasurer, Queen's Belfast); Mr J S Castle (Glasgow & Strathclyde); Mr H Hamilton (East Midlands); Ms A Lyon (Exeter); Ms C Kinkead (Queen's Belfast); Prof Adrian Parker (Oxford); Major Ian Stoney (Leeds); Dr Michael Smith (West Midlands); Prof David Dunn (West Midlands); Dr Marianna Kaimaki (Cambridge); Dr Jonathan Rayner (Sheffield); Mr Alan Hill (Exeter); Dr Julie Smith (Cambridge); Mr Alistair Finlay (Queen's Belfast); Brig Gerhard Wheeler; Col N Tougher; Col D Guinness; Gp Capt H Edwards; Lt Col M Bishop; Lt Col J D Brinn; Lt Col Tim Farthing

In Attendance

Ms Natasha Brannan (Prizewinner); Mr Jason Norris (Secretary, Tayforth)

Apologies

Professor E Archibald; Mr R Hall; Dr P J R Mileham; Cdr A McLennan RN

1. Minutes

RECEIVED: The Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 12 September 2017 (COMEC_AGM_2018_A)

RESOLVED: The Minutes were approved.

2. Matters Arising

NOTED: As requested AGM attendees are now included in the Minutes and the draft is published earlier in the year.

NOTED: Regarding item 11 on the Minutes relating to the delivery of Leadership in Practice to non-UOTC university students and the suggestion that universities might assist, Col N Tougher will discuss with Manchester MEC who had enquired about any developments.

3. Chairman's Report

RECEIVED: A report from the Chairman (COMEC_AGM_2018_B):

University Service Units

A major part of the Executive's work continues to be with the Service Staff Officers in support of our USUs, and our quarterly discussions have been informed by financial stringency, requiring affordability and value for money. USUs are managing restricted reserve service days, but the quality of recruits remains strong.

We have lobbied on staff gapping and on improving the recruiting system and medical process, and been instrumental in persuading the Services to collect and disclose reliable management statistics on the USUs and continuation recruiting to the Services. Issues identified this year have included:

URNUs: The CO plot is now filled and stable since COs are being chosen by Command Selection Boards.

The URNU syllabus review is refining training to ensure that it is achievable, relevant and engaging.

Plans for expansion of the URNU organization have been put on hold in the near term due to financial constraints.

The C2 structure introduced from 2014 continues to be monitored to ensure that the structure works well.

UOTCs: The UOTC study, initiated by Generals Bashall and Nanson's 'grubby tactical challenge' to balance the books and the range of potential options to be faced, has already realized savings through improved control and standardization. Work to examine further savings has continued by Deloitte, McKinsey and the AADP. Consultation, which appears at item 6, will deliver a paper on the future utility of the UOTCs.

New growth pilot Detachments in Brighton (meantime mothballed), Canterbury, Lancaster and the Haldane Company in London.

Centralised summer camps.

The Common Commissioning Course Short.

UASs: The Defence Infrastructure Organization UAS Basing Review and infrastructure constraints have created uncertainties for four UASs.

The UAS Biennial Report was well received and is available at <https://uod.box.com/s/wfoc0fwbffj1pgtj9hpesikdurpofsq9>

The Air Transformation Programme is looking at the role and objectives fulfilled by UASs and Air Cadets, and reviewing the scope of the current LAFT2 contract and its alignment to UAS and Air Cadet output.

The initial business case for Project TELUM, the Fixed-wing Light Aircraft Training System which will replace LAFT2 has been approved.

Networking

The Executive have maintained our relationships with the Armed Forces and our network of strategic alliances with Defence People and Reserves, the Council of RFCAs and related organizations, and are recrafting our working relationship with the Defence Academy. We have common allies, supporters and modernization agendas, and discuss joint interests.

Bryden Ritchie embarked on a consultation and review of our working relationships with MECs and the currency of the Constitution, which appears at item 7.

Conference 2018

It was most unfortunate to have to cancel the Conference, and the decision was not taken lightly. Members had some difficulty with the second week in September, but had suggested early in the week and over two days. Convenience of transport links was noted, but there was no objection to Dartmouth.

The response, however, was very disappointing and we needed to make a commitment before BRNC's summer shutdown. Despite Bryden Ritchie's pleas for notice of intent, two days before the closing date there were only 15 representatives registered from a minority of MECs. There were subsequently indications that perhaps another four might register, but we would have been clearly outnumbered by 23 Armed Forces personnel. This brought the viability and credibility of the event into question. Where reasons were given for absence, they were mainly travel time and clash with teaching duties.

