



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

Executive Committee Meeting

**held on Thursday 24th November 2022 from 1100hrs to 1500hrs at ULOTC, Yeomanry
House, Handel Street, London, WC1N 1NP**

Minute

Present

Mr J S Castle (Chairman); Rev Professor J P Taylor (Treasurer); Ms C Kinkead; Professor M Siva-Jothy; Maj I Stoney; Dr F Ruddell; Gp Capt R Caine; Col L Brooks; Lt Col T Irwin-Parker; Lt J Cuddeford RN; Lt J Smith RN

In Attendance

Mr J Norris (Secretary)

Apologies

General Sir P Wall (President); Dr M Vilnay (Vice-Chair); Dr R Hall; Dr G Matthews-Smith; Col J Powell; Cdr A Loring RN;

1. Minutes

- APPROVED: The Minutes of the Executive meeting held on 13th September 2022 (COMEC_Exec_2022_11_A1)
- RECEIVED: The draft Minutes of the Annual General meeting held on 13th September 2022 (COMEC_Exec_2022_11_A2)

2. Matters Arising

- CONSIDERED: Any matters or action points arising (COMEC_Exec_2022_11_A3)

Chairman's Report (Min 4 13 September 2022)

- ON AGENDA: The Vice-Chair summarised and noted agreement from the Executive that the draft COMEC Constitution and Terms of Reference could not be taken to the AGM to be ratified at this time. Although there was agreement in principle on the direction of travel it was felt more time needed to be spent working through the detail in consultation with the MECs.

- ON AGENDA: The Vice-Chair noted thanks to the COMEC Executive prize adjudication team for all their work on the selection process. It was noted clearer guidance was needed for COs with templates and limited work count. Col J Powell noted Executive COs can help by instructing COs to nominate at least one candidate. Templates / Guidance to be discussed at the November meeting.

Reports from the Service Staff Officers (Min 6 13 September 2022)

- ON AGENDA: An MoU is to be put in place with local units in relation to welfare with the aim of strengthening links to MECs and Universities. It was noted this was a tri-service issue so more detail and outcomes would be welcomed. Dr G Matthews-Smith suggested linking to the student's association as universities may not be able to share information. RN to update the Executive on this initiative at the next meeting.
- RESOLVED: An increase in Freshers Fair costs were noted and the Executive were asked if they could help support and reduce costs to service units noting public funds. The Treasurer noted it was the student associations that manage these rates and not universities making it more difficult for MECs to input. Executive members were asked to check what is happening at their universities and report back. The Chairman noted some student unions charge commercial rates outside of student societies. It may be possible to negotiate a discount by referencing the link to the Armed Forces Covenant and the student centric nature of the USUs. Ms C Kinkead noted it works differently at Queens where negotiations have to go through the student union manager which is then voted on by the Executive. Queens MEC also have a direct link to University Senate which allows escalation of issues to a more senior level. Professor M Siva-Jothy noted the challenge of the student union Executive changing each year, but also noted opportunity to invite a student union representative on to the MEC. Lt J Smith noted the RN only have a budget of £1K to cover 3 Universities so cannot afford commercial rates. The Chairman noted this is an ongoing issue and will also raise for further discussion at the COMEC/MEC forum.

Nominations to the Executive Committee (Min 9 13 September 2022)

- RESOLVED: The Vice-Chair asked the Executive to consider if we should co-opt a colleague until the next AGM to support activity. Gp Capt R Caine suggested the Executive should consider co-opting a student and it was agreed this should be discussed at the next meeting. Discussions were had about the best way of achieving this noting time and travel commitment if a student was required in person, costs, confidentiality concerns, ensuring the student represented the views of the cadets, as well as constitutional issues regarding voting rights.
ACTION: The Chairman requested Service Staff Officers nominate a student representative at the next meeting at which COMEC would consider co-opting for 2 years (as long as the student remained in the USU).

Conference (Min 11 13 September 2022)

- ON AGENDA: Executive to discuss whether to have a conference once per year or every two years.

3. Chairman's Report

- RECEIVED: A verbal executive summary from the Chairman.
- NOTED: The Chairman noted apologies for being unable to attend the COMEC Conference due to illness. One of the key issues were the COMEC constitution changes which did not happen for a number of reasons. A specific concern was around USU representation in wider aspects activity e.g. veterans and research which feel outside the scope. The Chairman reassured USUs were not required to get involved in these wider activities, they are optional "bolt-ons" for MECs to consider should they wish to pursue them. The change in the constitution is to recognise this additional activity if MECs wished to take it forward. There were also other concerns around the text, legal aspects and these are all being considered and taken forward. The Chairman noted further discussion to follow later in the agenda.
- NOTED: The Chairman also noted an apology from Johnny Mercer MP for being unable to attend the scheduled event. A new date has been set up which he has now committed to.

4. Treasurer's Report

- RECEIVED: An Executive Summary from the Treasurer (COMEC_Exec_2022_11_C)
- NOTED: The Treasurer noted that three MECs were in arrears for different reasons and in two cases the issue has been escalated to the Chairman for direct intervention. Individual University procurement issues still remain an issue.
- **ACTION: There is an outstanding cancellation invoice for the conference dinner which is still be resolved by RMAS. Lt Col T Irwin-Parker will update on the status of this noting it is expected the costs will be covered by the MoD. If this is the case the Treasurer will offer partial refunds to delegates or the option to donate to COMEC or Ukraine.**
- NOTED: The Treasurer noted higher than usual costs for travel to the conference due to the possibility of the rail strike and alternative arrangements having to be made.

