



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

Executive Committee Meeting

**held on Wednesday 6th September 2023 from 1230hrs to 1530hrs at the Britannia
Royal Naval College, South Devon AONB, College Way, Dartmouth TQ6 0HJ**

Minute

Present

Mr J S Castle (Chairman); Rev Professor J P Taylor (Treasurer); Ms C Kinkead;
Professor G Matthews-Smith; Professor M Siva-Jothy; Maj I Stoney; Col L Brooks; Gp
Capt R Caine; Cdr A Loring RN;

In Attendance

Mr J Norris (Secretary);

Apologies

General Sir P Wall (President); Dr M Vilnay (Vice-Chair); Dr R Hall; Dr F Ruddell;
Col J Powell; Lt Col T Irwin-Parker; Mr K Thompson

- NOTED: The Chairman thanked BRNC for hosting the meeting and conference.

1. Minutes

- APPROVED: The Minutes of the Executive meeting held on 18th May 2023 (COMEC_Exec_2023_09_A1)

2. Matters Arising

- CONSIDERED: Any matters or action points arising (COMEC_Exec_2023_09_A2)

Matters Arising (Min 2 18 May 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 November meeting. Professor M Siva-Jothy also offered to provide student reps with an online induction.**

Treasurer's Report (Min 4 18 May 2023)

- NOTED: 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.
- NOTED: The Treasurer updated that all MECs had paid except Bristol and this was in progress.

COMEC Constitution (Min 6 18 May 2023)

- **ON AGENDA: The Chairman requested a constitution subcommittee is formed, led by the Treasurer and including the Vice Chair, Ms C Kinkead, 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.**

COMEC Prize (Min 7 18 May 2023)

- **ACTION: Ms C Kinkead will review the prize nomination process and guidance documentation as the incoming Chief Prize Adjudicator for the November meeting.**

COMEC President (Min 9 18 May 2023)

- **ACTION: The Chairman asked the Executive to pass on any suggestions for the new President to Col L Brooks.**

3. Chairman's Report

- RECEIVED: An Executive Summary from the Chairman (COMEC_Exec_2023_09_B)

Chairman's Report

This conference (in part), provides the platform for the annual review of COMEC activity. It is also important to review what has been happening in the wider world, ie the context in which we as an organisation operate.

Context

COMEC continue to operate as a link between the Ministry of Defence and the Higher Education (University) sector. Our role continues (for the time being) to be minor in comparison to what it might be. More about this later.

Constitutionally and politically, we seem to be in a state of flux. The sad death of Her Majesty the Queen Elizabeth, just over a year ago has undoubtedly left a huge gap. Our new King Charles is beginning to fill the void, ably aided by the other members of the working family. Certain members of the none working family are not making his transition easy.

Politically, we have a government who portrays themselves as one thing, but whose values are far removed from those expected. Another group in the background, waiting for their opportunity. All within an environment where there is an intolerance towards debate. Institutions, once the bastions of such matters, now increasingly shy away. Globally, the once powerful western democracies, look increasingly weak. The world knows this, especially when they see the most powerful of our democracies being led by someone who quite frankly should be sat quietly at home.

Meanwhile, Russia continues to flex its muscles overtly and covertly. The Ukraine conflict rumbles on with no immediate sign of resolution. The west are effectively at war with Russia. Putin has already stated his intent to attack the UK with Nuclear weapons if certain lines are crossed. Bluster or not, such threats must not be brushed off as rhetoric. Yet, there are politicians on all sides who would rather not spend money on our "insurance", (Nuclear deterrent). They would either water it down to ineffective levels or remove it all together. Defence manpower is being increasingly eroded. We could not even mount a campaign comparable with the Falklands war, let alone successfully defend the UK.

Of perhaps greater concern is China. On the face of it, China is doing nothing more than being an economic superpower, (what the west has enjoyed for 200 years). The Belts and Roads policy in Africa and other developing countries is close to providing China with a strangle hold on the world's mineral resources. China now manufactures many of the goods seen in western homes. As with Russia's grip on fuel resources, China is rapidly becoming the key holder to many other resources. Where the UK and other European countries are effectively spending less on defense, China (and Russia) are spending more and more, simultaneously providing significant offensive capability.