We have had in recent years representatives in the thirties, except for 2016 at RAF Halton when there were 23. There is difficulty finding a date suitable for both the officer training establishments and university commitments, and we will need to give careful consideration to the structure of future events.

Membership of the Council

Southampton MEC has had to withdraw from membership of the Council because its universities cannot budget for the subscription for reasons of financial stringency. Southampton has been a valued member of COMEC. It is to be hoped that this disruption will not be long and that they will find the resources to re-join the Council at an early opportunity.

Executive Committee Minutes

Agendas are published a week before the meeting, and the Minutes follow a fortnight after the Committee have approved them, on the Events page of the website <https://www.comec.org.uk/category/events/>

Website

We have continued to improve the design of, and update the information on, the website, consistent with it being an informational source of reference and referral to other related sites.

Screen grabbers have been introduced on the Events and Publications pages to make the papers more accessible.

Dynamic twitter feeds have been extended on the Twitter Feeds page <https://www.comec.org.uk/updates/> There are feeds from your USUs, the armed forces, our strategic allies and associated organizations.

Publications

We have published Occasional, which are available on the website <https://www.comec.org.uk/publications/>

No. 8: Air Power by Michael Graydon and Andrew Lambert

No. 11: Trustworthiness in Public Life by Onora O'Neill, and National Resilience and the Developing Civil-Military Relationship by David Omand

They address the structures to protect our security and interests at a time of inevitable change, and are highly pertinent to the present international confrontation.

COMEC Annual Conference 2017 Proceedings, Dynamics and Strategy in Universities and Defence?

Printed copies will be available at the AGM, and it is available on the website.

We also updating the COMEC Conspectus 2004, and will maintain it in electronic form, to publicise to our strategic allies and others what we do and for whom.

General Data Protection Regulation

The Executive are considering a GDPR Compliance Statement and privacy policy.

4. Treasurer's Report

RECEIVED: The Annual Statement of Accounts 2017-18 (COMEC_AGM_2018_C). The Treasurer noted the following:

Profit and Loss Account

At the end of the financial year, four MEC subscriptions were outstanding. Three of these have indicated that payment is in process (and these are included in the Balance Sheet as debtors). However, one of these has subsequently indicated an intention to withdraw from COMEC and is not included in the accounts. One MEC paid the subscription twice (and this will be carried forward to 2018/19)!

Balance Sheet

Our policy has for some time been to reduce our reserves (our total net assets) to the equivalent of one year's income (£7,000) over several years. On the basis of the 2017/2018 deficit, and assuming that income from MEC subscriptions remains unchanged, this deficit-reduction will be achieved in 2019. The Council will therefore need to give thought as to how the annual deficit might be reduced thereafter.

There are, presently, no other indicators to suggest that the level of subscriptions should be reviewed.

RESOLVED: The Statement of Accounts 2017-18 were approved.

CONSIDERED: Southampton MEC showing as a debtor for £350 given their late notice after the subscription year regarding their withdrawal from COMEC. The impact of this and future reduction in total subscription income will need to be considered by the Executive.

NOTED: Increased travel costs for COMEC Executive meetings due to wider geographical spread of Officers.

5. COMEC Prize

REPORTED: The COMEC Prize Winner 2018 is OCdt Brannan of Queen's Belfast UOTC. The Runners-up are OCdt Gillanders of Wales UOTC and JUO MacDonald of Glasgow & Strathclyde UOTC.

6. UOTC Study

The President took the Chair for this item.

CONSIDERED: A consultation paper report on the UOTC Study (COMEC_AGM_2018_D).

NOTED: Col N Tougher noted the paper tried to answer what the options are for the OTCs and what is the return on investment. Col N Tougher and Lt Col M Bishop travelled across UK to establish a baseline of facts. There is now a requirement to run OTCs as a business delivering a tangible output across a huge footprint. The paper is written for ECAB (Executive Committee of the Army Board), meeting in September, to inform future direction ensuring everyone on same baseline. There is not a requirement to close OTCs, and there is a wish to retain the footprint; there needs to be a balance. OTCs provide 65% of Reserve officers and 39% of Regular officers.

NOTED: Universities are the other part of the equation and their views need to be included. The way the paper was written for ECAB had raised some concerns, notably the item on increasingly filtering out students who were not committed. It was to be hoped that OTCs would continue to select students who would benefit from, and contribute to, unit activities, ensuring that membership remained broad in outlook.

