



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

Executive Committee Meeting

held on Thursday 16th May 2019 at 1115hrs

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

Minutes

Present

Mr R G Livingston (Chairman), Mr B Ritchie (Vice Chairman); Rev Professor J P Taylor (Treasurer); Professor E Archibald; Mr J S Castle; Mr H Hamilton; Ms A Lyon; Ms C Kinkead; Maj I Stoney; Dr P J R Mileham; Sqn Ldr A Hawes;

In Attendance;

Mr Jason Norris (Secretary)

Apologies

Mr R Hall; Dr J Smith; Gp Capt H Edwards; Col N Tougher; Col D Guinness; Cdr I H Lynn RN; Lt Col M Bishop;

1. Minutes

- APPROVED: The Minutes of the Executive meeting held on 21 February 2019 (COMEC_2019_05_A)

2. Matters Arising

- Action points arising (COMEC_2019_05_A1):

Armed Forces Covenant Briefing (Min 3 21 Feb 2019)

- NOTED: Information and links regarding the Covenant have not yet been received from Col D Guinness.
- NOTED: Discussions were had around the Covenant. The Chairman noted the Covenant may be structured according to the disposition of the university to demonstrate its support for the Armed Forces community. Mr J S Castle noted there is a HE/FE veteran champions network in Scotland which encourages organisations to sign up. Mr J S Castle would be pleased to present this activity to colleagues outside of Scotland.

- RECEIVED: Dr P J R Mileham had received from the DRM team copy text for the COMEC Conspectus. The Chairman noted the need to ensure the message about the Covenant is consistent across all sectors.

Chairman's Report (Min 4 21 Feb 2019)

- NOTED: This item to be discussed later in the agenda.

Treasurer's Report (Min 5 21 Feb 2019)

- NOTED: This item to be discussed later in the agenda.

Conference 2019 (Min 7 21 Feb 2019)

- NOTED: This item to be discussed later in the agenda.

COMEC Prize (Min 8 21 Feb 2019)

- NOTED: This item to be discussed later in the agenda.

Publications (Min 9 21 Feb 2019)

- **ACTION: Nominations were invited from members to succeed Dr P J R Mileham as Publications Editor. The Chairman noted this would be discussed at the November Executive meeting once new members had been elected.**

Membership of the Executive (Min 10 21 Feb 2019)

- NOTED: This item to be discussed later in the agenda.

3. Chairman's Report

- RECEIVED: A report from the Chairman
- NOTED: The Chairman noted he had written to the Chairman of Southampton MEC again in the spring and, having received no response after a month, wrote to the University Secretary, copied to his counterparts in the other four participating universities. The University of Southampton acknowledged receipt, noting a response to follow. The University of Winchester noted they would discuss at the MEC's AGM. The Chairman noted, if there was no further response, the Executive would need to write off the 17/18 subscription as a bad debt. Ms A Lyon noted we had to turn down the nomination for the COMEC Prize from Southampton as they had not paid their subscription.
- NOTED: The Chairman noted he had also written to the Chairmen of three MECs which had been less engaged with the Council over the last couple of years to offer to try to improve communications and exchange of ideas. One has responded positively, and we have restored contact. Sussex MEC noted they were disappointed two years ago with the inexplicable closure of their successful UOTC detachment.
- NOTED: Professor E Archibald noted this raises the issue again of COMEC's relationship with MECs, asking for reports and for Executive members to make visits. Mr H Hamilton also noted this raised the serious issue of services not working in partnership with MECs on major decisions like withdrawing a unit.
- **ACTION: The Chairman will request any annual reports or equivalent from MECs.**

