



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

Executive Committee Meeting

**held on Thursday 22nd February 2024 from 1100hrs to 1345hrs via Microsoft
Teams**

Minute

Present

Mr J S Castle (Chairman); Dr M Vilnay (Vice Chair); Ms C Kinkead; Professor G Matthews-Smith; Professor M Siva-Jothy; Dr F Ruddell; Professor A Haniff; Maj I Stoney; Dr A MacLaren; Gp Capt M Barker; Lt Cdr B McWilliams; Lt Col T Irwin-Parker; Lt Col J Vere-Whiting

In Attendance

Mr J Norris (Secretary)

Apologies

General Sir P Wall (President); Rev Professor J P Taylor (Treasurer); Professor D Dunn; Col J Powell; Col L Brooks; Cdr A Loring RN; Lt Col A Coulson

1. Introductions

- NOTED: The Chair welcomed colleagues and noted COMEC Executive members represent MEC and COMEC not their individual universities.

2. Minutes

- APPROVED: The Minutes of the Executive meeting held on 23rd November 2023 (COMEC_Exec_2024_02_A1)

3. Matters Arising

- CONSIDERED: Matters arising are on the agenda.

4. Chairman's Report

- NOTED: The Chairman noted the significant item to report is the letter from General Wall to the VCDS and this will be covered later in the agenda.

5. Treasurer's Report

- RECEIVED: A written Executive Summary from the Treasurer (COMEC_Exec_2024_02_C):

COMEC Financial Statement 2023-24					
Income and Expenditure Account for 6 months to:					
31-Jan-24		Year 2023-2024	Year 2022-2023	Year 2021-22	Year 2020-21
	Notes	31-Jan-24	31-Jul-23	31-Jul-22	31-Jul-21
		(6 months)	(12 months)	(12 months)	(12 months)
Income					
MEC Subscriptions (paid)	Note 1	3,850	6,300	6,650	6,650
Conference / AGM Delegate fees		17	2,590		
Bank interest			19		1
Total		3,867	8,909	6,650	6,651
Expenditure					
Sep 2022 AGM/Conference		4,085	3,073	852	
Executive Meetings: general costs				148	110
Executive Travel & Subsistence (including to AGM)		3,225	3,182	2,666	555
COMEC Prize		512	541	500	517
Publications / Occasional Papers					280
Web site support		143	372	581	331
Administrator		1,500	3,000	1,500	1,500
Postage and stationery					
Total		9,465	10,168	6,247	3,293
Surplus / Deficit		-5,598	-1,259	403	3,358
Balance Sheet					
31-Jan-24					
Opening Balance		11,757	13,016	12,613	9,255
Surplus / Deficit for period		-5,598	-1,259	403	3,358
Closing Balance		6,159	11,757	13,016	12,613
Represented by:					
Current Account		3,799	4,861	6,784	8,401
Savings Account		2,395	2,377	2,358	2,358
Debtors and prepayments		0	4,679	4,249	1,964
Creditors		-35	-160	-375	-110
Total Net Assets		6,159	11,757	13,016	12,613
Notes from Treasurer:					
Note 1	Paid: Edinburgh, Leeds, Sheffield, Newcastle, London, Aberdeen, Birmingham, Glasgow, Oxford, Queen's, Liverpool				
Note 2	All subscription arrears are now cleared. Seven MECs have still to pay for the current year.				
Comment from Treasurer	The overall reduction in net assets indicated above is largely the result of the very high costs of this year's AGM / Conference (in particular hotel and travel costs for members of the Executive). Note that the Conference costs include the subsidy given to a number of officer cadets to attend. The deficit indicated above will be partially offset by the fact that 7 MECs have still to pay their annual subscription. The overall position is in-line with our long-standing stated objective of reducing our reserve funds.				

6. Reports from the Service Staff Officers

- RECEIVED: An Executive Summary from each of the Service Staff Officers:

- Royal Navy (COMEC_Exec_2024_02_D1)

*Annex C to
BRNC 02_04_01*

Dated 8 Dec 23

UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT ACHIEVEMENTS

Workforce

1. Overall the workforce situation is positive. The additional civilian staff (HEO plus 2 x AOs) at BRNC have settled in well and all have successfully completed their probation. Though the Universities Staff Coxswain (USC) is gapped, we had the short-term use of one of the former URNU Commanding Officers for 3 months until she assumed her new role at RM Tamar in mid-November. All Regional Admin Officer (RAO) posts will be filled for the first time, with the last to be recruited having joined URNU Cambridge on 8 November. The National Training Centre EO joined on 14 August and is settling in well. Two gapped URNU CO positions (Oxford and Bristol) were filled in September and the gapped CO East Midlands position was filled on 7 November. The post of Cox'n URNU Devon is gapped whilst the incumbent completes resettlement; a replacement has been recruited and joins on 4 Jan 24. The long-awaited URNU Chief of Staff (COS) has now joined URNU HQ. With the Drummond Division Staff Officer (DDSO) (North) in post for 7 months, discussions are ongoing to assign a DDSO (South) by the beginning of next academic year, these posts becoming available as the Defence Technical Undergraduate Scheme (DTUS) closes. A third post was previously approved and discussions are ongoing about how best to use this PID as it is not required by the Universities Department.

