



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

Executive Committee Meeting

held in person on Thursday 18th May 2023 from 1100hrs to 1430hrs 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; Col L Brooks; Lt Col J Mills; Lt P Crease RM; Mr K Thompson

In Attendance

Mr J Norris (Secretary);

Apologies

General Sir P Wall (President); Dr M Vilnay (Vice-Chair); Dr R Hall; Dr G Matthews-Smith; Gp Capt R Caine; Col J Powell; Cdr A Loring RN; Lt Col T Irwin-Parker

1. Minutes

- APPROVED: The Minutes of the Executive meeting held on 16th February 2023 (COMEC_Exec_2023_05_A1)

2. Matters Arising

- CONSIDERED: Any matters or action points arising (COMEC_Exec_2023_05_A2)

Matters Arising (Min 2 16 February 2023)

Nominations to the Executive Committee

- RESOLVED: 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). Mr K Thompson noted the RAF had three volunteers and can provide details once ready. The Army and RN will discuss and report back.
- **ACTION: The Chairman, noting student reps will be in attendance in future, asked the committee to consider which meeting(s) to invite them, meeting locations and how will this be financed – to be discussed at the next meeting. Professor M Siva-Jothy also offered to provide student reps with an online induction.**

COMEC President (Min 2 16 February 2023)

- CONSIDERED: The Chairman contacted the President on progress of a potential candidate he had in mind to take on the role. Other contacts have also been approached noting COMEC preference for 3* and above. Col L Brooks will also support the search. General Sir P Wall has offered to stay in post until a successor is nominated.

COMEC Constitution (Min 6 16 February 2023)

- ON AGENDA: There was agreement that the aspirational aspects of the constitution should be discussed in depth at the next COMEC Executive meeting. The other updates to the current constitution, ensuring it now reflects current practice, was agreed.

Membership of the Executive (Min 9 16 February 2023)

- RESOLVED: The Secretary will send out a call for nominations in due course.

3. Chairman's Report

- RECEIVED: An Executive Summary from the Chairman (COMEC_Exec_2023_05_B)

Chairman's Report (11th May, 2023)

Activity since the February meeting has been focused in the following areas:

- *RAF Cranwell – 6FTS Symposium and Dinner*
- *RAF Lossiemouth – RFCA visit (Reserve Forces)*
- *URNU Glasgow – 50th Anniversary*
- *MEC Chairs meeting – University engagement*
- *Constitution*

RAF Cranwell

Honoured to be invited by Gp Capt Rob Caine to this event. Highlights:

- *Resilience Agility – John Peters (Tornado pilot, 1st Iraq war)*
- *Bearforce – Resilience and welfare – Richard Bland*
- *John Egging Trust – Dr Egging (STEM based help for those from disadvantaged backgrounds)*
- *Tour of the College Hall building (RN origins)*

RAF Lossiemouth

Visit sponsored by the Lowland RFCA. Joined by other ERS Gold Award recipients. Highlights:

- *Talks from; Gr Capt Jim Lee (Station Commander) and personnel from 201 (Poseidon) Sqn, 11(AC) Typhoon Sqn, head of 2622 Reserve Sqn*
- *Visit to the new Atlantic Building, home of 201 (P8-A Poseidon) Sqn*
- *Meeting the 2622 (Highland) Sqn – interconnection with civilian employers*
- *Visit to II(AC*) Typhoon Sqn – incl close examination of a Typhoon FGR Mk 4 and talking to its pilot*

URNU Glasgow

Invited to attend the 50th anniversary celebrations

MEC CHAIRS' MEETING

- *3rd May, 2023*
- *Well attended, only three (18) MECs not represented*
- *Discussion: Activity of component universities in areas beyond USUs. Questions to each MEC rep.*
 - *How many universities does your MEC represent?*
 - *Who has signed the Armed Forces Covenant? (minimum entry to ERS)*
 - *How many are involved in military/veteran/family related research?*
 - *How many promote veteran support as either employees or students?*
- *Overwhelmingly, vast majority involved in all areas*
- *Conclusion: If the universities are involved, strong case for MECs to be involved, (if only to improve their relevance and strictly voluntarily!)*

Constitution *(Discussed as a separate agenda item)*

- *Strong rationale for our work to continue (see above)*
- *MEC activity in these additional areas will remain entirely at their discretion*
- *Our role is strategic; we must not delve into the detail of how MECs achieve, (but we can offer an advisory role)*
- *New constitution will remain as existing (with some minor changes) plus the option of engagement in the additional four areas. The document will remain strategic (not tactical). The new constitution may be supplemented with Guidance Notes (GN). These will be produced by COMEC Exec members (co-opting as necessary)*
- *A committee will be appointed to develop as necessary, the work already completed in writing the new constitution. This will be led by Prof Patton Taylor, supported by Margi Vilnay, Carol Kincaid and Gerri Matthews-Smith*
- *Special voting arrangement; one vote per MEC by postal ballot; the question "Do you as an MEC, support COMEC and the MECs in voluntary expansion of roles into military, veteran and families activities, beyond the traditional USU remit" - YES or NO*

I look forward to any discussion at the meeting.

Jim

J S Castle

Chairman

- NOTED: The Chairman highlighted the 6FTS Symposium and RAF Cranwell and that each squadron brought with them 2-3 students.
- NOTED: The Chairman reported the last MEC Chairs meeting was very well attended and provided an opportunity for all MECs to talk about the wider activities they are undertaking. The Chairman noted MECs are very engaged more widely and we need to consider relevance of COMEC if we are not looking at these activities. Dr F Ruddell noted that Queens Belfast MEC were not currently involved in activities outside the current core remit.