5. Reports from the Service Staff Officers

- RECEIVED: An Executive Summary from each of the Service Staff Officers:
 - a. Royal Navy (COMEC_Exec_2022_11_D1)

UNIVERSITY ROYAL NAVAL UNITS REPORT TO THE COMEC, NOVEMBER 2022

Introduction

1. *This report covers the period May 22 to Nov 22 for the University Royal Naval Units (URNU) in pursuance of their mission:*

'To inspire individuals through Leadership and Maritime Training, whilst facilitating a career in the Royal Navy for those who choose.'

Activity

2. Since the previous report to the Executive, URNU training has continued to return to normal post-Covid. The annual summer camp at the National Training Centre in Cambridge was very successful with 130 Officer Cadets attending for various periods ranging from 7 to 14 days. Activities conducted ranged from chartwork and navigation in support of RYA qualifications through to narrow boating on the Grand Union canal with 'green skills' and the assault course provided through support from Cambridge University Officer Training Corps (UOTC). Sixty British Canoeing qualifications and 200 RYA qualifications were awarded during this time. The annual recruiting round opened with the arrival of the 'freshers' at University and is now largely complete. We conducted a number of events alongside the UOTCs and University Air Squadrons (UAS), along with the more usual freshers' fayres and virtual events. Overall, the recruiting round saw a total of 324 Officer Cadets joining the URNU bring numbers up to a total of 816. In addition, amongst other activities, the organisation has delivered:

- a. Annual URNU Staff Conference at HMS SHERWOOD in Nottingham.
- b. Short sea embarkations in a variety of HM Ships and Royal Fleet Auxiliaries, including HMS Queen Elizabeth, HMS Northumberland, HMS Magpie, RFA Argus, RFA Mounts Bay and a variety of P2000s.
- c. Senior Leadership Team attendance at COMEC annual conference and AGM at RMAS.
- c. New Entry Weekends for 3 of the 4 regions¹, the final of which is scheduled this weekend.
- d. One Command, Leadership and Management training weekend at Pier Cellars in Cornwall.
- e. Hosted COS 6 Flying Training School at BRNC.
- f. Additional tasking since May has included:
 - 132 OCs on Adventurous Training.
 - 58 OCs on RN Courses.
 - 191 OCs participating in ceremonial events.
 - 67 OCs conducting Continuous Professional Development.
 - 2 OCs benefiting from RN Employer Engagement opportunities.
 - 164 OCs involved in Formal Events.
 - 67 OCs engaged in RNIPE activities.
 - 109 OCs conducting Sea Time.
 - 41 OCs involved in sporting activities.
 - 64 OCs conducting RN visits.
 - 164 OCs involved in Unit specific training opportunities (ie CLM).

¹ The 4 regions are: Wales and Western England (WWE), Eastern England (EE), Northern England and the Isle of Man (NE), and Scotland and Northern Ireland (SNI).

3. *The 'new' units in Belfast and East Midlands and the Virtual URNU run out of Belfast are still bedding in with numbers slightly below those of the more established Units. The Commanding Officer (CO) and Coxswain (Cox'n) of the East Midlands Unit are still 'double-hatted' with Manchester and Salford URNU but authorisation has now been received to assign a CO and recruit a Cox'n for East Midlands. Though the Manchester URNU team have done sterling work in running 2 Units, clearly there are consequences of having to share resources in this manner and the additional staff will make a big difference to the experience of the officer cadets. In addition to the URNU cadets, each Unit hosts a number of affiliates who are engineering, medical and dental undergraduates sponsored by the Royal Navy through a number of different schemes.*

4. *The current entry to Initial Naval Training (Officer) at BRNC Dartmouth includes 30 Officer Cadets who were either former URNU members or URNU Training Officers (TO). This equates to 19.5 per cent of the entire cohort. This is a continuing trend and there is increasing recognition of the role that the URNUs play in attracting high quality recruits into the Royal Navy. This figure does not include former URNU members who join as Naval Ratings, the Royal Marines, the Royal Fleet Auxiliary Service or one of the other Armed Forces. There is no intention to change the nature of the URNUs from a 'soft' recruiting organisation and we continue to welcome applicants with a wide range of career aspirations as we seek to address 'sea blindness' amongst the wider community. In particular, our access to universities in areas with high significant BAME populations is very valuable in raising understanding of the Royal Navy which will have longer-term benefits for both the Service and hopefully the wider community.*

5. *Wg Cdr Mike Dewar RAF, Chief of Staff No 6 Flying Training School visited BRNC Dartmouth on 8 and 9 November as part of ongoing efforts to further develop relationships between the University Service Units. An invitation will be extended to the Commandant of the OTCs, probably in the New Year, and a reciprocal visit to RAF Cranwell is planned.*

6. *The next COMEC AGM and conference is due to be hosted by the Royal Navy at BRNC. Dates are currently being discussed and hopefully will be confirmed before this Executive meets.*

Personnel

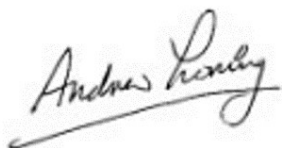
7. *The URNU CO role offers shore command opportunities to high quality mid-seniority lieutenants from specialisations other than warfare (who have the opportunity to command vessels of the Coastal Forces Squadron at this rank). One of these positions is hard-gapped and has been since the summer. Of the remaining 14, 4 are, in fact, warfare officers, one of whom is a senior lieutenant commander, one is a member of the Royal Naval Reserve leaving only 9 who fit the demographic for which the role was designed. The cox'ns are all employed on Full Time Reserve Service (FTRS) 2-year contracts which, with the opportunity to extend in post, provides the units with stability and continuity. Filling the hard gap at the Yorkshire Unit is Captain, BRNC's top workforce priority; in the absence of a CO, the duties are currently split between the Cox'n and The Senior TO (on an Additional Duties Commitment (ADC) contract of 120 days per annum) with oversight provided by the CO of the Northumbria Unit.*

8. *The Personnel and Training Directorate's 2-star led review of the workforce is expected to report on 5 Dec 22. This has already led to authorisation to recruit both the Cox'n*

of the East Midlands URNU and a BRNC-based Chief of Staff for the URNU to act as my deputy for all things URNU. By the time this Executive meets, these advertisements will be live on SERVE.² This review is also expected to confirm 8 new Civil Service posts for URNU Regional Administration Officers (RAOs), each RAO looking after 2 URNUs. Though these are new posts, they replace the former URNU secretaries. One new Higher Executive Officer has now joined the Universities Department with a further Administration Officer due on a date to be advised.