There are those who would say war is not inevitable. The reality is, we are already at war. Our country and others in the west are under constant attack by hostile states via cyber mechanisms. Although usually denied by governments, there is little doubt that instances such as the shutting down of air traffic control over the whole of the UK, was an exploratory attack.

In summary we are at significant risk from hostile forces, both economically and militarily. It is the first duty of any government to protect its people, simultaneously looking after the interests of the nation as a whole.

COMEC in context

So how does this affect COMEC? In terms of size and influence we are very small indeed. But we are part of Defence and so a significant (however small) part of the context described. As part of the Defence machine, we have a duty to be performing to our optimum capability. If every tiny component of defense does this, the sum of the parts becomes significantly stronger.

For more than 100 years we have acted as a platform for the provision of intellectual talent to the Commissioned Officer sector of all three branches of HM Forces. We have been comfortable in the fact that “we have been doing our bit”. However, when we know what risks we face today, we would be negligent (as supposed intelligent people) if we did not maximize what we were truly capable of in the service of our nation.

With or without us, the universities are already engaging in what we propose. Some MECs, to their credit, have already taken this on board. We are faced with two choices.

- *Continue as we are and become less and less relevant*
- *Expand; do what we are capable of; let defence and our host HE sector see that we mean business*

COMEC next stages

- *The final version of the new constitution will be put to each paid up component MEC*
- *The MECs will be given time to consider and vote on whether to proceed or not*
- *The MECs should have Extraordinary meetings to vote as necessary*
- *The vote will be one MEC, one vote*
- *The question, eg “Should COMEC change the constitution as presented”*
- *Answer, “YES” or “NO”*

Other matters

- *COMEC Exec meetings – minutes are available*
- *MEC activities – strong*

Visits – RAF Cranwell (thanks to Gp Capt Rob Caine)

- NOTED: The Chairman highlighted the key points from the above report noting COMEC needs to change and adapt.
- NOTED: Ms C Kinkead suggested the revised constitution would not meet the Chairman’s aspirations and vision, and a more constructive solution would be to engage in a strategy session with MECs. The Chairman noted there had already been discussion and we now need to move forward.

- NOTED: The Treasurer noted the Executive agreed a different process for the constitution at the last meeting. This was to 1) update the main constitution noting current inaccuracies and 2) suggest additions to the appendices for MECs to consider. This did not, on its own, align to the Chairman's vision and so may require further discussion as Ms C Kinhead had suggested.
- NOTED: Professor G Matthews-Smith noted MECs are not standing still, and many are taking wider activities forward. This needs to be carefully considered and include a strategic discussion on how best to take forward. Any widening of the remit of COMEC should also be discussed with the military.
- NOTED: Cdr A Loring agreed with Professor G Matthews-Smith noting other parts of the organisation feed into these other activities and from his perspective would not be able to engage as beyond his remit. Cdr A Loring felt that DTUS/DSUS squadron considerations were missing, noting these impacted on USUs but perhaps were not well represented at MECs. The Treasurer noted this aspect could be added to the appendices.
- Following wider discussion, it was accepted that the current focus should be on updating the basic constitution for the AGM to approve and other aspects can then be considered as suggestions for MECs to consider and for a resolution to come to the next AGM. The wider vision articulated by the Chairman would need to be considered separately to the updating of the constitution at the AGM.

4. Treasurer's Report

- RECEIVED: An Executive Summary from the Treasurer (COMEC_Exec_2023_09_C)
- NOTED: The Treasurer noted the current policy of reducing funds to 1 year of subscriptions and this is still ongoing, it is expected therefore there would be a deficit over income to achieve this goal. This also meant no increase in subscription fees are required at this time.
- NOTED: The Treasurer noted one MEC has not yet paid and is now 3 years in arrears. There have been assurances this would be paid imminently.
- APPROVED: The Treasurer noted ongoing complications of obtaining payment of COMEC subscriptions due to different accounting and procurement systems that rotate every year with different Universities. It was re-iterated that the policy of COMEC is that the MEC Chair and MEC Secretary should support the COMEC Treasurer with any administrative requirements needed for payment to be made.
- **ACTION: The Treasurer noted the majority of the COMEC Executive are now outside of England which would increase travel costs to London for the Executive meetings and the conference. The Chairman suggested a discussion of future meeting locations at the November Executive meeting.**