4. Treasurer's Report

- RECEIVED: An Executive Summary from the Treasurer (COMEC_Exec_2023_05_C)
- **ACTION: The Treasurer noted a number of MECs were still to pay their COMEC subscription and Bristol MEC is 3 years in arrears. The Treasurer noted this was more likely to be bureaucratic issues rather than unwillingness to pay. The Chairman offered to support the Treasurer especially with Bristol and next steps required, The Treasurer noted the situation impacts on cash flow.**

5. Reports from the Service Staff Officers

- RECEIVED: An Executive Summary from each of the Service Staff Officers:
 - a. Royal Navy (COMEC_Exec_2023_05_D1 & Welfare MoU Update COMEC_Exec_2023_D1a and COMEC_Exec_2023_D1b)

Annex C to BRNC 02_04_01

Dated 5 May 23

UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT ACHIEVEMENTS

1. **Personnel.** *Overall the workforce situation continues slowly to improve. **The additional civilian staff (HEO plus 2 x AOs) at BRNC are settling in well to their new roles, an AO is in post in URNU Liverpool as Regional Admin Officer (RAO) for the North West, whilst the 6 contractors who competed for their current RAO jobs were all successful in their applications. A suitable candidate for the post of RAO in URNU Solent has been interviewed and offered the role, and we have selected an EO to take up the new role of National Training Centre (NTC) XO at URNU Cambridge. For the first time ever we will have **all the CO and Cox'n posts filled from 17 April** with the recruitment of a Cox'n for URNU East Midlands, however, we had to go to FTRS to fill the position of CO URNU Manchester and the post of CO URNU Oxford will be gapped for 2 months over the summer. The Chief of Staff position in URNU HQ will be filled from 7 August, however, the post of Universities Staff Cox'n will be gapped from mid-September as the current incumbent departs for a 6-month Operational Tour in Bahrain. The Sponsored Undergraduates (SU) Office welcomed the first of 2 Drummond Division Staff Officers (DDSOs) who will be based alongside URNU Liverpool in HMS EAGLET / RMR Merseyside. He will act as Divisional Officer for all the engineering SUs (Defence STEM Undergraduate Scheme DSUS) cadets, University Cadet Entry (UCE) Midshipmen, and the remaining Naval Bursars). A second DDSO is expected next year and will be based in the south of the country. On the personnel front, the **trajectory remains upwards but we are not quite there yet.*****

Sponsored Undergraduates Office

2. *The SU Office can claim a number of successes and highlights this term as well as dealing with some significant challenges. The strain on the NHS and the effects of strikes, particularly by the junior doctors, has significantly increased the pressure on our Foundation Year (FY) doctors (15 in FY1 and 15 in FY2). This was exacerbated by accommodation issues in Portsmouth, however, it has now been agreed that the FY doctors are a priority for accommodation so hopefully this is now resolved. A relationship has also been established with The Battle Back Centre at Telford which been utilised to provide valuable interventions on 2 separate occasions.*

3. *Since the inception of Project SELBOURNE, the 2 annual week-long SU Acquaint Courses (SUACs) has not been supported by the contract. This, however, may now be resolved through engagement with Training Management Group (TMG) HQ which has proved most helpful. The SUACs will now appear on TAFMIS with resources allocated accordingly, or so we understand. The same challenges applies with the life support provided through Project HESTIA. BRNC has been supporting SUs: Doctors, Dentists, UCEs and Bursars for decades, however, a contract amendment is now being progressed through by the Deputy SU Staff Officer which will hopefully improve the situation in the longer term.*
4. *An extensive period of visits around the country were conducted by the SU Staff Officer and Sponsored Cadet manager to the FY doctors (and dentists), however, DDSO's engagement with his SUs, and with those on medical cadetships at the universities has largely been online. In the future, DDSO will conduct more face-to-face interactions through visits to the URNUs where Drummond Division OCs are hosted whilst SUSO / DSUSO will take a more regional approach to meeting with Jolly Division cadets.*
5. *The question of what to do with UCEs after passing out of BRNC and prior to university has led to a number of innovative solutions. The original plan to send them to Common Fleet Training (CFT) was cancelled when it became clear that engineers do not complete CFT on commissioning. A relationship has been built through BDS Washington with the US Naval Academy at Annapolis in which 5 spaces will, in future, be reserved for UCEs to join the Academy's annual East Coast cruise; this year only 2 places have been secured and it is planned to send the other 2 UCEs to QNLZ or PWLS. In addition, all 4 UCEs will join a P2000 on BALTOPS for a month. The question of who is responsible for the UCEs between commissioning and going up to university would thus appear to have been resolved thanks to some highly innovative and proactive work by the SU Office.*

University Royal Naval Units Headquarters

6. *This term has seen visits by Cdr (U), usually accompanied by the Universities Staff Coxswain (USC), to a total of 10 Units: Glasgow, Manchester, Belfast, Liverpool, London, Cambridge, Birmingham, East Midlands, Yorkshire and East of Scotland. Calls have also been conducted with the Naval Regional Commanders (NRC) for London and Eastern England, and Scotland and Northern Ireland as well as with Chief of Staff to NRC Northern England in the absence of the NRC. Cdr (U) and the USC also attended an evening reception attended by the Lord Provost of Glasgow to celebrate the Unit's 50th Birthday. Recognising the role that URNUs play in recruiting, URNU Belfast engaged with Queen's University Belfast to arrange a shadowing day for students with very promising results.*

University Royal Naval Units

7. *This is traditionally a busy term for the Units following concentration on recruiting and New Entry Weekends in the Autumn with lots of events and activities at home and abroad. In addition to the URNUs' collective support to the RN Winter Sports Festival in January, this term saw overseas visits to Sicily by cadets and staff from the Scottish and Northern Irish Units for the International Forum on Peace, Security and Prosperity alongside colleagues from the University Officer Training Corps (UOTC) and University Air Squadrons (UAS). Other overseas trips were*

URNU Solent's trip to the battlefields of Normandy, and Wales and Western England's visit to Gibraltar organised by URNU Birmingham. CLM and AT weekends have taken place in Okehampton (Wales and West), Isle of Wight (Wales and West), Stubbers Adventure Centre (Eastern England), Norfolk Broads (Eastern England), Rothiemurchus (URNU East of Scotland), Ballykinler, NI (URNUs Belfast and Glasgow) and Exercise The Green Mile honing the military skills of URNU Devon's cadets. Numerous sporting events have taken place inter-URNU (Northern England's Bogseat Challenge) and regional sports weekends, at MOD Caledonia (Scotland and Northern Ireland) and between University Service Units (USUs) (URNU Belfast, URNU Birmingham and URNU Wales). Sadly, higher priority tasking at MOD Garats Hay (former Defence Sixth Form College) led to the cancellation of the National URNU Sports Weekend. After a successful trial involving URNU Birmingham, 3 URNUs have now completed the 'Hold Fast' challenge based on RN Diver Training conducted both at Perth and at our own NTC. URNUs have also been completing combined events with the UOTCs (URNUs Bristol and Glasgow), and working with Civilian Emergency Services (URNUs Bristol, Wales and Devon). In addition, URNU Liverpool conducted a fast cruise in HMS EAGLET, many first aid qualifications have been awarded, and URNU Virtual achieved 13 RYA Day Skipper theory passes.

