



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

Executive Committee Meeting

held on Thursday 14th May 2020 at 1100hrs using Microsoft Teams

Minutes

Present

Mr R G Livingston (Chairman); Rev Professor J P Taylor (Treasurer); Mr J S Castle; Dr R Hall; Mr H Hamilton; Professor P Ivey; Dr J Smith; Maj I Stoney; Dr M Vilnay; Col D Gray; Gp Capt I Sharrocks; Col N Tougher; Lt Col M Bishop

In Attendance:

Mr Jason Norris (Secretary)

Apologies

Ms C Kinkead; Cdr N Downing RN

- NOTED: The Chairman thanked the Secretary for setting up the meeting on Microsoft Teams noting the current Covid19 restrictions.
- NOTED: The Chairman welcomed Gp Capt I Sharrocks to the COMEC Executive.

1. Minutes

- APPROVED: The Minutes of the Executive meeting held on 20th February 2020 (COMEC_2020_05_A1)
- **ACTION: The February 2020 Executive Minutes to be uploaded to the COMEC website.**

2. Matters Arising

- Action points arising (COMEC_2020_05_A2)

Minutes (Min 1 20 Feb 2020)

- ACTIONED: The November 2019 Executive Minutes to be uploaded to the COMEC website.

Matters Arising: Relations with MECs (Min 2 20 Feb 2020)

- RESOLVED: The Chairman will connect with Cdr N Downing to confirm the May COMEC Executive meeting at the invitation of the Liverpool MEC with the URNU as host.
- RESOLVED: Cdr N Downing salvaged the prospective meeting in Liverpool with an innovative programme for the Executive to engage with Liverpool and Manchester & Salford MEC members, colleagues and students, and representatives and Officer Cadets of the other Services. However, the health and economic pandemic prompted cancellation of the visitation and meeting remotely instead.

Matters Arising: Publications (Min 2 20 Feb 2020)

- NOTED: Occasional Paper No. 12: The Ethics of Fighting Power - Patrick Mileham will shortly have the draft paper, referenced with end-notes and a bibliography as a text and literature survey for those interested in the subject. Shortened versions are offered to the Service officer academies, Joint Services College and Chaplaincy Centre for adaption to their requirements.

Matters Arising: Any Other Business - DASA (Min 2 20 Feb 2020)

- RESOLVED: Chairman to take forward proposal to invite DASA Innovation Partner to brief the Executive.
- NOTED: The proposal was overtaken by the pandemic, but members were asked in the Easter Update if such matters as a briefing on research opportunities and case studies were of interest. No responses have been received to date.

Treasurer's Report (Min 4 20 Feb 2020)

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

Conference (Min 6 20 Feb 2020)

- RESOLVED: Ms C Kinkead, the Chairman and the Secretary will liaise with Wg Cdr T Bake on the Conference arrangements.
- NOTED: Wg Cdr T Bake had the administration well in hand for the Conference on 2 and 3 September at RAF Halton, and we had wide-ranging discussions on the construction of a programme embracing a range of speakers on current issues of interest to members. However, the progress of the pandemic meant that those concerned were preoccupied with other priorities and could not commit to September, so we were reluctantly persuaded to cancel the Conference this year. The next Conference will be held in September 2021.
- NOTED: The Annual General Meeting will be held remotely and focus on the formal business of annual reports, and election of Officers and Members of the Executive.

Membership of the Executive (Min 8 20 Feb 2020)

- ACTIONED: The Secretary to send out nomination requests for vacant COMEC Executive positions. The Executive agreed to extend the deadline to 31st July 2020 due to the pandemic.

Any Other Business: (Min 9 20 Feb 2020)

- **ACTION: Dr R Hall to send out COMEC Prize outcomes to all nominees and provide limited feedback where requested and possible.**

3. Chairman's Report

- RECEIVED: A report from the Chairman
- NOTED: The Chairman noted the health and economic pandemic has prompted the postponement of planned appointments, and we have had our last face to face meetings for a while. However, we are maintaining business continuity by engaging more by alternative means with our network of universities, the Armed Forces and Defence. There are no particular items to report other than those which may appear elsewhere on the Agenda.