5. Reports from the Service Staff Officers

- RECEIVED: A verbal update from each of the Service Staff Officers:
 - a. Royal Navy (COMEC_Exec_2023_09_D1)

**Annex C to
BRNC 02_04_01**

Dated 4 Aug 23

UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT ACHIEVEMENTS

Workforce

1. Overall the workforce situation remains largely static. The additional civilian staff (HEO plus 2 x AOs) at BRNC have largely settled in well. The Universities Department Staff Officer (UDSO) is doing excellent work with the URNU budget including disentangling the URNU from wider Sponsored Undergraduate (SU) committed expenditure. The SU Admin Officer is now also effectively working as a Naval Writer as well as her responsibilities as an E1 (see below). Subject to Directorate approval, all Regional Admin Officer (RAO) roles will in due course be filled for the first time, though Security Clearance times could impose additional delays. The National Training Centre EO is due to join on 14 August. Two gapped URNU CO posts (Oxford and Bristol) will be filled in September and the recent review of Strategic Workforce Priorities should add extra impetus to filling the East Midlands position. The FTRS Coxswain plot remains fluid with high quality candidates generally being found to replace those who choose to move on, though not without a number of short to medium term gaps and the concomitant churn this imposes.

University Royal Naval Units Headquarters

2. This term has seen visits by Cdr U, accompanied by the USC, to the final 2 Units: Oxford and Northumbria, plus further visits to URNU Bristol in advance of the recent transfer of HMS FLYING FOX to RMR Bristol. The long-awaited URNU Chief of Staff joins as term completes with the Universities Staff Coxswain (USC) departing in September for a tour in Bahrain. The need for him to complete Pre-joining Training in his current assignment is imposing the usual additional demands but he will be able to take some leave prior to departure. In his absence, his position will be covered by a former URNU CO on a medical downgrade which should significantly alleviate the problem of his post being gapped. Delays have been encountered gaining Sponsor accounts for Coxswains as the Cabinet Office appear to change their requirements near monthly. This is currently with PSYA and hopefully will soon be resolved.

University Royal Naval Units

3. Whilst this term saw the end of routine training night activity in all units with the end of the Academic term and start of the summer holidays, in many ways it has been as busy as last term with most unit having a programme of activity involving all 4 pillars of the URNU syllabus. National training has included 2 RYA training weekends hosted at URNU Cambridge (with Officer Cadets (OCs) and Training Officers (TOs) from Manchester, York, Northumbria, London, Virtual and East Midlands); OCs and TOs

attending and supporting the Sponsored Undergraduates Acquaint Course (with URNU Belfast's Chaplain Crane supporting the Chaplaincy department throughout); a multi-unit attendance at the Tough Mudder Challenge, and 10 OCs from 5 units attending Ex Why Kayak (a week long kayaking expedition on the River Wye). Most units conducted ship and establishment visits including PWLS and ASTU (URNU East of Scotland) and representing the RN at Armed Forces Days around the country. Several URNUs plan to support the Dartmouth Regatta this summer. The URNU HQ led Summer Conference was well attended by unit staff and TOs at MOD Garats Hay. Unlike the previous URNU Summer Camps, this year sees the URNU undertaking Ex SOLIS ARCE at Okehampton Battle Camp, supported by 32 unit staff and TOs providing Militarisation, Green Skills and CLM training, team building and a full military exercise for over 80 Officer Cadets from all over the UK. Regional training has included Sports and AT activity (Scotland and Northern Ireland units at Rothiemurchus), regional CLM training weeks or weekends and sports activity supporting fundraising. URNU East of Scotland also won the Dasher Award, generously donated by the Honourable Society of Knights of the Round Table. This award recognises the unit that has collectively put in the best performance overall during the year based on self-penned citations, and covers every aspect of URNU activity from routine drill nights to overseas expeditions.