OFSTED

9. In February the URNUs were the first University Service Unit organisation to be the subject of a full OFSTED inspection. Five units and the headquarters were inspected. As this was the first inspection of its kind, the grading scales familiar from traditional OFSTED inspections were not used. The report has now been received and made a number of recommendations which are being addressed. The key recommendation concerned the number of staff available in the HQ and in the Units to deliver, monitor and assure the Welfare and Duty of Care (WDoC) of the officer cadets. The additional personnel identified above goes a considerable way towards addressing this particular issue. In addition, as part of an initiative to improve the WDoC of cadets, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has been produced between Devon URNU and its affiliate universities, which is offered as a template at Enclosure 1 to this report. This will be discussed as an item at the Executive meeting, presented by the author Lt Jamen Smith RN, CO Devon URNU.



A LORING
Cdr, RN
Commander Universities, Britannia Royal Naval College

Enclosure:

1. Memorandum of Understanding between University Royal Naval Unit Devon and Affiliate Universities.

² Service for Experienced, Re-joiner and Volunteer Engagements.

Introduction

1. *A reticence has been identified within University welfare departments to disclose personal information in relation to student welfare through risk of breaching General Data Protection Regulation(GDPR). Although understandable, this has weakened communication between University Royal Naval Unit (URNU) Devon and affiliate universities, arguably impacting both the student experience and/or Duty of Care. As an example, prior to conducting any URNU activity each Commanding Officer must conduct a ‘Safe to Train’ audit. This ensures that students’ wellbeing poses no risk to life and that there are no underlying issues that could be exacerbated when conducting (often high intensity and deliberately challenging) URNU training. Any disconnect between university welfare services and the URNU negatively impacts this vital safety function.*
2. *GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018 are not intended to prevent, or limit, the sharing of information for the purposes of keeping young or vulnerable people safe. All URNU students (Officer Cadets) are 18+ years old but are deemed vulnerable adults due to their Phase 1 training status.*
3. *This MoU aims to streamline the flow of information between URNU Devon (URNUD) and its affiliate universities. It has been written to establish a more collaborative way of working, and maximise support of Officer Cadet (OC) welfare and general safety.*

UK Policy

3. *Consent, confidentiality, and the sharing of information is one of the most complex yet vitally important aspects of mental healthcare. The most effective care plans will invariably involve the exchange of information within the confines of relevant legislation and professional codes of practice. Best practice in this area will not only produce better outcomes but may also avert serious incidents and tragedy, as detailed in the UK Government’s 2021 independent [SHARE: consent, confidentiality and information sharing in mental healthcare and suicide prevention](#).³*
4. *The 2018 report [Information sharing: Advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services to children, young people, parents and carers](#) provides clarification on what information can be shared without consent. In terms of URNU, the following are deemed particularly important:*
 - a. *“Where practitioners need to share special category personal data, they should be aware that the Data Protection Act 2018 includes ‘safeguarding of children and **individuals at risk**’ as a condition that allows practitioners to share information without consent”. (p.5)*
 - b. *“Relevant personal information can be shared lawfully if it is to keep a child or **individual at risk** safe from neglect or physical, emotional or mental harm, or if it is protecting their physical, mental, or emotional well-being”. (p.5)*

Information Sharing

³ This statement is further supported by The National Suicide Prevention Strategy for England (2012), The 2018 NHS Resolution, The 2014 Department of Health and Social Care and the UK General Data Protection Regulation (updated 2021).

5. *A flowchart of when and how to share information can be found at Annex A. However, when taking decisions about what information to share, one must consider⁴:*
- a. How necessary and proportionate the information required to share is.*
 - b. The relevance of information to the potential purpose of activities.*
 - c. How adequate the information is for its purpose (should be of the right quality).*
 - d. The accuracy of information (clearly distinguish between facts and opinion).*
 - e. The timely fashion of sharing to reduce the risk.*
 - f. How secure information is shared.*
 - g. How to record the decision for sharing such information.*
6. *Improved information sharing between university welfare organisations and URNU Devon is deemed essential. This is of particular relevance when an OC approaches a University welfare officer to report an issue such as self-harm and/or depression. Should the University welfare team not share this information with the URNU, and the individual is selected to conduct an arduous training course or go on deployment then the student's mental health and emotional wellbeing may be put at significant risk. They will also have no access to the university welfare support (or emergency care) that they may otherwise be reliant upon. If details of student support needs are shared, action can be taken to safeguard the individual and remove them from any situation deemed unsuitable. At the very least, additional care can be provided, and better decisions made through fully informed staff and support services.*