4. Treasurer's Report

- RECEIVED: A report from the Treasurer (COMEC_2020_05_B)
- CONSIDERED: The COMEC budget, projected financials and future subscriptions
- **ACTION: It was noted there were slightly fewer subscriptions paid than at the same time last year and reminders would be sent out in due course.**

5. Reports from the Service Staff Officers

- Received: A report from each of the Service Staff Officers:
 - a. Royal Navy (COMEC_2020_05_C1)

URNU REPORT***Introduction***

1. Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting restrictions implemented by Her Majesty's Government, the activity of the University Royal Naval Units (URNU) has been seriously curtailed from mid-Mar 20 onwards.

2. Individual URNUs were directed to take advice from the MECs associated with the universities to whom they were affiliated, in order to place the wellbeing and duty of care (WDoC) of both Officer Cadets (OCs) and staff at the centre of their planning. As a result, all units ceased face to face contact with their members at a similar time, and some took the decision to go on Easter Leave early, in line with university guidance.

3. As a direct result of the developing COVID-19 situation, the Jolly Division – Sponsored Cadets and Undergraduates (JD) Annual Weekend, for Medical and Dental Cadets, scheduled to take place at HMNB Portsmouth at the end of Mar 20 was cancelled while the Technical Bursars' event scheduled for Apr 20 at HMS SULTAN was postponed. Unfortunately, a number of unique seagoing experiences for the OCs, including sea time on HMS Prince of Wales and HMS Protector had to be cancelled, while the Easter Deployment onboard platforms from First Patrol Boat Squadron was judged to be of too high a risk.

4. In late Mar 20, all of the URNU Commanding Officers (COs) and Coxswains (Coxns) were put on 48 hours' notice to move. Ten staff were recalled to BRNC to support mandated training delivery, while 3 x COs were activated to support Op RESCRIPT and Op BROADSHARE. Currently, the 3 activated COs remain on task, while the remainder of staff are working from home. However, ten uniformed personnel from the URNU organisation are currently on notice to deploy as part of the SW COVID Support Force (CSF) while other staff have been identified to facilitate the delivery of core training in other RN Training Establishments.

Priorities

5. In line with Capt BRNC's current intent, Commander Universities (Cdr U) has set the following higher-level priorities for the Universities Department (URNU and JD) in the coming months:

- a. Provide Welfare and Duty of Care (WDoC) to JD, URNU Staff, Training Officers (TOs) and OCs, through ongoing remote interaction.
- b. Provide resilience to BRNC Command, as a group or, as individual augmentees.
- c. Deliver Military Assistance to Civilian Authorities (MACA).
- d. Deliver FOST Directive 002/19.
- e. Return to business as usual (BAU) post COVID-19.

6. It has been recognised that the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has affected every aspect of how we live and work. However, the URNUs continue to deliver training in a safe, efficient and effective manner, by utilising civilian and defence managed Virtual Learning Environments. This has been achieved through the careful and considered mitigation of risk, at all levels, to ensure that we are delivering a balanced package designed to continue to develop each individual on both a personal and professional level. At this difficult time, the need for WDoC to take primacy has been clearly identified. With this in mind, each individual is being encouraged to carefully consider how they can contribute to the mental and physical well-being of their colleagues and the young people who have taken the conscious decision to join our organisation.

7. Having taken into account the overarching priorities of BRNC Command, our main effort as a department within the Command, while delivering the priorities highlighted in para 5a, 5b and 5c on an enduring basis, are:

- a. Look after our people (Staff; URNU; JD)
- b. Achieve the effect set out in FOST Directive 002/19, by delivering on the recommendations set out in the FOST Directive Phase 1 Briefing Paper.

- c. Prepare for the return to Business as Usual (BAU).

Our People

8. While not having had face to face contact with the URNU TOs and OCs for over two months, unit staff have taken advantage of modern technology to instigate Virtual Training Nights which include various training evolutions, guest speakers, briefings, committee elections and of course the mandatory social at the end of the evening. All 15 x URNU are now utilising a combination of Microsoft Team, Zoom and Google Classroom to provide the OCs with a vital point of contact during lockdown. The initiative has proved popular, with the majority of units reporting 75% to 100% attendance of TOs and OCs on a regular basis. With the agreement of the awarding authorities, RYA and CMI virtual classrooms have also been established to enable OCs to complete the accredited awards that they were working towards.