4. Sea time has been achieved in various platforms including ALBION, QUEEN ELIZABETH, PEMBROKE and TYNE but most notably during an extensive period at sea on BALTOPS in the P2000s which ran until 3 July. During this period, the URNU achieved an extraordinary 680 days at sea for 70 personnel spread over 6 hulls. With the relationship with CFS now well re-established post Op ISOTROPE, the URNU look to attend BALTOPS in 2024 and hopefully another period of RFA sea time in January. Above all else, time at sea serves to inspire OCs to apply to join the Naval Service with a number of former URNU cadets joining BRNC and RALEIGH in September, another off to the RFA as a Logistics Officer, and 4 URNU cadets attending this year's RNR Accelerated Officer Programme (AOP), a third of all attendees. In the future it is hoped to send URNU OCs on to the Accelerated Rating Programme at RALEIGH, however, this currently remains an aspiration. Two flying camps took place at RNAS Yeovilton courtesy of 727 Naval Air Squadron, the first during the end of Easter leave in late April and the second at the beginning of the Summer term in early May. These were hugely successful and very much enjoyed with one OC joining as an Air Engineer in September with an aspiration to become a Maintenance Test Observer as a result of support received from 727 NAS. Finally, URNU Belfast are taking 10 OCs to Malta for a Maritime Power study trip (EX PEDESTAL); OCs will be researching key moments in WW2 in which Malta as a Naval Base featured heavily. In a series of site visits they will present their findings to the CO and the visit will culminate with some AT (sailing).

5. Charitable events remain a feature of many URNUs during this period highlights including URNU Belfast's Help For Heroes 150-mile charity walk and URNU East of Scotland's extensive activities to support Poppy Scotland by running the Edinburgh Marathon and attending Armed Forces Day. URNU East of Scotland and Belfast OCs also conducted charity conservation work in the Cairngorms National Park. URNU Devon is hiking the South West Coast Path to raise money for the RNRM Charity and

for the Defence Medical Welfare Service, a mental and physical welfare charity for those in the Services.

6. *The URNU is now a regular feature in Navy News, with the aim of expanding the first one-page spread that appeared in the April edition to a regular 2-pages in the near future. The URNUs remain very active around the regions supporting the NRCs with Defence Engagement (DE), and in conducting the 4 pillars of their training. In many parts of the Midland and Northern England, the URNUs, along with the Sea Cadets, have become the face of the Royal Navy for DE activity, sometimes alongside but often separate from the DE activities of the Maritime Reserves. Though the URNU is not, and never will be, a 'hard' recruiting tool, it remains highly effective as a 'soft' tool and its importance in this capacity is only likely to increase in the future. In particular, the URNU is proving effective at penetrating the former industrial heartlands, engaging with the BAME communities and demonstrating the Naval Service as a diverse and inclusive organisation.*

Sponsored Undergraduates (SU) Office

7. *The SU Office has had an exceptionally busy term running 2 Sponsored Undergraduate Acquaint Courses (SUAC) at BRNC, largely conducted in-house / using BRNC Executive Department resources. Next year's courses should be the first to be run with Training Management Group (TMG) support, a first for the Universities Department. Between the 2 SUACs, the first Medical Officers and Dental Officers (MODO) welfare weekend was conducted, coinciding with the BRNC Open Day, to assist newly graduating MODOs in their transition to their Foundation Years and registration with the General Medical and Dental Councils. Also between the 2 SUACs, the first Drummond Division Acquaint Weekend (DDAW) was run during the working week (!) at HMS SULTAN with visits to the dockyard and HMS COLLINGWOOD. Future DDAW will be weekends conducted at BRNC with the intention being for Defence STEM Undergraduate Scheme (DSUS) cadets and University Cadet Entry (UCE) midshipman to attend R&A's engineering Look at Life (L@L) courses with a view to 'selling' the benefits of the 2 schemes to putative naval engineers, a great way to support the recruiting effort. UCEs and DSUS will also get the benefit of the establishment and ship visits conducted during L@L as well as acting as brand ambassadors (for an exceptional offer).*