8. Sea time has been achieved in various platforms including 3 trips with the Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA TIDEFORCE and RFA MOUNTS BAY), HMS QUEEN ELIZABETH, HMS ALBION and HMS MERSEY, and the start of an extensive period at sea on BALTOPS in the P2000s which kicked off on 13 April and runs until 3 July. Unfortunately, many of the planned trips in RFAs had to be cancelled owing to operational reasons but we will seek to reschedule these in the summer.

Numerous ship visits to ships alongside have been conducted. Two flying camps will also take place at RNAS Yeovilton courtesy of 727 Naval Air Squadron, the first during the end of Easter leave commencing 24 April with the second at the beginning of the Summer term from 8 May. URNU Devon supported HMS DUNCAN's Operational Sea Training by providing personnel for a simulated Non-combatant Evacuation Operation.

9. Charitable events have been a feature of many URNUs during this period highlights including URNU Northumbria's RBL's The Great Tommy Sleepout to help raise money for homeless veterans (as well as a separate bake sale for the RNRMC), and URNU East of Scotland's extensive activities to support their chosen charity FreshStart. URNU Birmingham combined AT with fundraising climbing Mount Snowdon in Wales as did URNU Liverpool with their Trans Pennine Trail cycling trip in support of the RNRMC, whilst URNU Yorkshire covered 238 miles in a week, by walking, cycling, running or swimming to raise money for the RNL (238 being the number of lifeboat deployment stations around the country).

10. After a hiatus of several years the URNU will now be a regular feature in Navy News. The first one-page spread appeared in the April edition and it is hoped to increase this to a regular 2-pages in the near future. Exposure around the regions is still a little inconsistent but the plan is for a PR team to be created each with responsibility for specific aspects of media liaison and coverage. In general, the URNUs are very active, the Officer Cadets getting involved in a wide range of activities; showcasing this to a wider audience will hopefully increase understanding of the URNUs, promote membership with the active support of the Naval retired community, families and friends. Though the URNU is not, and never will be, a 'hard' recruiting tool, it is highly effective as a 'soft' tool and its importance in this capacity is only likely to increase in the future.

MoU 01/22

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN UNIVERSITY ROYAL NAVAL UNIT DEVON AND AFFILIATE UNIVERSITIES.

Sponsor: CO URNU Devon

1. *This Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) clarifies principal responsibilities and formalises arrangements between the Commanding Officer of the University Royal Naval Unit (URNU) Devon and affiliate University welfare representatives.*

2. *This Memorandum of Understanding is to be reviewed every 12 months.*

Military Education Committee Chair

(Title: Name: Email:)

Signature: Date:

Commanding Officer – University Royal Naval Unit Devon

(Rank: Lt Name: Jamen Smith Email: jamen.smith517@mod.gov.uk)

Signature: Date:

Exeter University Welfare Representative

(Title: Name: Email:)

Signature: Date:

Plymouth University Welfare Representative

(Title: Name: Email:)

Signature: Date:

Marjon University Welfare Representative

(Title: Name: Email:)

Signature: Date:

Introduction

1. A reticence has been identified within some University 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 (Note: this is a MOD definition of vulnerable adults and does not pertain to other authority definitions).
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](#).¹

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

¹ 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 consider²:*

- 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.*

Progress update 31 March 23.

10. *A welfare consent form has been created to alleviate any concern for information sharing (see Annex B). URNU's are to ensure that all OC's complete the form as part of the routine joining paperwork.*

11. *A welfare referral template form has been created to facilitate information sharing to ensure only the most relevant information is shared (See Annex C). Consent from the individual should*

² Information sharing: Advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services to children, young people, parents, and children

always be sought, however information can be shared without consent with professional judgement and in line with GDPR provisions.