- NOTED: Rev Professor J P Taylor noted that the COMEC Executive meeting used to rotate around MECs across the country and this is something that could be re-instated. Mr J S Castle also agreed with Rev Professor J P Taylor that we could invite MEC Chairman to attend Executive meetings if they wish. Mr B Ritchie noted we have tried to engage but there was a low response to his questionnaire, perhaps this is something that can be discussed further at the AGM and Conference? Professor E Archibald suggested a regional approach to the Conference in future although logistical and financial issues were noted (including receipt of payments).
- NOTED: The Chairman noted he had had wide-ranging discussions with Brig Mark van der Lande on UOTC-related issues. His report was now required in July, so that Brig Bill Wright might initiate action before he left Sandhurst in the autumn. Members had now visited Bristol, Birmingham, Exeter and London UOTCs, with Cambridge and, to address our concerns about the Panel's preoccupation with the South of England, a flying visit to Glasgow and Strathclyde to follow over the next few weeks. Their findings thus far seemed to echo those of Prof Rachel Woodward's three years of research published in 2016. The needs of the Army had to be articulated to interact effectively with universities and their MECs. The Panel seemed to have identified two themes:
 - . recruitment to the UOTCs and continuation-recruiting to the Army.
 - . strengthening the close and vital partnership with the universities.
 Brig van der Lande would be pleased to present their findings and the response to the Conference, which should be an ideal time to involve our MECs in refreshing our partnership with Defence.
- NOTED: The Chairman noted that, following review of DTOEES and the STEM graduate requirement, DTOEES is to close with the last intake to Welbeck in 2019 and the final bursars to DTUS in 2021. It was noted Defence needs to increase numbers above DTOEES's ability to deliver and replace it with the STEM Graduate Inflow Scheme. This will be targeted to increase significantly the number of STEM graduates into Defence. It will be open to all UK undergraduates and be supported by a competitive financial package. Ms A Lyon noted the Welbeck Governors were not consulted, and the Chairman noted that it appeared that neither had the Universities. He suspects that there would be at least 500 bursars and that the scheme would be administered by the three Services.

4. Treasurer's Report

- RECEIVED: A report from the Treasurer (COMEC_2019_05_B)
- NOTED: The Treasurer noted 10 MECs have paid their subscriptions so half still to pay and reminders have gone out.
- NOTED: The Treasurer informed the Executive that the policy of reducing financial reserves over the last few years now needs reviewed. Considerations should include reducing costs (e.g. by reducing the frequency of meetings), increasing the COMEC subscription paid by MECs or seeking additional funding e.g. from MoD. It was noted the COMEC subscription has not increased since 2015 although costs have been increasing year on year (although the biennial lecture has not run since 2008). Discussion also centred on ensuring value for money to MECs and ensuring we maintained (and increased) their engagement.

- **ACTION: The Treasurer will present options relating to a sustainable budget for the Executive to consider in due course.**

5. Publications

- RECEIVED: An update from Dr P J R Mileham on Occasional Papers and Conspectus.
- NOTED: Dr P J R Mileham noted content was already out of date with the new STEM Scheme being introduced. Content has been received from across the services, although further images are still required. A foreword from the President and Chairman is also needed.
- NOTED: Dr P J R Mileham hoped to have the content ready for the AGM, although was unsure if we could publish at that stage.
- NOTED: Discussion was had over the need for both an electronic and printed copy noting cost of production. An electronic version will be produced first for the website and costs explored for a hard copy.
- NOTED: An Occasional paper on the “Moral Component” will be produced in the Autumn (Occasional Paper No 12). Ms C Kinkead noted the issue of the use and impact of drones.

6. Reports from the Service Staff Officers

- RECEIVED: A report from each of the Service Staff Officers:
 - a. Royal Navy (COMEC_2019_05_C1)

COMEC EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE URNU UPDATE

Recent Activity

1. *Review of Chartered Management Institute (CMI) process and appointment of National Adviser / Training Officer.*
2. *Successful:*
 - a. *Inter-unit URNU sports weekend, 450 participants in 2-3 days of competition and social activities.*
 - b. *Easter deployments to UK, Summer deployments planned to Baltic and UK. >50 students predicted to deploy.*
3. *Commissioning of the Dasher Trophy by Knights of the Round Table. Award based on percentage personnel participation and achievement of units to drive competition.*