9. The activation of the Sponsored Undergraduate Staff Officer (SUSO) and requirement for civilian staff in the Universities HQ to work from home has challenged the organisation to identify more efficient working practices. This has particularly been the case with Jolly Division (JD) where WDoC interviews and regular contact with Medical / Dental Cadets via Skype and video conferencing has become the norm.

10. Prior to the COVID-19 instigated lockdown the URNU was able to deliver one of the most prestigious and popular events of the year. With over 450 Uniformed Staff, TOs and OCs from all 15 x URNUs coming together at HMS TEMERAIRE to participate in the URNU Sports Weekend is the biggest event in our annual calendar. On this occasion, results were as follows:

- Swimming	Devon
- Basketball	Manchester & Salford
- Football	Northumbrian
- Netball	Wales
- Hockey	Birmingham
- Relay	Wales
 - Overall Results	
	1 st Wales
	2 nd Northumbrian
	3 rd Birmingham

11. RN Media Comms and Engagement (RNMCE) have worked with nominated OCs from each URNU to enhance existing skills and develop their ability to take photographs and video footage for use, alongside editorial, on the new URNU webpages that are due to be launched on the RN Website in Jun 20.

FOST Directive 002/19

12. To ascertain the current position and understand the future direction of the organisation, Flag Officer Sea Training (FOST)¹ directed that Commander Universities (Cdr U) is to conduct a review into the effectiveness of the organisation. The review

¹ FOST Directive 002/19

being designed to provide a legitimate foundation to instigate considerable organisational changes if deemed necessary.

13. *The briefing paper, produced as a response to Phase 1² of the review, concluded that the University Royal Naval Units (URNU) Organisation has been utilising legacy systems and requires an overhaul to make it a fit for purpose organisation, resourced and capable of supporting a modern and relevant Naval Service into the future.*

14. *The paper outlined issues that had been initially identified in four broad categories. Further work in relation to the issues and recommendations has identified actions which can be split into five workstreams (WS): Governance; Training Syllabus; Administration; Training Delivery and Business Continuity.³ These WS align with the URNU Organisation's core functions and recognise the fact that the organisation must evolve and transform while delivering BAU to the existing cadre of Officer Cadets (OCs). It has also been recognised that the identified WSs are not mutually exclusive. In fact, as they are clearly interdependent, it is assumed that elements of WS1-4 will move to WS5 as the project is delivered.*

COVID-19 Exit Strategy

15. *The Universities HQ is currently working to identify how the individual URNU can be effectively restarted when the government reduces COVID-19 restrictions. The Virtual HQ team is now considering how to mitigate against ongoing gapping as well as the short-term gaps induced by MACA tasking, so that we are fully prepared to meet the challenges that we will undoubtedly face at the start of the new academic year.*

16. **Recruitment.** *It is recognised that the most critical period of every academic year for the URNU, in terms of activity and setting up of units for success in the year(s) that follow, will be quickly upon us. Unfortunately, this year, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the challenge will be even greater as we will not only have to recruit new OCs but also to re-recruit / re-invigorate the existing OCs who will not have had face to face contact with the unit for over 6 months. In preparation for what will clearly be a challenging recruiting environment COs have been encouraged to consult with MECs to ascertain the likely format of Freshers' Fayres and are preparing to utilise novel virtual strategies to supplement proven face to face techniques. Through close liaison with Captain Naval Recruiting (CNR) and RNMCE the organisation is proactively seeking opportunities to increase its media footprint. This initiative is designed to provide young people arriving at the 64 universities who are affiliated to the URNU with an awareness of the opportunities that the sS can offer them during their university career.*

17. *Last year's very strong recruitment was unfortunately undone, in many units, by some significant failure rates at the recruit medicals. There are proposals being enacted that will hopefully limit this issue during the forthcoming recruitment phase. However, my direction to COs is that they are to over-recruit by 15% to account for an expected rate of failure. As there is clearly a risk that some units may find themselves with more*

² 20200124-FOST Directive Phase 1_FINAL-OS

³ UTM 18/20 – Establishment of Workstreams to deliver University Royal Naval Units Review

than 51 students, I am content to veer liability, and funding, between units if the need should arise. However, the character and success of an URNU is intrinsically linked to its members, so quality rather than quantity will still be the watchword.