8. *With the second group of UCEs commissioning in March, the 4 new midshipman have enjoyed a fantastic term with a 7-week BALTOPS deployment with CFS followed by a 4-week East Coast cruise with cadets from the US Naval Academy (USNA) at Annapolis. As well as providing exceptional training, both deployments provided opportunities for port visits, wider DE through working with cadets from a number of other nations, and building the relationship between BRNC and USNA. The USNA East Coast cruise is strongly supported by British Defence Staff (Washington) with the UCEs really stepping-up and taking leadership roles in commanding and navigating the USNA's Yard Patrol (YP) craft, despite all being engineers!*

9. *Whilst the Sponsored Undergraduate Staff Officer (SUSO) and his team have delivered some outstanding activities this term and progress continues to be made in integrating some training through TMG, the previously reported problems continue to apply to the lack of life support being provided through Project HESTIA. The unilateral decision to cease supporting SUs: Doctors, Dentists, UCEs and Bursars despite their being College business for decades has imposed significant challenges. The MODOs found themselves as the only regular Naval personnel out of 28,500 without any UPO support whatsoever. By calling on the good offices of the Fleet Writer (WO1 Ramsey) and providing in-house training to the SU Admin Officer (SUAO) for the more straightforward transactions, the more complex issues will now be supported by UPO NELSON with UPO CTCRM advising on the onboarding of new personnel. This state of affairs is the consequence of the contract not being scoped properly and is highly unsatisfactory. A contract amendment is now being progressed by the Deputy SU Staff Officer which will hopefully improve the situation in the longer term, though how long is not known owing to other Navy-wide issues with the contract.*

10. **SU Finance.** *SU Finance continues to impose considerable challenges, largely due to the various stakeholders in Navy Command HQ not understanding the differences between the URNU (a Navy-run University Society), and the Sponsored Undergraduates, all of whom have been offered careers in the Royal Navy. Indeed, some (MODOs and UCEs) are already full-time salaried personnel. To add to the complexity, the DSUS scheme is largely, though not entirely, funded by UKStratCom whilst the remainder of the funding for engineers comes from Captain (R&A), and for MODOs from a separate Navy Command budget. The SU Office also administers bursaries and scholarships on behalf of Captain (R&A) to the Defence Technical Undergraduate Scheme (DTUS) cadets, and to Naval scholars though they are not under the authority of Captain, BRNC. Ill-advised but well-intentioned attempts to transfer funds internally in the past have caused additional problems through people neither understanding what was requested nor what was granted. The decision by the Centre to withdraw the Bills Direct facility has caused a vast amount of additional, mostly nugatory work. Agreement with Navy Command to use CP&F Variant 2 to pay University fees in the Autumn was subsequently vetoed by the Centre; this subsequently changed to CP&F Variant 3, and latterly to the use of an ePC, though at least one of these is yet to be approved. The Centre (Directorate of Acquisition and Project Delivery (DAPD)) is actively seeking a long-term solution to this and other second order consequences of the decision to withdraw Bills Direct.*

- NOTED: Cdr A Loring provided highlights of the above report to the Executive. Workload and staffing will continue to be a challenge noting current staffing rules.
- NOTED: Cdr A Loring noted some units are now heading to 50:50 male to female ratio, and also have trans students as well as registered blind. The URNUs will continue to ensure diversity and will also work closely with other services to share best practice. Ms C Kinkead congratulated Cdr A Loring, who noted there was an active push to increase diversity further.

b. Army (COMEC_Exec_2023_09_D2)

G3/COMEC SITREP/RMAS/AUG23

01 Aug 23

COMEC Secretary

University Officers' Training Corps – COMEC Executive – August Update

1. **Deputy Commandant RMAS (UOTC) overview.** *The summer term, post exam period, has focused on the delivery of our Annual Deployment Exercises (ADXs), both at home and abroad, as well as numerous summer AT expeditions both in Europe and further afield. Planning and preparation now step up for the next academic year's intake, including the critical period of recruitment in the autumn. With the backdrop of an increasingly challenging military recruitment environment for all three services, much interest will be paid to our overall success, both in our initial 'ATTRACT' effect with Freshers and to those leaving University.*