Aspects of Note

4. *Regular RN staff gapping at 15% across URNU estate. Complicated by minimum manning levels (2 per unit).*
5. *Student take-up high with good retention. Majority of units running at or near capacity. Oxford and Cambridge to enhance recruitment activity this year.*

6. *Cambridge relocated to new premises, formal opening planned 5th Jul. Glasgow extension of lease imminent. Wales new build progressing with occupation forecast 2020. Improvements to Bristol, Devon, Edinburgh and Sussex ongoing or complete.*

7. *2PA Assurance Visits Commenced by COMCORE Staff (URNU 2-up) with feedback allowing routine improvement in practice and process. Ofsted requirement being investigated, however complicated as not PhI training.*

8. *Exorbitant cost of Fresher Fairs at some universities may negate attendance and impact recruitment. Insistence by some of charging full business rates for Govt sponsored activity is felt to be inappropriate. Anecdotal evidence suggest activity driven by anti-military elements. A statement on the standing of units (student service?) and active engagement would be helpful.*

- NOTED: The Chairman noted review of CMI process and appointment of a training officer, what the review might entail and whether this was an URNU appointment or covers the whole service?
- NOTED: The Chairman queried the staff gapping and the impact this had on activity including sea deployments which appeared very low? It was also queried if COMCORE was getting more involved in supervision and how this related to Dartmouth's role?
- NOTED: Discussion was had around the cost of Freshers Fairs. It was noted the student unions are not part of the University so difficult for MECs to get involved.
- **ACTION: Chairman to send a note to service staff officers on examples of approaches that could be taken to engage with student unions and address their antipathy.**

b. Army (COMEC_2019_05_C2)

COMEC EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OTC UPDATE 10 MAY 19

Key Points

- *Work continues on various Basic Training Transformation Programme strands.*
 - *Cambridge and Oxford OTCs have had funding reduced for OCdts from 170 to 134 to bring them into line with all other standard OTC sizes.*
 - *Queens, Aberdeen, Tayforth, Edinburgh and Glasgow have had funding for OCdts reduced from 134 to 96.*
 - *These are financial constraints not formal establishment changes.*
- *Analysis continues on the course of action to merge Aberdeen and Tayforth OTCs into an OTR. CO Aberdeen has produced 5 potential courses of action, one of which remains no change. Next steps are a meeting with 51X and external stakeholders on 28 May in Stirling*

- *AOSB. The medical/administrative hurdle to attend AOSB (B) has been reduced for OTC OCdts and in support of the mission, two OTC-specific AOSB (B) have been delivered.*
 - *February. 45 attendees. 37 males (82%) and 8 females (18%)*
 - *20 x cat 1 (44%)*
 - *April. 54 attendees.*
 - *18 x cat 1 (33%), 27 x cat 2 (50%), 7 x cat 3 (13%)*
- *WESTMINSTER COMPANY training has been delivered in two weekends. Focussed on AOSB (MB) “Not Selected - Leader Development” Regular or Reserve, the scheme provides 12 months of training opportunities to address identified issues agreed by ResPO/ CO/ YODA*
- *Medicals are now a 4* issue and have been affected by OTCs remaining outside the Capita contract, DPHC support issues and RMAS Gp under-resourced. For Med staff. As of 10 May a plan is in place to deliver dedicated support to each OTC (17 regional doctors) and an uplift to RMAS. (3 x DPHC staff on a part time basis).*
- *Manning (Regular) remains healthy albeit with small gaps causing localised issues.*
- *Manning (Army Reserve) remains poor and Comd OTC has met both DCFA and DRes to discuss the issue.*
- *OTC – Army Reserve soldier transfer remains a work in progress*
 - NOTED: The Chairman noted the distinction between financial constraints and formal establishments.
 - **ACTION: The Executive would be interested in the redistribution of the funded number reductions during the rebalancing of establishments within the overall headcount.**
 - **ACTION: It was suggested that Aberdeen and Tayforth internal stakeholders should be apprised of lessons learnt from MECs with UOTCs subsumed in OTRs with regard to maintaining their identification with their universities, and the Army sustaining their close and vital links with key universities.**
 - NOTED: The Chairman looked forward to destination information for those attending AOSB.
- c. Royal Air Force (COMEC_2019_05_C3)