Way Ahead

7. *Each University is invited to nominate a point of contact that URNU can liaise with directly on student welfare matters. This will allow greater continuity and understanding between the various units. Both parties to the MoU (i.e., the University and URNU Devon) would then agree to make each other aware of any well-being concerns affecting individual students for the purpose defined by this MoU.*
8. *Point 4b is key, there is a need to establish an effective and well considered mechanism for communicating genuine concerns both ways. Additionally, this must be achieved in consideration to the points raised in paragraph 5 and Annex A. URNU and affiliate university welfare departments are recommended to create a mutually agreeable mechanism (i.e., form, guidance document etc) to ensure that relevant personal information can be shared effectively. The mechanism(s) are to be added as Annex's to this MoU once complete and reviewed annually in line with this MoU.*
9. *University staff are invited to visit URNU should they wish to gain greater insight, and liaise with URNU CO to arrange a mutually agreeable time and date.*

DOCUMENT REVIEW

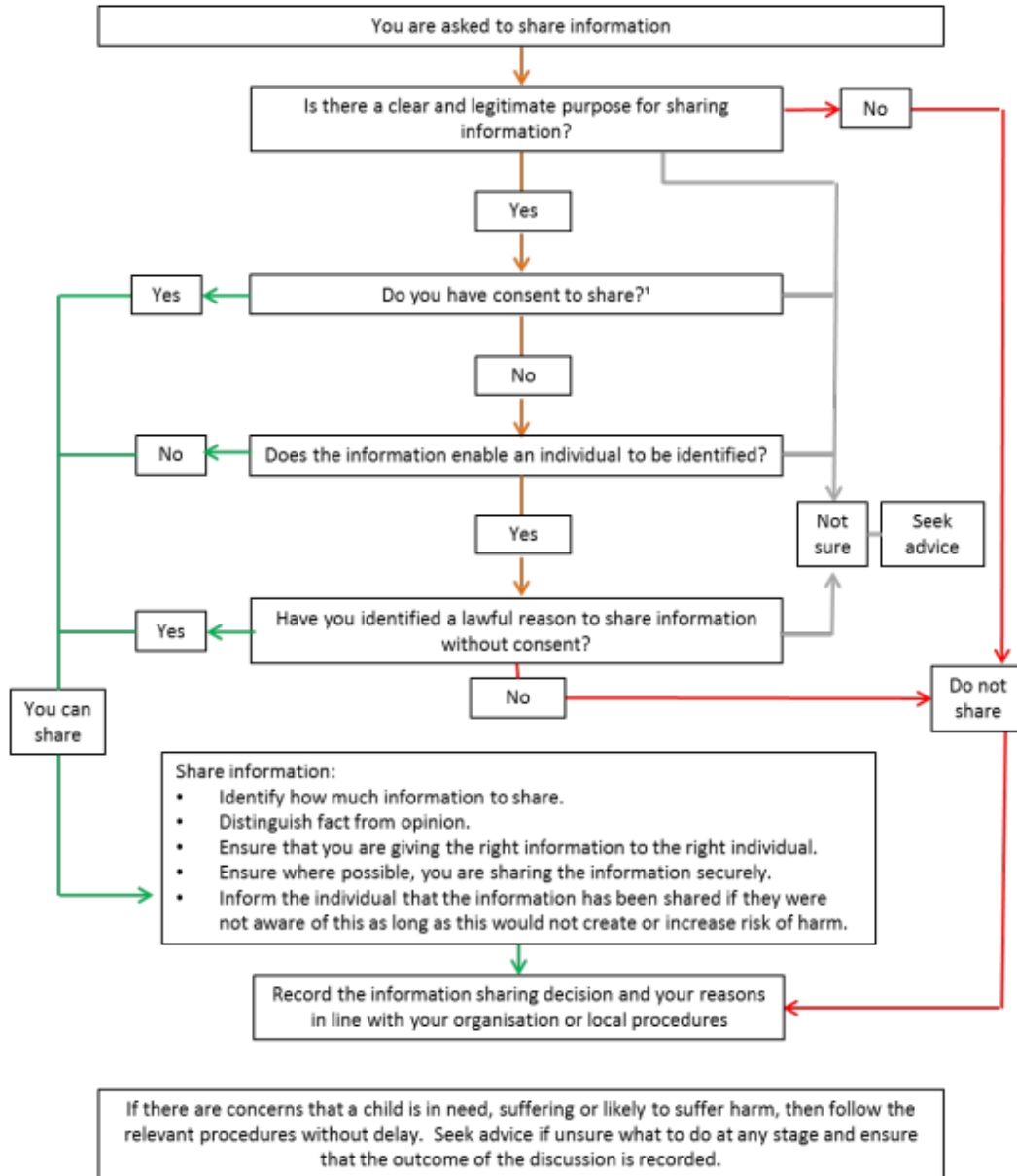
10. *Review annually*

⁴ Information sharing: Advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services to children, young people, parents, and children

Annex A to

*MoU 01/22
28 September 22*

Flowchart of when and how to share information



1. Consent must be unambiguous, freely given and may be withdrawn at any time

- NOTED: Lt J Smith highlighted key activities the cadets had been involved in including the Remembrance services. An issue at the moment is providing an at sea experience noting the P2000 is deployed on other activities – other ships are being explored as alternative options.