2. **G1.** *The gapping of key staff posts remains an issue, especially with our Reserve personnel. A few new initiatives are being examined to see if there is any way to address some of these shortfalls and balance that added workforce within the budgets. However, we do look forward to welcoming several new FTRS personnel to the UOTC Group in the autumn. HQ UOTC, within the RMAS Group, has now got its two new members (DCOS and SO3 DSUS). Close interest remains on the OCdts on the DSUS programme, both in terms of numbers and the developing policy.*

3. **G5 Recruitment Plans.** *UOTC units are now finalising their plans for the annual autumn recruiting surge. This is combined with our continued work with TONIC (the marketing contractor) who are undertaking an online SM campaign. This campaign is already well underway and looks to target those students awaiting school exam results and finalising their UCAS choices. We are heartened that many units are already receiving numerous expressions of interest ahead of Freshers week.*

4. **G7 Military Training.** *Although impacted by constraints with the Defence Training Estate all units were able to conduct a successful 2-week package. Several units deployed to Northern Ireland and several others to Scotland, meaning we were able to concentrate our efforts geographically. We will look to reinforce this concentrated scheme of manoeuvre next summer. UOTCs continued to load many candidates to the summer RMAS Commissioning Course Short (CCS), providing 2Lts to both the Army Reserve and UOTCs themselves.*

5. **G7 Overseas Training.** *Overseas training exercises (OTXs) continue to provide a key piece of the ATTRACT effect and two of our units successfully deployed to Gibraltar on Ex BARBARY WARRIOR in June and July. Exeter UOTC, had a great*

piece done on their exercise by local TV media whilst on 'the Rock' – <https://youtu.be/p9rUCik2WOU>. A question over funding continues to hang over these highly sought-after packages, but the aspiration is to continue. Three OCdts from different units have also spent time at the US Air Force Academy on a Cyber internship.

6. **G7 Adventurous Training (AT).** Numerous UK and overseas AT activities have been undertaken during this period; including general AT 'taster' packages as part of ADX, as well as summer AT expeds. A lucky few OCdts have been rock climbing as far afield as California, plus several trekking contingents to Scandinavia and the Alps, including for Via Ferrata and Summer Mountaineering Foundation (SMF) qualifications, producing many spectacular photos to support Freshers recruiting. The majority though, will have enjoyed numerous economical UK adventures. Units are now planning their Alpine winter AT expeds; a vital part of the ATTRACT every year at Freshers' Fairs.

7. **G7 Other Training.** Hacking for Defence (H4MoD) is a dynamic estimate process previously executed in the USA. Small teams of 4 or 5 people examine a real-world problem from a sponsor, in a concentrated time frame, in order to bring a set of fresh eyes to the issues and recommend new solutions. A very successful pilot was run at RMAS this term over 3 and a half weeks with just over 20 OCdts from various UOTCs. The problem sponsors were different departments from UK Defence who put forward their hot issues to be looked at. Despite very limited previous understanding of the areas, before even getting to the specific problems themselves, the four teams did an outstanding job. This pilot was widely hailed as a great success and something we would like to continue with in the future if possible.

8. **G8 Finance.** The financial position remains ever challenging across Defence with increasing pressures. Despite efforts towards supporting inflow and EtR, UOTCs remain subject to close scrutiny especially with regard to Reserve Service Days (RSDs). The RSD training year budget has so far been supported at last year's level; however, the operating budget is tight.

9. **COMEC Conference.** Unfortunately, the COMEC conference falls within our annual stand down and, with no other windows for the UOTC HQ to take leave, the HQ will be unable to attend this year's event. We look forward to receiving the minutes on completion of the conference.