Summary

18. *During the course of the 19/20 academic year, the URNU organisation has consolidated its numbers, work to gain a higher profile both internally and externally and begun to gain traction in the filling the gaps in the military and civilian personnel plot. The FOST Directive, has offered us a unique opportunity that the URNU Organisation is grasping with both hands, in order to ensure that the organisation as a whole is ready to support the New Navy as we move forward into the new decade. I am confident that each of the URNUs will be able to deliver against the Key Performance Indicators, but we are not underestimating the challenges that will be faced as the country emerges from the COVID-19 pandemic.*

- NOTED: The Chairman noted the update to the Naval website is welcome and hoped the URNUs will be better represented.
- NOTED: On the review of the training syllabus, the Chairman hoped this will bring alignment to reserve training to encourage graduates to join the RNR when they leave.

b. Army (COMEC_2020_05_C2)

UOTC Update to COMEC

1. **Commander OTC overview.** *The last 3 months has seen a vastly reduced physical presence as the Covid-19 pandemic fundamentally changes the way we conduct business. Throughout March, as Higher education establishments took the decision to move to online activity and cease face to face activity in line with Government and Public Health direction, UOTCs followed suit and increasing moved to virtual training. As “lockdown” progressed, UOTCs were increasingly called upon to support national resilience efforts and staff were diverted to essential support activities. Commanding Officers (COs) have been (and remain) deployed as military liaison officers and significant numbers of Army Reserve staff have been formally mobilised. Those staff remaining have, in a very short time, developed innovative means to retain student interest, engagement and commitment.*

2. **Activity.** *On 24 March, UOTCs were informed training activity would not resume until at least 1 July. RMAS ceased Academy based training activity on 3 April. Summer term is, traditionally, the least busy, allowing students to focus on exams. A light programme of online activity, focussing on leadership continues, and students are still given the opportunity to take part and will receive payment if they do so. The resumption of activity will be covered in later points.*

3. **Data.** *Lockdown has coincided with the end of the Financial Year and the Group HQ is now collating and analysing data. Financial data will not be finalised until mid-*

May and will be provided in the next report. The data for output is not yet finalised, but initial information is provided below:

- a. *To put the OTC as a whole in context:*

	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Establishment	2864	2864	2570
Held strength	3273	3299	3436

Despite a reduction in the financial establishment for UOTCs they have actually grown each year. Numbers of held strength are snapshots and will vary. The maximum number, where available, has been used.

- b. *In terms of overall numbers:*

	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
AOSB(B) attendances	192	345	382
AOSB(MB) attendances	203	213	254
MB Select	107 (52%)	130 (61%)	189 (74%)
MB Risk select	39	23	<i>Not measured</i>
Reg C entry	114	203	196
Mod D Commissions	89	132	94

UOTC numbers at briefing, Main Board and selected have all increased year on year.

- c. *Finally, if we look at transfers:*

	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Reserve soldiers	267	223	294
Reserve officers	108	84	81
Regular soldiers	16	11	5
RN/RM/RAF	19	9	21
Cadet Force Volunteer	4	4	4

4. *A breakdown of outputs by individual UOTC will be made available to the next meeting.*

5. **Training resumption.** *The conditions to allow the restoration of UOTC activity are still under consideration. Any resumption will be conducted in a graduated manner and sees the UOTCs remaining in-step with Public Health (PH), Force Health Protection (FHP) and individual University health direction. Any resumption of UOTC training will involve Controlled Monitoring and the adherence to prescribed FHP measures throughout. Monitoring our people, and accuracy of COVID-19 reporting, is key to ensure COVID-19 transmission is as low a risk as possible. There are four guiding principles:*

- a. *People, our Duty of Care responsibilities and legislative requirements remain paramount and doing what is best for the individual is key.*