- NOTED: Following the outcomes of the OFSTED report, more staff admin resource is being added to HQ.
- NOTED: The Chairman asked if it was felt the URNU is being de-prioritised in the RN noting availability of ships and squeeze on budgets. Lt J Smith noted this was not the case as many of the top jobs come through URNU. The First Sea Lord is expected to visit the URNU shortly and there is an urgent operational need for the P2000 ships, so URNU training needs to come after that. Other options for sea training are being explored including the Auxiliary.
- NOTED: The MoU will be discussed later in the agenda.

b. Army (COMEC_Exec_2022_11_D2)

G3/COMEC SITREP/RMAS/Nov22

14 Nov 22

COMEC

University Officers' Training Corps – COMEC Executive – November Update

1. ***Commander OTC overview.*** *With the start of the new academic year, the focus as usual has been on the 'ATTRACT' space, recruiting across the Freshers' Fayres at our partner Universities with linked welcome events at our Barracks and Army Reserve Centres. This year this has been supported with a co-ordinated strategic campaign across social media (SM). With attestations now completed (our first new cohort to swear allegiance to HM the King), the focus has switched to the initial training of the new intake and the 'RETAIN' piece for those returning from the summer leave period.*
2. ***G1.*** *Overall, we are well on course to meet our target of 1400 OCdts to be attested this year. Gapping of key staff posts across the UOTC establishment remains an issue. In particular, our Reservist gapped posts in critical training appointments has a knock-on impact on our output; this is largely mitigated at Unit level through support across the wider Army Reserve network.*
3. ***G5 Plans.*** *There is an ongoing study underway to ascertain a better HQ UOTC structure. This fits into the wider RMAS Op Model review in order to better exercise control and support to our units, with an aspiration of a small uplift in personnel.*
4. ***G5 Recruitment.*** *To build on our autumn recruitment effort, work with TONIC (the marketing contractor) continues to maintain our presence in the digital space as part of the ongoing 'ATTRACT' campaign aiming to build 'brand' awareness of the UOTC offer ready for next year's autumn intake and in support of the Oxbridge second round intake after Christmas. The SM campaign already underway aims to assist in messaging those students ahead of final school exams next summer.*
5. ***G7 Military Training.*** *As we enter a new training cycle, the new entrants on Module A (Foundation Military Skills) have now been issued with kit and are getting to grips with basic elements of the military syllabus including foot drill and weapon handling. For many their first experience of a public parade will have been on Remembrance Sunday, just past. The second*

years will be stepping up to the contents of Module B (Tactical Command 1), a much more demanding package designed to stretch them in 'the field' and test and improve their leadership skills and command tools. The Senior Division will be providing junior leadership and assistance and role models to these two cohorts of their student peer group.

6. **G8 Finance.** *The financial position remains difficult across Government and the economy. We await the results of the latest Treasury forecast and direction to see how and if we will be impacted. Defence and UOTCs remain subject to close scrutiny especially with regard to Reserve Service Days (RSDs). However, at time of writing no planned activity is under threat. The RSD training year budget remains at £7.2m with approximately 60% of annual budget spent in the first 7 months of FY 22/23, before the bulk of the next winter training period.*

{electronically signed}

*T.J. Irwin-Parker
Lt Col
SO1 UOTC*

- NOTED: Lt Col T Irwin-Parker noted ongoing work with DSUS and implementation of the scheme. There is also a focus on cultures and ensuring cadets are correctly briefed.
- NOTED: Lt Col T Irwin-Parker noted a review of the HQ structures noting Sandhurst has granted an uplift in posts due to shortfalls. It is expected resource will focus on DSUS scheme.
- NOTED: The Chairman asked if there were any restrictions on training areas. Lt Col T Irwin-Parker confirmed no overall restrictions noting if some areas are congested other options can be used.

c. Royal Air Force (COMEC_Exec_2022_11_D3)

20221101 – 6 FTS COMEC Report

1 Nov 22

*Comdt 6 FTS
COMEC Executive*

COMEC EXECUTIVE MEETING 24 Nov – 6 FTS REPORT

Comdt 6 FTS Overview

1. *Since the last quarterly report 6 FTS has moved into the recruitment phase of the year with staff and students engaged in the task of recruiting the new cohort of students for the 2022 intake. The initial signs are that applications are strong this year and significant effort has gone into making the process as seamless as possible; however some frictions remain around the medical processes. On a different note there has been significant progress with the*

provision of a new Light Aircraft Flying Contract with Babcock International. A new contract was signed recently that will enable the current flying operations to continue with Babcock International for the next 4 years; with provision for a potential additional four years beyond that. This contract extension is linked to the viability of the TELUM capability which aims to deliver an air platform that is carbon net zero at the point of use; this is scheduled to replace the current Grob Tutor capability in the future. We are also ensuring that the Sqns are prepared for the possibility of an Ofsted inspection, as well as preparing for a busy training period ahead as we induct the new joiners into the organisation and begin to prepare them for the winter activities ahead of us. From an HQ perspective we have entered a period of planning to ensure that our staff resource meets the requirements from a training and welfare duty of care perspective. During this period 6 FTS boarded the first 4 Direct to Texan pilots who aim to become the Typhoon or F35 operators of the future. In a highly competitive market 2 were selected for fast jets (FJ); however, the other 2 will be selected for rotary wing or multi-engine trg. All of these new streams will reduce the pilot trg pipeline significantly (circa 18 months for FJ pilots) and enable Defence to meet it front line targets.

Recruiting

2. *2022 has been a strong recruiting year so far with 1,100 applications to join the University Air Squadron (UAS) for 400 available slots. Selection is underway with most sqns in pre-employment checks. Capita Medical has historically slowed progress due to a lengthy process, shortage of doctors and increased burden on the NHS. Whilst some of these remain factors, clinics have been in abundance and currently have no logistical challenges. Temporary Medical Unfit (TMU) issues will remain a challenge, UAS are currently experiencing 55% first time pass rate of the medicals, just above the national average. 6 FTS HQ has worked hard to make efficiencies within the process and influence stakeholders to what has been a very positive recruiting period for 2022/23.*