OTCs nominally serve three quarters of HE institutions, but coverage is variable. Brig G Wheeler questioned whether the footprint, including detachments, kept up with HE developments, and whether the name of the OTC impacted on engagement. Also, the need to work closely with universities in particular subject areas and keep open both officer and non-officer recruitment to specialist branches.

Each Service had its own priorities for its USUs, but their deliberations would no doubt be influenced by the Army's decision on the utility of UOTCs. The President, therefore, considered it necessary to articulate COMEC's views at the highest level of MOD.

CONSIDERED: Engagement at Ministry of Defence level with the evidence on the importance of OTCs and the other USUs to recruitment.

7. Development of COMEC and Relations with MECs, and Conference

CONSIDERED: A report on the consultation and review of working relationships with MECs (COMEC_AGM_2018_E), and the timing and structure of future events.

NOTED: The Chairman noted the disappointment of having to cancel the COMEC Conference. It is not, in its present form, engaging MECs or their members. The Executive will give careful consideration in consultation with MECs to the structure of future events.

NOTED: The Chairman reflected on the reasons for cancelling the Conference. Following consultation, MECs' preference was for a 2 day event in the first week of September at an officer training establishment. Unfortunately, this now tends to be during the summer shutdown, but members suggested early in the second week, and there was no objection to Dartmouth, though, for many, transport links meant 2 days became 3 including travel. The decision was not taken lightly, but the response from our members was very disappointing, with travel time and clash with teaching duties given as reasons for absence. Shared accommodation may have been another issue.

NOTED: The content of the Conference was discussed and need to focus on a key single theme. Dr J Smith suggested looking at adult learning and what military as employers are looking for, this could include short courses. It was also suggested the conference focuses on links between military and University training strategy for student development to help MECs gain better engagement from senior University managers.

NOTED: The Vice Chairman updated the Council on the outcomes of the MEC questionnaire and expressed disappointment that only half of MECs responded. Themes that came out of the survey included the variety of constitutional arrangements and range of traditional annual activities, but little feedback on future direction. It was noted that communication needed to be both ways if COMEC were to represent effectively the interests of MECs to Defence. A more detailed version of the report is available on request.

8. Nominations to the Executive Committee

NOTED: There were no Terms of Office of Ordinary Members due to end in 2018. There is one unfilled vacancy from 2017 and one new vacancy for 2018.

NOTED: Nominations to Executive Committee Member were received by the due date in respect of the following:

- Major Ian Stoney (Leeds) (COMEC_AGM_2018_F1)
- Dr Julie Smith (Cambridge) (COMEC_AGM_2018_F2)

RESOLVED: There being two nominations received by the due date for two vacancies, Major Stoney and Dr Smith are duly declared elected to the Executive Committee as Ordinary Members for a term of four years.

9. Any Other Business

- NOTED: Air Marshal Edward Stringer, new Director General of the Defence Academy, has expressed his support of the valuable work and important role of the MECs in supporting and promoting Defence, our student cohort and DTUS. With the Defence Academy undergoing a major transformation programme, there is merit in exploring how a COMEC-Def. Ac. relationship might be developed, on a more strategic level to support each other's aims and objectives. The President and Chairman will meet him to discuss this further.
- NOTED: Major I Stoney noted concerns that subsuming UOTCs in OTRs had diminished their identification with, and standing in, their universities. The Chairman will take this up with Col N Tougher.
- NOTED: The Chairman of Tayforth MEC noted by correspondence that it would be of use for all UK MECs to be aware of the Defence and Security Accelerator if they are not already involved in some way. The Defence and Security Accelerator (DASA) finds and funds exploitable innovations which benefit UK defence and security. Announced in the 2015 UK Strategic Defence and Security Review the mission for DASA is to deliver for the UK strategic advantage through the innovative capabilities and technologies they have identified and supported. DASA aim to become the go-to place for Government, private sector, partners and academics to find solutions to defence and security challenges. In Scotland the contact is Dr Debra Carr and she has been touring each of Scotland's universities to help promote the research opportunities. Would be helpful if all UK MECs had an active interest on this link with Defence and an awareness of DASA and who within their university is considering DASA funding submissions. The Linked in url: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/defence-and-security-accelerator/>

10. Dates and Venues of Future Meetings

NOTED: The Executive will give careful consideration in consultation with MECs to the timing and structure of future events.