12. An example welfare flowchart has been created as guidance with dealing with a welfare concern (see Annex D).

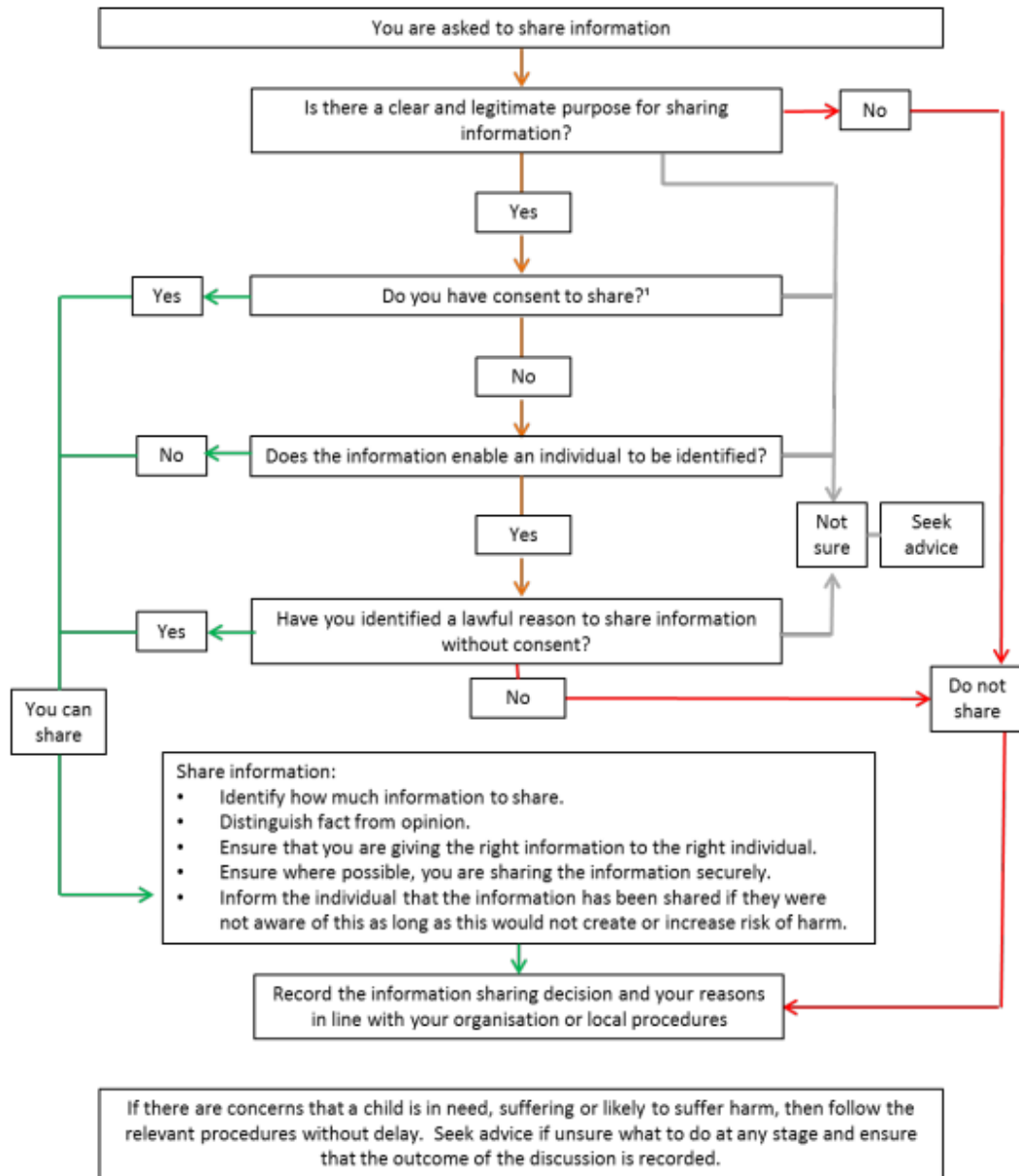
DOCUMENT REVIEW

13. Review annual

Annex A to

*MoU 01/22
04 May 23*

Flowchart of when and how to share information



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

**Annex B to
MOU 01/22
04 May 23**

Officer Cadet Welfare Consent forms – to be completed with joining paperwork

All staff concerning Wellbeing Services, including Unit CO's, COXN's, TO (and other), Student Services, Line Managers, Welfare Case Workers, Residence Life team, Education Support Advisors (Welfare) and external clinical supervisors, work closely as a team (where applicable) to ensure you receive the best support we can offer. In accordance with all relevant data protection legislation, your personal information will be treated respectfully and sensitively and only shared with other members of the team on a "need to know" basis.

Exceptional circumstances

Wherever possible staff will seek to obtain your agreement prior to liaison, however it is acknowledged that there may be some circumstances where this is not possible. There may be rare instances when Wellbeing Services are unable to maintain our commitment to confidentiality. In such circumstances we may need to contact relevant others such as your GP or other health professionals. Exceptions to confidentiality occur when Wellbeing Services practitioners believe you or others may be at risk of serious harm, when there are safeguarding concerns, and/or when a member of the team would be liable to civil or criminal court procedures if relevant information had not been disclosed.

How we manage your information

We keep computer-based records of all the information you provide; this includes records of written information, emails, phone conversations and face-to-face contact. This enables us to offer you a professional service and to ensure you receive appropriate advice and support. All personal and sensitive data is processed in accordance with all relevant data protection legislation. This agreement lasts for your total duration of your time in URNU.

I hereby agree to the terms articulated in the MOU and give consent for information to be released and liaison to take place between URNU's and Wellbeing Services and other University colleagues/departments.

Name:

Signature:

Date:..

*Annex C to
MOU 01/22
04 May 23*

*Welfare Form Referral Template – Sharing concern between University Welfare departments
and the URNU.*

Reference number of student:

Description of referral and concerns:

Staff's professional judgement to be made on individuals presumed risk of harm to self or others (low, medium or high) with reasoning:

Referred by staff

With or without consent (please circle most relevant).

Staff Details

Name:

Rank:

Role:

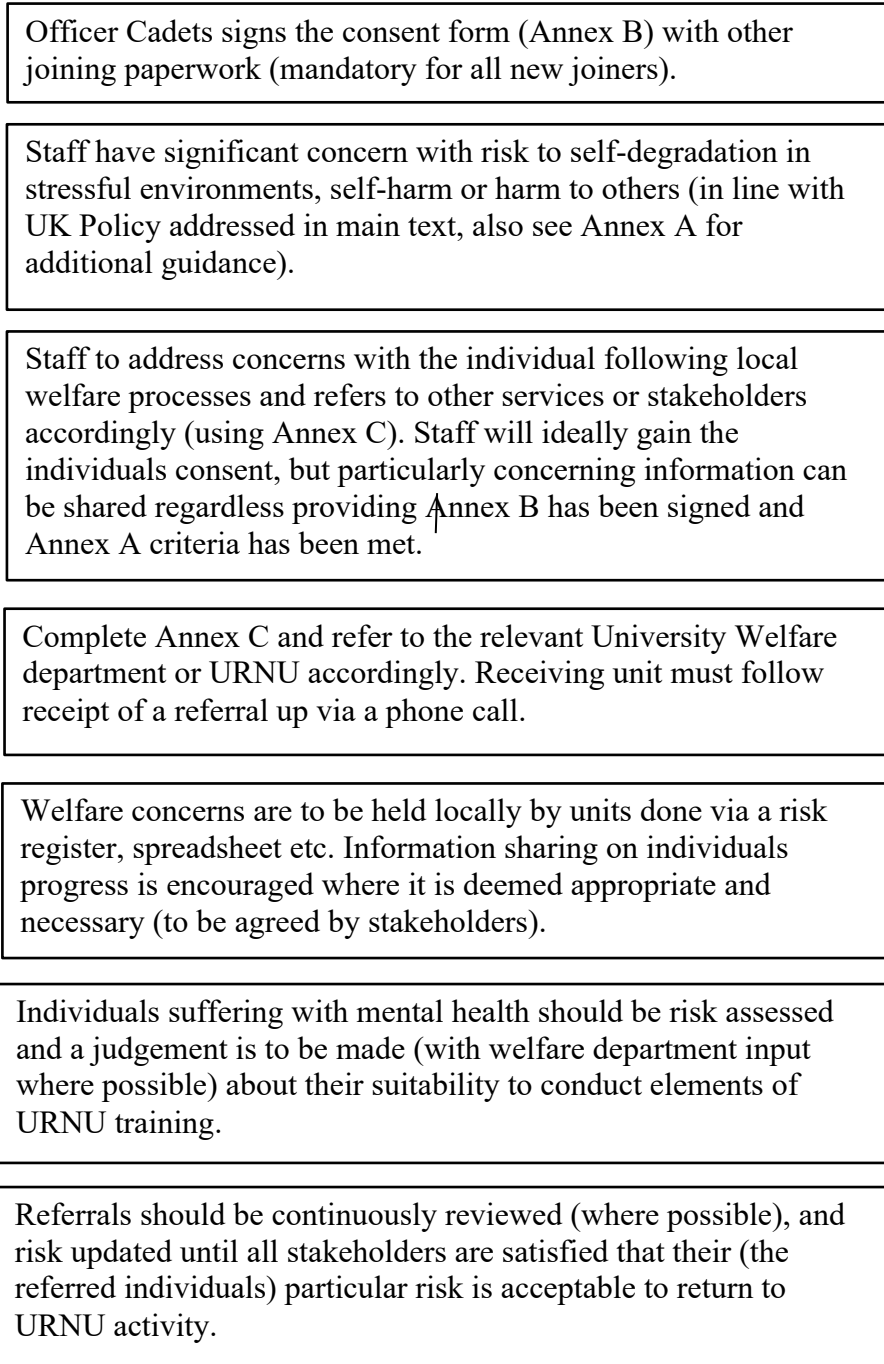
Email:

Phone:

Note: The receiving unit must follow up with a phone call to confirm receipt and to confirm identifiable characteristics of the student/OC. Official Sensitive information such as identifiable characteristics cannot be shared via email from service laptops due to MOD policy.

04 May 23

Flowchart of an example welfare process



- NOTED: Lt P Crease RM noted approval of increasing staff at HQ to support administration was having a positive impact.

- NOTED: Lt P Crease RM noted DSUS is now fully implemented. There have been some issues with medicals and process however students have been given exposure to ships and capital platforms.
- NOTED: Lt P Crease RM reported that D&I (Diversity & Inclusion) ratio was 65 men: 35 women and that some URNUs were at 50:50. URNUs were also delivery on activities including winter sports and increasing sea days supporting the URNU USP.
- NOTED: The Chairman welcomed the report and positive updates. The MoU has been circulated to all MECs by the Secretary for MECs to take forward if they wish.

b. Army (COMEC_Exec_2023_05_D2)

G3/COMEC SITREP/RMAS/MAY23

09 May 23

COMEC Secretary

University Officers' Training Corps – COMEC Executive – May Update

1. **Deputy Commandant RMAS (UOTC) overview.** *The spring term as usual has focused on the delivery of Module A and B training and seen a considerable number of overseas winter and spring adventure training exercises taking place. Units have continued to deliver more of the expected 'offer' to their OCdts who have thrown themselves into these opportunities. With ADXs and summer AT expeds now firmly on the horizon, whilst the students are fixed in exams, units are now planning for the main training events of the year, plus early planning looking forward to next academic year including their critical period of annual recruitment in the autumn. This all takes place with the backdrop of an increasingly challenging military recruitment environment. Our mission, easily translated into our 'ATTRACT' space, continues to be:*

'The UOTC is to deliver leadership development for selected students through military training, adventure training, personal, intellectual and social development physical training and sports. On behalf of the Army, it is to engage with higher education institutes to support RC civil engagement and contribute to Army inflow'.

2. **G1.** *The UOTC programme via the Entry Medical Cell (UEMC), continues the review and final medical clearance via GP records of last autumn's intake of 1400 new OCdts. Gapping of key staff posts still remains an issue in many of the UOTCs, especially with our Reservist instructors and staff. The small UOTC HQ within the RMAS Group is shortly due to expand with another SO2 focussing on G1 and G4, a very welcome addition to the team! This is part of the 'Op MODEL' study to ascertain a better HQ structure in order to better exercise control and support to the units. This is in addition to a new SO3 who joined us in April, focusing on our OCdts on the DSUS programme. We are due to receive one more SO3 for DSUS at some point next year.*

3. **G5 Recruitment Plans.** UOTC units early planning work is now taking place to prepare for the annual autumn recruiting surge during Freshers which will come around all too fast after ADX. This is combined with continued work with TONIC (the marketing contractor) who are undertaking part of the 'ATTRACT' campaign on social media for us this year. This campaign is already underway in the digital space, to target those students conducting final school exams, who are now making choices regarding UCAS and university places in autumn 2023.
4. **G7 Military Training.** UOTCs continue to deliver Module A and B of the RMAS Commissioning Course Short (CCS) syllabus, primarily to their first and second-year students, with final training objectives completed at ADX. A pilot will run this summer in one UOTC, to look at the 'Delta Course' allowing UOTC OCdts trained in Mod A & B to then continue their training, to deliver them to the same standard as Army Reserve basic soldier training (Common Military Syllabus (Reserves) or CMS (R)). The Delta Course basically makes up for certain training objectives which are taught in an earlier place in the CMS (R) soldier pipeline than in the officer training pipeline, where they are only taught in Mod C & D at RMAS. Implementation of which, would mean there is no Phase 1 training delta when UOTC OCdts leave university service, if they then choose to transfer to Group 'A' reserve service.
5. **G7 Overseas Training.** Overseas training exercises (OTXs) continue to provide a key piece of the UOTC offer and two of our units are currently planning on deploying to Gibraltar on Ex BARBARY WARRIOR in the summer. In addition, a few UOTC OCdts have deployed during April to France on Ex ORION with 3 RIFLES to act as translators, delivering real effect in support of the Field Army and a great insight and opportunity for our OCdts to boot. Other overseas DE activity has also been conducted in Singapore, Italy and Georgia for a very small number of OCdts.
6. **G7 Other Training (AT).** Numerous UK and overseas AT activities have been undertaken during this period; mainly including all our unit's winter Alpine AT. Units continue to plan forward for summer AT expeds and for the main ADX AT period. Ex NORTHERN LIGHTS in Edinburgh during late March and the Queen's Challenge Cup sports competition at RMAS successfully took place in April too, along with participation in numerous other AT type challenges such as the 'Ten Tors' event in the SW of England.
7. **G8 Finance.** The financial position remains difficult across Defence and UOTCs remain subject to close scrutiny especially with regard to Reserve Service Days (RSDs). The RSD training year budget is not yet fully firmed-up but we are actively having our expectations for it managed downwards unfortunately.