UAS Student Population Breakdown

3. *Of the current student cohort (687 members), 25% are female and 75% male. Of our total number of students, 52% are studying a STEM subject of which 15% are female and 85% male. Within the STEM group, 72% are studying a subject relating to engineering (12% females and 88% males). 14% of our total student population are from the BAME community, and of those, 60% of those studying STEM subjects. For comparison the current RAF diversity targets for Regular Service are 10% BAME and 15% Female respectively. The levels of ambition outlined under the ASTRA initiative are 20% BAME and 40% female inflow into the RAF by 2030. 6 FTS have been tasked with supplying 30% of all Modular Initial Officer Training places for the RAF; this will be a steep challenge as the organisation cannot control which professions (Eg Pilot, Engineer etc) are open nor control the Recruitment and Selection process. However, 6 FTS are planning to build on good practise, engagement, and continuous improvement and education to improve our numbers to the greatest possible degree.*

HQ 6 FTS Armed Forces Career Office

4. *The overall recruitment picture for RAF Pilots remains extremely competitive and the UAS has provided some outstanding candidates to be considered by the RAF Recruiting and Selection organisation for the few posts available this year. The results of the recent RAF Pilot Selection Board, conducted in late Oct 22, had circa 180 internal UAS applications received with 90 students progressing through to the Officer and*

Aircrew Selection Course stage. Currently 5 UAS students have been selected with another 25 on hold awaiting the announcement of in year training opportunities for Recruiting Year 23-24. The quality of all of these candidates was outstanding and a testament to the amount of hard work and preparation each candidate had produced was evident to all. A handful of unsuccessful pilot candidates were found to be competitive for their 2nd career choice and offered alternative roles. Additionally, the annual UAS Bursary Board sat and was able to offer 10 students RAF Bursaries until graduation. This number is significantly lower than previous years but reflects the reality that most of the professions that the UAS students wished to join (Pilot, Intelligence, Engineers, Remotely Piloted Air Vehicle pilot) were closed, thus significantly affecting the career choices available. New applications for branches and professions within the 2022-2023 UAS Bursary Scheme have been advertised and open from Aug 22 until Mar 23; these include the new Defence STEM Undergraduate Scheme (DSUS) roles for Engineering Officers, offering the opportunity to receive an annual bounty and up to £9000 towards academic fees. The 22-23 Medical Officer Sponsorship Board closes on 31 Oct 22 with almost 20 applications received from UAS students thus far; the Medical Selection Board is due to sit in Apr 23.

Force Development

7. *Planning is well advanced for the 2023 round of UAS skiing expeditions. This winter, our sqns are combining their training with another sqn using a regional approach to maximise the opportunities and training, whilst keeping staffing and costs to a minimum. Alpine Ski Foundation Level One training will be given to a total of approximately 160 UAS OCdts in locations across Andorra, Austria, France, and Italy during the 2023 ski season.*

8. *As a new cohort of UAS OCdts has just been recruited, the next training period will include Induction Training for those new to the organisation. This training will be delivered at RAF College Cranwell by the 6 FTS Force Protection Team, as well as on each sqn. Once this introductory training has been completed, OCdts will be able to take part in the variety of other activities we offer (e.g. other military training and adventurous personal development).*

9. *The RAF Charitable Trust (RAFCT) has a mission to Promote the RAF and Inspire young people and RAF personnel to fulfil their potential in air, space and technology. They provide scholarships, donate millions to a diverse range of initiatives and support Adventurous Training. At their request, 6 FTS held a ‘Dragons’ Den⁵’ style event, at which sqns pitched their ideas for a truly challenging and memorable expedition for a prize of £15,000 prize. Standards were very high, ultimately though, it was decided that the prize be shared by Universities of Glasgow & Strathclyde Air Sqn (mountaineering to the peak of Mt Blanc) and Bristol University Air Sqn (mountain biking around the Annapurna Trail).*

LAFT2

10. *The LAFT2 Contract, which supports UAS flying activity with aircraft, engineering support and Motor Transport provision, has been extended by four further years, thus ensuring continuation of provision until 31st March 2026. This CAT A Programme extension provides*

⁵ The ‘Dragons’ were Air Officer Commanding 22 Group, Comdt RAFC Cranwell, the Chair of the RAF Charitable Trust, Comdt 6FTS, SO2 Force Development and WO 22 Group.

the additional time required for Project TELUM to determine the way forward in terms of non-traditional propulsion means in support of RAF ASTRA and HM Government Net Zero targets.

K Thompson

*K Thompson MA
SO2 Force Development, HQ 6 FTS*

- NOTED: Gp Capt R Caine highlighted the re-established engineering contract (renewable) which is significant due to additional pressures on budgets and value currently. Gp Capt R Caine also noted the formal accreditation of elementary flying training which replaces 7 weeks of Initial Officer Training (IOT) and saves 18 months of training for a fast jet pilot.
- NOTED: Gp Capt R Caine noted recruitment has been strong and at 6FTS ethnic diversity and gender balance has exceeded RAF targets. There remains an issue about transitioning this through to service however. UAS' are also required to supply 30% of officer entry across all branches.
- NOTED: Gp Capt R Caine noted cadets have been doing more force development and adventurous training supported by the Air Force Trust.
- NOTED: Discussions were had around sickle cell anaemia testing as part of the fitness test, and this was not consistent across the services.
- NOTED: The Chairman asked if all the aircraft were now serviceable noting previous grounding. Gp Capt R Caine confirmed this was the case.

d. Defence People (COMEC_Exec_2022_11_D4)

DEFENCE PEOPLE (RF&C) UPDATE FOR COMEC – NOVEMBER 2022

Defence Overview

1. *HM Forces continue to remain persistently engaged overseas and in the Homeland protecting UK national interests. The Reserves are playing an active part supporting this, with 623 currently mobilised.*