COMEC EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE UAS UPDATE 9 MAY 19

Key Points

- *Steady progress towards full operation of NI UAS.*

- *Formal announcement made that Colerne Airfield (Bristol UAS) will be closed.*
- *Woodvale runway fully operational.*
- *Further engagement with industry on Tutor replacement aircraft.*

1. **Northern Ireland UAS.** *Two Tutors will be detached to Aldergrove for a flying camp 29 May to 7 Jun 19. The aircraft will be available for VIP visit and NI UAS formal dinner at end of May.*

2. **Bristol UAS.** *At long last, it has been formally announced that Colerne Airfield will close. This allows processes to begin to relocate staff. Although BUAS is expected to move to MOD Boscombe Down, this has not yet been announced.*

3. **RAF Woodvale Runway.** *The main runway at Woodvale is now fully functional and flying operations have increased.*

4. **Tutor Replacement.** *There has been further engagement with industry over the replacement aircraft for the Tutor and follow-on contract.*

- NOTED: Sqn Ldr A Hawes noted recruitment for Northern Ireland UAS is on track.
- NOTED: Sqn Ldr A Hawes noted RAF Woodvale is now also cleared for passenger flying (and therefore cadet flights).
- NOTED: Sqn Ldr A Hawes noted work is ongoing to relocate Yorkshire UAS with Doncaster or Leeds East (formally RAF Church Fenton) as possible options.
- NOTED: Sqn Ldr A Hawes noted recruitment was below target this year, but hoping to achieve establishment of 1,000 next year.
- NOTED: Mr B Ritchie noted that the working assumption for the 2020 COMEC Conference was that it would be hosted by the RAF.

d. Defence People

- NOTED: There was no report received.

7. Conference 2019

- RECEIVED: An update from the Vice-Chairman on the COMEC Conference 2019
- NOTED: Mr B Ritchie updated the Executive on current plans and arrangements for the COMEC Conference. The Victory Service Club has been booked for the duration of the conference and possible speakers approached. Once headline speakers confirmed a communication will be sent out to MECs which will also be encouraged to fund student attendance. Support for the conference will come from the London URNU.
- NOTED: It was noted that planning should start shortly for the Sept 2020 Conference.

8. COMEC Prize

- RECEIVED: An update from Ms A Lyon on the COMEC Prize and nominations received.

- NOTED: Ms A Lyon noted there were 11 candidates nominated for the COMEC prize spread across the 3 services from around the country. All except one candidate met the new eligibility condition to be introduced from next year.

9. Membership of the Executive

- RECEIVED: An update on nominations for the 3 upcoming Executive vacancies.
- NOTED: It was noted there had been no formal nominations received at this time although there have been enquiries.

10. MECs and COMEC

- **ACTION: Professor E Archibald suggested that a standing item be introduced to future COMEC Executive meetings whereby a small number of MECs are asked to report on their activities to improve engagement in order to enhance communications and exchange ideas. Meantime, the Chairman undertook to invite sight of any papers MECs produce which may give an appreciation of their activities, public lectures, business updates, good practice, issues of concern or reports for their universities to share with us.**
- **ACTION: The Executive agreed to consider holding a meeting each year outwith London.**

11. Dates and Venues of Future Meetings:

- To Note: The dates and venues of future meetings:
 - 4-5 September 2019 (VSC, London)
 - Thursday 21 November 2019 (ULOTC, London)
 - Thursday 20 February 2020 (ULOTC, London)
 - Thursday 14 May 2020 (ULOTC, London)