{electronically signed}

T J Irwin-Parker
Lt Col
COS UOTC

- NOTED: Lt Col J Mills noted recruitment has been challenging, not helped by recent negative press regarding Sandhurst. More positively there is additional resource at HQ OTC group to support administration.
- NOTED: Lt Col J Mills noted a focus on annual deployment exercises including Gibraltar and around the UK. Cadets have also participated in defence initiatives in Georgia, Singapore and Italy. The Army are also progressing joint training events in London with RN and RAF counterparts.
- NOTED: Lt Col J Mills noted work is underway to align the officer training course with the Duke of Edinburgh Gold scheme so activity would be recognised. The committee noted challenges on recognising the annual camp or training as it was paid and therefore did not meet the voluntary requirements of the scheme. Suggestions were made on how to tackle this including city licences that covered the unit or donating pay.

c. Royal Air Force (COMEC_Exec_2023_05_D3)

- RECEIVED: The RAF shared the 6 FTS Annual Report 2022/23 publication
- NOTED: Mr K Thompson noted it was useful to share this report for the COMEC meeting noting it went beyond the standard report and COMEC could see what was going to Chief of the Air Staff.
- NOTED: Mr K Thompson noted RAF are also looking at increasing footprint in HQ. He reported they had an OFSTED inspection in March (HQ and squadrons) in which they received an overall grade of good despite current challenges of maintenance due to budget.
- NOTED: Mr K Thompson noted UASs taking part in activities in Europe and sporting competitions.

d. Defence People (COMEC_Exec_2023_05_D4)



General

RF&C Personnel update	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Following the pause of the Reform Programme, the Reform Leadership Team have temporarily left MOD. The Reform Team has come under Hd Reserves, Brig. David Wakefield. On 22 May, Cdre Martin Quinn is returning to head up RF30, replacing Brig. Hugh Robertson who is retiring.
RFCA Reform Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The RFCA Reform Programme has been paused as the department was unsuccessful in securing any slots for its legislative programme in the next Parliamentary session. The programme will now continue to deliver recommendations and areas of continuous improvement that are not dependent upon legislation. 25 recommendations are complete and a further 29 are being progressed as far as possible.

Governance

Estates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RF&C and the CRFCA are both engaged in supporting the Volunteer Estate VFM Study and the Reserve Estate Optimisation (REO) Programme. RF&C are working closely with the VE VFM Study team to ensure any changes in the functions or responsibilities of the RFCAs are reflected in future legislation for the NDPB. RF&C continues to work on understanding the Land Registry details of all RFCA sites and request that the RFCAs' continue to collaborate on this.
Volunteer Estate (VE) Value for Money (VFM) Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The VE VFM Study will take into consideration all aspects of The Sullivan Review which concern the provision of Hard FM services to the VE. The Study is due to be completed by 30 Jun 23. The outcome will be reported to the MOD Investment Approvals Committee to help inform future decisions on infrastructure arrangements for the VE.
Health and Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The HSEP Director, is planning to meet with CE/CRFCA and Dir VE to progress recommendations and consider future H&S resourcing requirements. Further discussions are planned this year.

Reserves Overview

Reserve Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The total strength of the FR20 Volunteer Reserve population as at 1 Jan 23 was 34,310, a decrease of 2310 personnel (or 6.3%) since 1 Jan 22. As at 1 Jan 2023, the trained strength of the FR20 Volunteer Reserve population was 30,570, a decrease of 1,350 (or 4.2%) since 1 Jan 2022. This comprises: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maritime Reserves 2,760 Army Reserves 24,940 RAuxAF 2,860 3,590 people joined the Volunteer Reserve in the 12 months to 1 Jan 23, a decrease of 1,810, or 33.5% when compared with the previous 12-month period.
Use of Reserves	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reservists continue to serve in support of operations worldwide, both in formed units and as individual augmentees. Providing support to the NATO Enhanced Forward Presence in the Eastern part of the Alliance, and in support of broader defence engagement activities. There are currently more than 600 Volunteer Reservists in permanent service and more than 5,500 Reservists on Full Time Reserve Service commitments. Reserve personnel have also recently provided ceremonial support at the coronation of Their Majesties King Charles III and Queen Camilla. Reservists provide a vital service to Defence and their country; providing mass, resilience and specialist skills that may not be available in the Regular Force. Work is underway to re-establish a culture of readiness that was taken for granted during the Cold War.

Addressing Recruitment Challenges

General	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All three Services are recruiting in a very difficult environment. The UK employment rate remains high, resulting in a highly competitive employment market.
Maritime Reserve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Methods to address the recruitment challenge were put together for consideration in November and a recruitment campaign targeted on the Maritime Reserves started in early 2023. Accelerated programmes for both Officers (9 weeks) and Ratings (5 weeks) are planned for Summer 2023 with the aim of significantly increasing the Maritime Reserves GTS.
Army Reserve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Army is conducting an end-to-end review of the Army Reserve service journey (attract, recruit, train, retain). This work will identify and prioritise ways to improve inflow and to reduce wastage and outflow from the Army Reserve. Focus on social media and close liaison with Recruiting Group to direct recruiting resource where it is most needed.
RAF Reserve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In December 2022, Deputy Commanders have authorised the national roll-out of Reserve Support Wings (RSWs). Three further RSWs will be stood up - NI and Scottish, Central, and S England and Wales RSW. Planning for the Central RSW started in Jan 23 with the subsequent RSWs to follow early in FY 23/24.