- b. Purpose, delivering training of the right quality to provide students with appropriate.
 - c. Empower COs to make key decisions in a rapidly changing environment, based on intent and disciplined initiative;
 - d. Communication, ensuring we give our people the confidence to start, or return to, work is key. Every action (however low-tactical) will be scrutinised.
6. **Horizon Scanning.** Noting that the operating environment is in continuous flux, the following work streams will be subject to change but should give an indication of the direction of travel.
- a. **Recruiting.** Recruiting in Sep 20 will be a challenge; recruiting must be more social media focussed and we must be prepared for fewer ocdts joining than in previous years; we will likely need to recruit in Jan 21 too; we need to be flexible to adjust the training year accordingly.
 - b. **Training.** The speed with which universities return to a physical student presence will inform the style of delivery of UOTC training. Balancing available resources and movement restrictions alongside the need to deliver recruitment positive activities will be a constant discussion. The attract vs train equation may be re-balanced as the situation demands.
 - c. **Prioritisation.** Until otherwise directed, the delivery of Mod A and B is considered essential activity and every effort will be made to achieve this. This will provide inflow to CCS and also ensure that RMAS is able to meet training requirements as per normal.
- NOTED: Lt Col M Bishop noted there was good engagement from OCdts online. Professor P Ivey noted we should not lose the unexpected benefits from lock down and embrace new delivery models. Col N Tougher noted key for UOTCs is the desire to return to safe training being balanced against the Universities returning to face-to-face tuition and the need to attract, nurture, train and encourage our young people to explore a career (full or part time) in the uniformed Services.
 - NOTED: Col N Tougher noted virtual learning will take us so far but he is asking guidance from ARITC as to how to replace Freshers' Fayre with messaging to potential attendees at the various universities. Advice from the MECs on links to the Universities' electronic communications plans would be welcome.
 - NOTED: Lt Col M Bishop noted that although there had been financial reductions the numbers of cadets has increased.
- c. Royal Air Force (COMEC_2020_05_C3)

COMEC EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE UAS UPDATE 14 MAY 20

Key Points

- *COVID-19 & Opportunities.*
- *Bristol UAS future location to be announced Jul 20.*
- *Tutor Safety Enhancements*
- *Charities.*
- *Date for COMEC Conference 21*

1. ***COVID-19.*** UK lockdown resulted in a pause in flying training; though limited flying returned from 27 Apr 20 in order to maintain staff currency. Virtual training has replaced face to face ground training with sqns developing innovative solutions to the problem. As a result, students have been able to participate in ground school, personal and leadership, and town nights. As the lockdown is eased, we will adapt our training programme accordingly, although it should be noted that in normal times this is a quiet period with students focusing on revision and exams.

2. ***COVID-19 Opportunities.*** COVID-19 has been the impetus to accelerate our efforts in looking at new ways of working, notably in how we communicate with our students and deliver ground training. Future delivery of ground training is closely linked to Project MERCURY. This seeks to breakdown Initial Officer Training (IOT) into modules, thereby allowing military personnel to buyout the general service training element of the course. In addition, 6FTS is assessing feasibility of delivering classroom-based training through LEARN, which is a student-centred and flexible way of learning. The first MERCURY IOT is programmed for Sep 20. The target date for the new UAS ground training syllabus is Jan 21.

3. ***Bristol UAS.*** DIO Business Case to determine future location of the Sqn is programmed to go before the investment approvals committee in Jun with the formal announcement of its decision in Jul 20. Once the announcement is made, we can then crack on with long term planning for BUAS.

4. ***Yorkshire UAS.*** Work still ongoing on relocation of YUAS; preferred option being RAF Leeming though we will need to await the outcome of the DIO value for money study which will not report before mid-22.

5. ***Tutor Safety Enhancements.*** Comdt RAFC Cranwell has funded 2 major safety enhancements to the Tutor, namely a test procedure for essential electrical systems and a conspicuity trial involving 2 aircraft with first aircraft was delivered on 28 Apr 20.

6. ***Charities.*** Many UASs have conducted charity activities in support of 'NHS Charities Together' either in their own right or supporting CUAS's virtual relay from RAF Lossiemouth to RAF Akrotiri and back, some 10,200 km. To date the relay has raised £21,000 which includes gift aid.

7. ***COMEC Conference.*** The committee is requested identify a date for the 2021 conference in order to commence planning over the summer period.