{electronically signed}

T J Irwin-Parker
Lt Col
COS UOTC

- NOTED: There was no-one in attendance to present so the report was noted without further discussion.

c. Royal Air Force

- NOTED: Gp Capt R Caine noted a report is being prepared for senior staff to justify significant budget for flying training. The UAS' core mission is to inspire and attract the best students. While not officially an officer recruiting organisation UAS' do also deliver 30% of officer training.
- NOTED: Engagement with young people is also key to inspire the next generation (ASTRA). 4000 Schools engaged with, 20,000 ATC cadets flying per year and 4000 UAS student recruited over 4 years is the ambition.
- NOTED: Gp Capt R Caine noted although UAS BAME diversity is good, this is not yet translating to RAF as a whole.
- NOTED: Gp Capt R Caine noted there is a move to more integration with MECs / COMEC by UAS' including building relationships across other services.
- NOTED: Maj I Stoney noted a number of students join other services and Col L Brooks noted this should also be recognised as a success

d. Defence People

- NOTED: Col L Brooks noted there was a new Secretary of State for Defence looking at new ideas through the Defence team. This included agency and agility and incentivising people in a new era. RF30 programme is also being taken forward to enhance capability.
- NOTED: Col L Brooks noted recruitment to the military is still challenging and there was a need to attract technology enabled people. The MoD are therefore looking at best practice with allies and partners, as well as looking at reserve forces to support future requirements.
- NOTED: Col L Brooks noted employer engagement was promising: 642 Gold, 1324 Silver and 4558 bronze with over 10,000 employers who have now signed the covenant.
- NOTED: Col L Brooks also noted a move towards more flexible working and a pan defence skills framework, including supporting reserve families.
- NOTED: Ms C Kinkead asked about the status of RFCA and support for USUs. Col L Brooks noted there are some required primary legislation changes needed which have been delayed to after the general election.

6. COMEC Prize

- REPORTED: The COMEC Prize Winner 2022-23 is SUO Kaycee Jacka of Wales UOTC. Highly commended are CUO Lulu Willet of London UOTC, PO Emma Lloyd from London UAS, A/Mid Elizabeth Ashall from Glasgow and Strathclyde URNU.
- NOTED: Ms C Kinkead noted the panel received 13 submissions this year which was the same as last year. Quality of applications overall was excellent.

- APPROVED: Ms C Kinkead suggested those highly commended should also receive certificates in future and this was approved for action in 2024.

7. COMEC President

- NOTED: Col L Brooks has approached a senior individual but unfortunately, they did not have capacity to take on the role. Other potential candidates are being considered.
- **ACTION: The Chairman asked the Executive to pass on any suggestions for the new President to Col L Brooks.**

8. Nominations to the Executive Committee

- NOTED: There are three vacancies on the Executive occasioned by the completion of term of office for Dr Ross Hall (not eligible for re-election), and two vacancies carried over from the last AGM.
- NOTED: Nominations have been received by the due date in respect of the following:

Executive Committee Member

- o Professor David Dunn (West Midlands MEC; COMEC_Exec_2023_09_E1)
 - o Dr Amos Haniff (Edinburgh MEC; COMEC_Exec_2023_09_E2)
 - o Dr Andrew MacLaren (Edinburgh MEC; COMEC_Exec_2023_09_E3)
- NOTED: There being three nominations received by the due date for the three vacancies, Professor David Dunn, Dr Amos Haniff and Dr Andrew MacLaren are to be ratified by the AGM.

9. COMEC Constitution & MEC Terms of Reference:

- RECEIVED: The final draft COMEC Constitution (COMEC_Exec_2023_09_F1) for AGM Approval
- RECEIVED: Terms of Reference for MECs for AGM Approval (COMEC_Exec_2023_09_F2)
- NOTED: Following discussions earlier in the meeting the Treasurer will lead on the AGM constitution discussions, including addressing feedback received to date from MECs (there was one comment that came back). The Executive thanked the Treasurer and constitution subgroup for all the work on this to date.
- NOTED: The Chairman asked Col L Brooks if MoD are also in favour on the constitution revision and direction of travel and this was confirmed noting it had been discussed last year.

10. Conference

- RECEIVED: An update from the Secretary on planning for the COMEC AGM & Conference at BRNC. (COMEC_Exec_2023_09_G)

- NOTED: The Chairman thanked Cdr A Loring, BRNC and the conference committee for an excellent programme.
- **ACTION: Future location and timing of conference to be considered at the November Executive meeting.**

11. Any Other Business:

- NOTED: Dr G Matthews-Smith noted an international conference on 2-3 September 2024 at Edinburgh Castle and all are welcome to attend.

12. Dates and Venues of Future Meetings:

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