2. *The Prime Minister has commissioned an update to the Integrated Review (IR) first published in Mar 21 to ensure the UK's diplomatic, military and security architecture is keeping pace with the evolving threat posed by hostile nations. The IR 'refresh' from a Defence perspective will seek to ensure that our proposed future capabilities, force structures and alliances reflect today's security challenges. The Reserve Forces and Cadets directorate (RF&C) is actively engaged in this process, and the update is expected to be published by the end of this year.*

Reserves Policy

3. *The team is currently working with the Single Services (Ss) to review mobilisation policy to ensure currency and ensure it remains fit for purpose ahead of the IR 'refresh'.*

4. **Reserve Forces 30 Review.** *The RF30 team within Defence have analysed the report's recommendations on a programmatic basis to identify 14 core workstreams; these will build integrated capability, enable access to diverse talent whilst modernising, simplifying, and improving the offer. The Programme has prioritised workstream activity against the needs of the Front-Line Commands (FLCs). Activity prioritised has included a Strategic Framework for Reserves comprising of the Active Reserve (Operational and Reinforcement) and the Strategic Reserve, and exploratory work relating to terms and conditions of service (TACOS) to support transformation. The team is also engaged with the Haythornthwaite review of the Offer to Service people.*

5. **Use of Reserves.** *Work continues with the AGILE STANCE Campaign Plan (ASCP) with a number of supporting activities taking place this quarter. The campaign is centred around re-building a culture of readiness across the Reserve, along with the re-establishment of Defence's ability to mobilise Reservists at pace and scale. Employer Engagement (EE) will be a critical enabling part to this. Concurrently the Defence Plan will seek to optimise the use of Reserves and better define their utility outside of mobilisation.*

6. **RFCA Reform.** *The RFCA Reform Programme was established to create an Executive Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB) which will merge the existing 13 RFCA associations and its Council, whilst retaining regional structures, influence, and important links to local communities. In outline the new operating model aims to: strengthen the management of the financial, legal, safeguarding and estate portfolio currently being carried by both MOD and the RFCAs; enhance the capability of the Commands to operate effectively in the Customer role; and provide tri-Service direction and oversight of governance, strategy, and performance management through the establishment of a Single Departmental sponsor. A new Executive Structure for the future NDPB has been agreed and recruitment for key posts has been initiated. The agreed advisory structure will preserve RFCA regional membership.*

FR20 (Update info from the latest UK Armed Forces QSPS info)

7. *The total Trained and Untrained Strength of the Tri-Service Future Reserves 2020 (FR20) population at 1 Jul 22 was 35,273, this is a reduction of 2,019, or 5.7% since Jul 21.*

8. *The trained strength is comprised of:*

- a. *Maritime Reserve: 2,823*
- b. *Army Reserve: 25,502*
- c. *RAF Reserve: 2,898*

9. *Reserves from all Services continue to serve on operations in the UK and overseas alongside their Regular counterparts.*

Employer Engagement

10. **Overall Assessment.** *Active support from employers of reservists is a key factor in defence's ability to recruit and generate capability from the reserves. The maintenance of strong, positive relationships with a full range of employers continues to be important to Defence. The strategy and policy for Employer Engagement (EE) are mature and provide the framework for coherent, consistent EE by MOD and the single Services. The key themes for EE in the next 12-18 months will be driven by the outcomes of the refresh of the Defence Command Paper and the single Service Reserve transformation programmes. The*

development of the MODs response to RF30 and delivery of the ASCP will continue to be important; it is expected that Reserves will continue to play an important part in UK resilience tasks over winter.

11. **ASCP.** RF&C EE Branch continues to contribute to ASCP. The key aspect now is to ensure employers are aware of the implications of ASCP in a timely manner, and to ensure the links with RF30 and the sS transformation programmes are properly understood.

12. **RF30.** In close collaboration with the FLCs, the Programme commenced engagement with selected employers to gauge support for the increased utilisation of the Reserves pending review of the post-Integrated Review force designs. A wider formal consultation with employers will follow.

13. **Anchor Events.** The schedule for major events in 2023 has now been confirmed: Partnering with Defence in Mar 23, Reserves Day in Jun 23, and the Defence Insight Brief in Oct 23. All will be planned as face-to-face events with the aim of fostering positive action, ensuring more reservist friendly workplaces, and building advocacy in civil/civic society for the Armed Forces community. Additionally, the autumn has seen His Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant award ceremonies take place across various regions; Reservists and Cadet Force Adult Volunteers have been presented with their awards in recognition of their outstanding service. The honours conferred are amongst the highest any individual can receive, and supplementary only to those honours bestowed by His Majesty the King in the New Year and Birthday Honours Lists. Additionally, Defence's Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS) Silver and Gold award ceremonies have taken place across the regions, hosted by the Lord-Lieutenants and senior Defence personnel.

14. **Employer Notification.** The annual Employer Notification Directive was issued in Aug 22, in order once again that sS could combine the data cleansing and compiling activities required with those for the ASCP ACA. Excellent returns for 21/22 were achieved, with all 3 sS reporting a 100% success rate, work is well in hand for similar performance in FY 22/23. The Defence Directive on Employer Support (ES) and Employer Notification (EN) (JSP 766) was refreshed and re-issued in Oct 22.

15. **Employer Recognition Scheme.** It is anticipated that the number of signatories of the Armed Forces Covenant, currently 9282, will reach 10,000 in Feb/Mar 23. This a major milestone for the scheme and an indicator of the support that it continues to enjoy. The Armed Forces Covenant Duty is a legal obligation placed on certain public bodies to acknowledge the Covenant principles when exercising certain functions and will come into force on 22 Nov 22. This is intended to improve understanding of the needs of the Armed Forces community. Current ERS numbers are 642 Gold winners, 1335 Silver and 4815 Bronze. Demand for advancement on the scheme remains strong, and the quality of nominations is robust, with a particularly strong set of Gold nominations this year (156 Gold awards in Jul 22). This year's Gold application window has closed and nominations will be considered by the national selection board.