- NOTED: Gp Capt I Sharrocks noted as RAF recruitment has suffered due to the pandemic, the RAF are looking to speed up recruiting to a reduced 8 week period (Project Astra)
- NOTED: Gp Capt I Sharrocks noted the RAF are trying to maintain a meaningful physical footprint in Wales. If this is not possible, they aim to keep a virtual footprint.
- NOTED: Gp Capt I Sharrocks noted under Project TELUM that the RAF expects to have new training aircraft in 2 – 3 years’ time, be carbon neutral and also introduce virtual reality simulators. The Chairman welcomed the update.

d. Defence People (COMEC_2020_05_C4)

DEFENCE PEOPLE (RF&C) UPDATE FOR COMEC – FEBRUARY 2019

Defence Overview

1. *The department’s priorities remain delivering operations overseas and supporting the Government in delivering the United Kingdom’s exit from the European Union. The department continues to prepare for the upcoming Spending Review and Integrated Foreign, Defence and Security Review. RF&C remains actively engaged regarding any measures that might affect Reserves and Cadets.*

Reserves Policy

2. ***Reserve Forces 30 Review.*** ACDS (R&C) has initiated a strategic review of the Reserve Forces. The review will be led by Rt Hon Mark Lancaster and will consider utilising novel and innovative ways of partnering across Government and with the private sector to share cost and benefit on how we might train, skill and equip our Reserve in support of the ambition that will be set out in the Integrated Foreign, Defence and Security Review. It will clearly articulate a bold vision as to what the Reserve (including the Regular Reserve) could and should be contributing to Defence and wider HMG objectives by 2030, including a reinvigorated Enterprise Approach with a flexible Reserve unconstrained by existing TACOS. The review will report in Sept 2020.

3. ***RFCA Review.*** The Review has looked into the CRFCA and RFCAs ensuring the RFCAs continue to deliver to Defence output, the best VfM for Defence, and identifying what additional opportunities the RFCAs could undertake. The draft report has been shared with stakeholders, Perm Sec has met with the CRFCA President and Chair, and ExCo is due to consider the recommendations in the near future.

4. ***Reserve Forces Act 1996.*** Renewal of the Armed Forces Act is due to begin in 2020. RF&C are therefore reviewing primary legislation to identify any requirements for change in support of reserve objectives. Included in this review will be policy instructions to amend RFA96 through AFB20 to allow the introduction of a Part Time Reservist Commitment Type.

5. ***Use of Reserves.*** As part of the Department’s focus on Enterprise Approach we are examining ways that we might make better use of the Reserves. Specifically, through Ex AGILE STANCE, we are looking at the ability to assure our ability to mobilise at

mass and pace and better understand the impact that Reserve, and Regular Reserve mobilisation have on our employers. Through the Defence Plan we are also looking to optimise the use of Reserves and develop better metrics to define the utility of reservists.

6. **FTRS.** Our review of FTRS commitment types continues and sS have agreed and implemented harmonised definitions for FTRS HC and LC commitment types.

7. **Digital Optimisation.** RF&C are looking at a digital optimisation solution for Reservists, possibly by integrating it into the transformation programme through a digital workstream. RF&C have communicated their requirements to the Transformation Programme as a test of concept and will engage with wider Defence to finetune options.

Future Reserves 20 (FR20)

8. *The trained strength of the Volunteer Reserves continues to increase; however, shortfalls in the trained strength of the Maritime and Army Reserves meant the target of 35,060 Reserves trained strength by 2019 was not met. Our recruitment campaign is a long-term programme and numbers continue to grow. Figures below are as at 1 Oct 19:*

- a. *Maritime Reserve: Target – 3,100; TS – 2,850*
- b. *Army Reserve: Target – 30,100; TS – 27,250*
- c. *RAF Reserve: Target – 1860; TS – 2660*

9. *Reserves from all Services continue to operate in every theatre alongside their Regular counterparts. Around 450 reservists are currently called out for permanent service.*

Employer Engagement

10. **Employer Notification (EN).** EN20 is under way with a hard stop of 28 Feb, after which the overall performance will be evaluated and a report submitted to the E3G.

11. **Armed Forces Covenant.** The rate of signings continues to be c.30 per week. RF&C and DRM are planning for the 5000th signing milestone, which is expected to be reached in Feb. The education sector continues to rise, with 554 signed AFCs, see Annex 1.

12. **Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS) Awards.** 100 ERS Gold Award winners were recognised at an event at the National Army Museum in Nov 19. RF&C and RFCAs are now planning the awards for 2020.