Employer Engagement

Overall Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The AGILE STANCE Campaign Plan (ASCP) and RF30 remain key programmes for EE involvement. The priority for Defence EE remains to encourage employers to support recruitment and retention of Reserves within the workforce and to encourage support for the Armed Forces community.
Service Level Agreement (SLA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The SLA will continue to focus on key outcomes required by Defence People. This will be informed by VCDS' Reserves Vision ensuring that EE remains relevant and delivers value for money.
ASCP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EE Branch is focused on EX AGILE DEFENDER 24 (Feb-Mar 24) which will provide an opportunity to further embed EE within the developing Reserves construct.

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Employer Engagement

RF30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DRM will facilitate employer involvement in a strategic level academic research programme taking place in May/June 23.
Gold Award Association (GAA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EE Branch has continued to develop the relationship between MOD and the GAA. Chair GAA now sits on the 2* Employer Engagement Executive Group (E3G).
Employer Notification (EN)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The annual EN Directive for 2023 was issued 15 Aug 22, in order that sS could combine the data activities required with those for the ASCP ACA. This has proven beneficial with Army and RAF reporting 100% of those eligible having been notified, and RN 92%. This data continues to aid understanding. The EN Directive for 2024 will be issued in Aug 2023 with results due Feb 2024. These are the best results achieved so far. RF&C recognises the considerable amount of work done by sS EE staff in producing this result.

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Cadet Force 2023 Strategy Review

CF2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Work is underway to review the 2025 Cadet Force Strategy (CF2025). The Cadet Force 2030 Strategy (CF2030) aims to influence future cadet policy development. ▶ 2030 Strategy will be an evolution of CF2025 which will aim to deliver a challenging and stimulating cadet experience that develops and inspires young people in a safe and enjoyable environment. The intention is to implement CF2030 in April 2024.
Cadet Expansion Programme Phase 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The aim of Phase 3 of the Cadet Expansion Programme (CEP) is to meet the Government's ambition to grow the number of cadets in school cadet units from 45,000 as of 1 Apr 2020 to 60,000 by 2024. ▶ The programme remains on track. Early discussions are underway with the Department of Education to consider Phase 3 and beyond.
CyberFirst	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The National Cyber Security Centre's (NCSC) nationally recognised training programme, CyberFirst, continues to be delivered successfully across all Cadet Forces. ▶ Uptake of courses continues to strengthen but remains very much demand-led. RF&C is building a more accurate picture of demand patterns over time to inform a more detailed planning model.

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Cadet Force 2023 Strategy Review

Cadet Force Numbers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The number of cadets in the community Cadet Forces decreased by 3% from April 21 to April 22, however, as there was an 11% increase in Combined Cadet Force strength over the same period, overall numbers of cadets increased. These trends reflect the continuing longer-term impact of COVID-19 and growth in the school cadet population resulting from the Cadet Expansion Programme. ▶ As of Apr 2022, there were 124,080 cadets and 25,960 Cadet Force Adult Volunteers (CFAVs) in cadet units across the UK.
CRDCA Cadet Health Check	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The Cadet Health Check team, led by Baroness Garden of Frognal, briefed CDP on its findings on 1 Sep 2022. The Executive Summary of the report has been circulated to members of the 3* Youth & Cadet Steering Group. Work on the health check team's 7th report is ongoing. ▶ A key observation in the 2021 Annual Health Check report was the pivotal role that access to the Defence Training Estate has for the cadet experience, particularly the impact of late cancellations.

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Reserve Forces 2030 (RF30)

Ongoing work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The RF30 team continues to provide Frontline Command (FLC) coherence, including staffing the 4* Reserves Narrative. Preparations are now complete for Reserve Forces input to the Defence Command Plan (DCP) via the People Committee.
Workstream Updates	<p><u>Priority RF30 Workstreams:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mobilisation – outputs are being developed to make the process more efficient, primarily through digitalisation. Strategic Workforce Planning – work is ongoing to address data capture for Reserves and their integration into longer-term strategic level planning. This will also be used for short term issues such as skills and capability gaps. Digital work – work continues with the focus on Defence Connect and FLC coherence of digital transformation. <p><u>Ongoing RF30 Workstreams:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Estates EE & Partnership
Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A second well-received RF30 webinar was held in February to an internal audience. Topics covered by ACDS included: EE, Mobilisation & TACOS.

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- NOTED: Col L Brooks noted Defence People moving to a new report format to allow updates for multiple stakeholders.
- NOTED: Col L Brooks updated on RF30 report, produced 2 years ago, and currently awaiting the government response.
- NOTED: Col L Brooks updated on the RFCA reform through the Sutherland review, which proposed making RFCAs regionally independent. This has not yet been secured to go to 4th session of parliament. RFCA remain key to managing estate and are significant supporters of the employer recognition scheme.
- NOTED: Col L Brooks highlighted recruitment numbers are challenging across all services, and that recent press has not helped. A significant amount of work is going into reserve recruitment and retention including a tri-service recruiting programme.
- NOTED: The Chairman noted the USUs have a unique opportunity to support recruitment but also have to balance the politics of being seen as just a military recruiting unit. Universities also share core values with service units like integrity, confidence, responsibility, creativity – this needs joined up. Lt Col J Mills noted interest generally is decreasing in the younger generation as less connection to military through family (London OTC went from over 2000 expression of interest 6 years ago to 500 this year). Mr K Thompson noted in UAS the flying attracts students, but it is adventurous training and social element that is helping to retain them. Col L Brooks also noted pay a consideration and challenge of medicals and wait times do not help.
- NOTED: Ms C Kinkead asked how many recommendations from the RFCA reform programme require legislation. Col L Brooks will investigate and report back.