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- NOTED: Col L Brooks noted the changing security situation with war in Europe and the challenge to world order. There is an integrated review refresh to ensure forces are configured correctly and are fit for purpose.
- NOTED: Col L Brooks noted the RFCA reform and ensuring they remain supported noting the significant contribution they make including to OTCs where maintaining the estate remains a challenge. The Chairman also note RFCAs provide critical input into MECs and formally passed COMECs thanks for their ongoing contribution.
- NOTED: Col L Brooks noted a concerning decline in reserve numbers. However, there has been a lot of support from employers many of which are now at Gold level so consideration is being made on other awards that can be presented to keep employers engaged.

6. URNU / University MoU and Student Welfare

- RECEIVED: An update from Lt J Smith (COMEC_Exec_11_E)
- NOTED: Lt J Smith spoke to the Memorandum of Understanding in the RN report enclosure.
- NOTED: Lt J Smith introduced the MoU noting this had come from a number of cadet mental health issues he became aware of, and concerns about how this was not linking up to University welfare teams due to GDPR issues (and misunderstanding) and lack of understanding about how the USUs operate. There was also an issue regarding the time it took for medical assessments to be made in the units (can take up to 2 years). As Lt J Smith looked into this further it became apparent this was a tri-service issue and there was no consistency across Universities. On more detailed reading of the GDPR wording there is an obligation to share information for safeguarding purposes which is not well understood by universities.
- NOTED: To resolve these issues Lt J Smith drafted an MoU that can be used between service units and Universities to support sharing of welfare information when this is deemed necessary. This has been supported by fleet chain of command and those University HR departments it has been discussed with. It was noted there is a similar arrangement with the NHS and medical students so Universities should not be unfamiliar with the arrangement.
- NOTED: The Chairman noted thanks to Lt J Smith for all his work on this important issue. The Chairman noted this was a consistent area of concern for MECs and that this MoU provides a solution. The Service Staff Officers also noted support and agreed to consider this MoU for their units and affiliated Universities. The Chairman also suggested MECs may want to invite the University welfare officer to meetings to get them more involved.
- **ACTION: The Chairman asked Lt J Smith to provide bullet points and the MoU, so he can then forward this on to MEC Chairs enabling them to start acting on it. Prof M Siva-Jothy also suggested MECs report back progress on this to COMEC so we can monitor noting the importance of the issue.**

7. Conference

- RECEIVED: Feedback from the 2022 COMEC Conference at RMAS. The Chairman noted feedback was detailed in September Executive and AGM minutes for reference.

- RESOLVED: Executive to discuss whether to have a conference once per year or every two years. The Chairman noted the issue of resourcing and what Services can provide in terms of support. An annual conference is achievable if Services can provide speakers and organisation. **ACTION: It was noted it would be helpful to have a guide of what is required and what host Services are expected to resource. The COMEC Conference Organising Committee to review this.**
- RESOLVED: Confirmation of timing, venue, proposed agenda of the next COMEC Conference. Discussions were had over the best dates to hold the conference noting constraints on both the host Service and the Universities. It was agreed there could be flexibility, and dates other than September could be considered with enough notice. BRNC Dartmouth is proposed as the venue although it is noted travel and accommodation may be costly, other alternatives were discussed and could be considered.

8. COMEC Constitution:

- RECEIVED: Feedback from the AGM regarding the COMEC Constitution and next steps.
- NOTED: The Chairman noted since the AGM and Conference there had been further discussion on the feedback and consideration of next steps. One option is to keep the current constitution with only minor updates to represent factual changes and an optional section on wider activities.
- NOTED: The Treasurer noted two key issues with the new draft constitution presented at the AGM, 1) aspirations in the terms of reference and concerns around resourcing new activity, 2) the complete re-write of the previous constitution was, for some, oversimplified and it confused constitution and standard operating procedures. In both cases this could be resolved by keeping the old constitution as is, just making factual updates, and adding a new section on the proposed wider remit making clear this is optional for MECs to consider. This could be better communicated to MECs with any changes highlighted compared to the previous version, so it was clear to MECs what has changed from the original constitution.
- NOTED: It was noted if the above was acceptable then guidance in the appendices could then be updated as a separate exercise e.g. guidance for MECs. Col L Brooks noted a forward had been approved by the MoD and sent to the Chairman.
- NOTED: Prof M Siva-Jothy noted MECs also needed time to consider changes at their meetings before being asked to be approved. It was agreed this approach would be communicated at the February COMEC/MEC Forum.

9. COMEC Prize

- CONSIDERED: The COMEC Prize criteria and guidance for 2022/23 with input from the Service Staff Officers.
- APPROVED: As Dr R Hall steps down next year it was approved that Ms C Kinkead will chair the COMEC Prize Committee. Dr F Ruddell will also join the committee.
- NOTED: Dr R Hall and Ms C Kinkead will review the criteria and guidance before requesting nominations for the 23/23 prize.

10. COMEC President

- NOTED: The Chairman noted the current President, General Sir P Wall was content to continue until a replacement is found.
- **ACTION: The Chairman will contact the President on progress of a potential candidate he had in mind to take on the role.**

11. Any Other Business:

- NOTED: There was no other business considered.

12. Dates and Venues of Future Meetings:

- APPROVED: The dates and venues of future meetings:
 - Thursday 16th February 2023 (Virtual Microsoft Teams Meeting)
 - Thursday 18th May 2023 (ULOTC, London)
 - September or October 2023 AGM & Conference (Royal Navy)
 - Thursday 23rd November 2023 (ULOTC, London)