Cadets

13. **Ministerial Engagement.** Ministerial interest in cadets remains high within MOD, and the Youth & Cadet team recently briefed Anne-Marie Trevelyan MP, the new Armed Forces Minister, on the MOD-sponsored Cadet Forces. Anne-Marie Trevelyan MP was appointed on 16 Dec 19, and has also taken over responsibility for the cadet portfolio.

14. University of Northampton Research. The University of Northampton (UoN) will shortly be publishing the 3rd interim report on research into the social impact resulting from the MOD's spending on Cadet Forces. Findings to date (available on the UoN website) suggest that a child's self-efficacy (their ability to exert control over their own future) is improved because of the activities they undertake in the Cadet Forces. This is particularly true amongst those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

15. Cadet Expansion Programme (CEP). The CEP achieved its target of 500 cadet units parading in UK schools in Nov 19 nearly 6 months ahead of the Mar 20 target. The challenge now is to sustain school cadet units and ensure they maintain their success.

16. CyberFirst Programme. By the end of Mar 20, the National Cyber Security Centre's nationally recognised CyberFirst training programme will have been delivered to over 1500 cadets and Cadet Force Adult Volunteers across the 3 services.

ANNEX 1: EDUCATION ACCOUNTS THAT HAVE SIGNED AN ARMED FORCES COVENANT:



- NOTED: The Chairman noted an important issue for COMEC is the RFCA review, noting their regional connection with society and our units. Col D Gray noted he can share the publication which recommends building on the RFCA achievements while under direct command of MoD.
- NOTED: Col D Gray noted the University sector had a further 9 institutions signing up to the Armed Forces Covenant since the last report.

e) CV19 Concerns

- NOTED: Lt Col M Bishop noted concerns as twofold. Firstly, for UOTCs not to diverge too much from HE guidance to students. Noting the imperative for the Army is to restart training and recover from the imposed delays which affect the pipeline, and ultimately inflow into the Army in 3 years' time. Secondly, and for further discussion, is how do UOTCs (USUs more widely) recruit "virtually" if there are no physical Freshers' fairs.

- NOTED: The Chairman noted a common interest in the Universities and Services on safely resuming activities. The manner will vary in the different nations of the UK and in each university and service, so it is important to exchange intelligence to ensure approaches are mutually compatible. While we are learning from alternative methods of delivery, Dr Smith observed that face to face and practical interaction within an academic community are critical to personal development if values and standards are to be maintained.
- NOTED: Professor P Ivey noted most Universities will not reopen their campuses until the next academic year, financially they need to be open from September. Key is confidence in staff and students, this is currently very low indeed. Teaching in September will be accompanied by social distancing and this has not been worked out at present. Freshers will be a lower priority given the need to run physical scenarios for students on campus. Over the summer (June onwards) campuses will slowly open up for staff, for London transport is crucial and presently a huge barrier. Any second spike will see some Universities failing given the government have declined additional support to the sector. Uncertainty is very high at present obviously.

6. Prize

- RECEIVED: An update from Dr R Hall on nominations received.
- NOTED: 13 nominations were received across the UK (except Northern Ireland) with the majority from URNUs and UOTCs.

7. MEC Brief Reports

- RECEIVED: Exeter MEC brief report (COMEC_2020_05_D1)
- RECEIVED Northumbrian MEC brief report (COMEC_2020_05_D2)
- NOTED: The Chairman noted the different approaches of MECs and was encouraged by their activities. Dr M Vilnay suggested as we receive further reports COMEC could put forward a template based on best practice from the sector.
- NOTED: Further reports from MECs would not be requested until the November Executive meeting.

8. Any Other Business:

- NOTED: No further business was considered.

9. Dates and Venues of Future Meetings:

- CONSIDERED: The dates and venues of future meetings (one to be hosted by a MEC):
 - Thursday 3rd September 2020
 - NOTED: Agreed to meet virtually at 1100hrs. A virtual AGM would also be considered.
 - Thursday 19th November 2020 (ULOTC, London)
 - Thursday 25th February 2021 (ULOTC, London)
 - Thursday 20th May 2021 (ULOTC, London)

- NOTED: The 2021 COMEC Conference, subject to confirmation with the RAF, may be held on 1 – 2 September 2021 at RAF Halton.
- **ACTION: The Chairman and Secretary will move the MEC vote on COMEC Executive nominations to a virtual / online format so these can proceed at the AGM.**