6. COMEC Constitution

- CONSIDERED: Revised Constitution draft (COMEC_Exec_2023_05_E)
- CONSIDERED: The aspirational aspects of the constitution and next steps in the context of real time university activity.
- NOTED: The Chairman noted discussions around the constitution had been ongoing for over a year and he is keen to move things forward. Having listened to feedback the simplest way forward was to make factual updates to the existing constitution adding optional supplementary roles that each MEC could decide whether they wished to take forward.
- NOTED: The Chairman noted at the last MEC Chairs forum, where there was good attendance, he asked each MEC what activities they are involved in beyond USUs (e.g. research, veterans, ERS, families etc) – all except Queens Belfast MEC noted significant involvement. The Chairman asked how COMEC could properly represent MECs if it did not recognise these activities?
- NOTED: Ms C Kinkoad asked if there was a greater role Universities could play in these other activities? COMEC constitution is about running of COMEC not about the activity of each MEC so these does not need to change.
- NOTED: Discussions were had around ensuring the MECs do not feel any additional activity is being imposed and keeping COMEC relevant for all members including service staff officers.
- NOTED: The Treasurer noted that what is in the COMEC constitution does not affect what MECs do. There are aims and objectives for COMEC and recommended terms of reference for MECs in the appendix. Patton recommends inserting these optional supplementary activities in the appendix section for MECs to decide whether they wish to engage or not. The Chairman thought this was a helpful solution recognising everyone's views. Col L Brooks also felt this was a helpful way to recognise others activity and had no issues from a MoD perspective.
- **APPROVED: The Executive agreed to factually update the existing constitution and add, as an option for MECs to consider if they wish, the supplementary activities in the relevant appendix.**
- **ACTION: The Chairman requested a constitution sub-committee is formed, led by the Treasurer and including the Vice Chair, Ms C Kinkoad, and Dr G Matthews-Smith. The subcommittee will 1) update the original constitution main text for the AGM to approve in Sept 23, 2) update the relevant appendices with the optional supplementary activity as discussed, 3) review the appendices noting some may need further consultation and may need redrafting requiring a longer timescale, and approval at a later date. Once the subcommittee is agreed a draft will be circulated to the Executive before submission as a paper to the AGM. An exceptional COMEC Executive meeting can be called online if needed.**

7. COMEC Prize

- RECEIVED: An update on the COMEC Prize Nominations from the Chief COMEC Prize Adjudicator, Dr R Hall.
- NOTED: Dr R Hall noted by correspondence that there were 13 nominations (7 male and 6 female) from 3 URNUs, 7 UOTCs, and 3 UAS'. Also received at least one nomination for all nations of the UK (9 England, 2 Scotland, 1 Wales and 1 Northern Ireland).
- NOTED: Ms C Kinkead noted the number of nominations was about average compared to previous years.
- NOTED: The Chairman requested feedback on the process noting some MECs had reported the volume of material required was taxing. Feedback from the Royal Navy was that the process was OK but queried the requirement for the CV. Lt P Crease RM noted there was feedback from the Army that a lot of detail was required, including for the cadet noting a CV was also required. Ms C Kinkead noted had try to limit to 500-word count but needed the detail to be able to make a selection between exceptional candidates. Ms C Kinkead also noted focus was on what the nominated cadets were doing while on USU, not on wider achievements and perhaps this could be made clearer in the forms.
- NOTED: Prof M Siva-Jothy noted there appears to be a focus on COMEC marking the COs statement rather than the student. If the COs statement is for verification purposes, then CO simply needs to sign off the student's statement as being correct and endorsing it. Discussions were had around the CV and if this was really needed. The Prize subcommittee should consider for next year.
- **ACTION: Ms C Kinkead will review the process and guidance documentation as the incoming Chief Prize Adjudicator.**

8. Conference

- RECEIVED: An update on planning for the COMEC AGM & Conference at BRNC.
- NOTED: Lt P Crease RM noted they hoped to have confirmation of speakers in the next week and are not expecting any changes.
- NOTED: Lt P Crease RM noted accommodation is limited in Dartmouth hence the requirement for civilian attendees to stay at the Premier Inn. Military personnel should all be able to be accommodated at BRNC (30 cabins available).
- NOTED: Lt P Crease noted there is capacity for around 96 and the Executive noted it would be good to have as many cadets as possible attend.
- **APPROVED: The draft conference programme (COMEC_Exec_2023_05_F)**
- **APPROVED: The conference fee of £125 was approved for all attendees.**
- RESOLVED: The Secretary will book accommodation for the Executive.

9. COMEC President

- CONSIDERED: An update from the Chairman noting earlier discussion under Matters Arising.
- NOTED: COMEC President Brief Specification (COMEC_Exec_2023_05_G)
- **ACTION: The Chairman asked the Executive to pass on any suggestions for the new President to Col L Brooks.**

10. Membership of the Executive

- RECEIVED: An update from the Secretary on upcoming vacancies
- NOTED: The Secretary noted there are 3 vacancies for the Executive and a request for nominations had been sent encouraging applications from under-represented parts of the UK.
- NOTED: The Chairman observed the current age profile of the COMEC Executive and challenge of attracting younger members. Professor M Siva-Jothy noted this will be addressed with cadet representation on COMEC going forward. Ms C Kinkead also noted COMEC needs to consider diversity profile as well as age.

11. Any Other Business:

- CONSIDERED: Frequency of COMEC Reports from the Service Staff Officers (Col L Brooks)
- NOTED: Col L Brooks noted it was increasingly difficult to report new updates and content 4 times per year to COMEC and requested a change in frequency aligned with key dates in the year, as well as a change in format to accommodate.
- NOTED: Discussions were had on frequency and types of report, noting these reports were also published to MECs. It was decided shorter bullet point reports at the same frequency would not be helpful.
- **APPROVED: The Executive agreed to Service Staff members to compiling full written reports for the November and May meetings only going forward, with verbal updates at other meetings (or other relevant content if available e.g. annual review / report for other audiences).**

12. Dates and Venues of Future Meetings:

- CONSIDERED: The dates and venues of future meetings:
 - 6-8 September 2023 AGM & Conference (Royal Navy, BRNC Dartmouth)
 - Thursday 23rd November 2023 (ULOTC, London)
 - Thursday 22nd February 2024 (Virtual Microsoft Teams Meeting)
 - Thursday 16th May 2024 (ULOTC, London)