Council of Military Education Committees (COMEC)

2. The COMEC annual conference and dinner was held at BRNC during the first week of the Autumn Term. Despite somewhat limited numbers attending from the MECs, high quality speakers including Mr John Ridge (Director Innovation), Brigadier Jamie Roylance RM (Navy Command Chief Technology Officer) and Commodore Steve Prest (former Navy Command Acting Director Acquisition), plus the welcome return of Professor Geoff Till as the after-dinner speaker, helped ensure that the event was a great success for those that made the effort. For many of the Armed Forces attendees, whether University Service Unit (USU) cadets, their senior leadership or from the Centre, it was an excellent opportunity to showcase the College, and the URNU cadets attending acquitted themselves extremely well.

University Royal Naval Units Headquarters

3. This term has so far seen visits by Cdr U to 4 Units: East Midlands, Birmingham, Solent and London, plus a further visit to URNU Bristol following the recent transfer of HMS FLYING FOX to RMR Bristol and the arrival of a new CO RMR. COS has conducted advisory visits to the Northern England units including regular returns to URNU Liverpool where the CO is absent on shared parental leave. On the visit to URNU East Midlands, Lt Cdr Adam Beasley was presented with his valedictory certificate for 12 years' service; he is seamlessly transferring to the RNR, being assigned to HMS SHERWOOD. Lt Cdr Youngson (bronze certificate) had a lower key presentation at her request. Her transfer to the RNR is delayed pending a medical intervention. 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. Unfortunately, ongoing confusion with

precisely what the Control Total for the URNU Budget actually comprises compared with approved costings are an additional challenge. She has now taken on the additional duties of Authorised Demanding Officer (ADO) for Motor Transport and as the Low Value Purchasing (LVP) / electronic Procurement Card (ePC) manager. These are a significant part of her duties which she has taken on from the USC who is currently on an Operational Tour in Bahrain until April 2024. She will retain these responsibilities following his return in April 2024. Delays previously encountered gaining Security Vetting sponsor accounts for Coxswains have now been resolved. Long standing problems with the Capita medical process appear to be improving significantly, and the URNUs now look like being accepted into the Royal Navy's New Recruitment Process (NRP) medical process in due course, the original plan for this to happen by the end of the year now being deemed unachievable. This has the potential significantly to improve outcomes for individuals.

University Royal Naval Units

4. The Autumn term is traditionally dominated by the annual recruiting round which, despite various blockers put in place by some of the Student Unions, specifically Bristol but also Cambridge and Liverpool, has been particularly successful. Though not quite all URNUs are at full strength, approved over-recruiting in others means that at 851 cadets we are close to our bearing of 867 (51 per unit) not counting affiliated SUs. For the first time, recruiting has extended to Gibraltar with the first University of Gibraltar students joining URNU Virtual. This term has also seen the first and very successful Training Officers' Confirmation Course (TOCC) following considerable work to develop and roll out a revised pathway for the URNU Training Cadre, which comprises mainly Training Officers (TOs) but a small number of former Senior Ratings and Warrant Officers. On completion of the TOCC, 12 TOs were promoted to Lt (URNU). The approval of an RN Workplace Trainer (RNWT) competency plus the introduction of the TOCC will significantly decrease the burden on TOs to take time out to attend RN and RNR courses to progress to Lt (URNU) whilst leaving the option open for those who wish, for example, to complete the Defence Trainers' Course (DTc). The URNU currently has 128 Training Cadre against a maximum of 136 (8 per URNU) and recruiting is buoyant.

5. Activities. Over the Summer Leave period the URNUs were busy supporting the Dartmouth Royal Regatta with both TOs and Officer Cadets (OCs) helping out in many areas, and through OCs assisting at the CCF Summer Camp. This year we will be looking to support additional CCF activities nationally as the URNU support at the BRNC event was much appreciated by SO1 CCF and enjoyed by the URNU OCs who helped out. Since completing the recruiting round, the Main Effort for the regions has been to complete New Entry Weekends of which all have now taken place at HMS RALEIGH (Wales and Western England), MOD Worthy Down (London and Eastern England), HMS CALEDONIA (Scotland and Northern Ireland), HMS CALLIOPE (Northern England – North Eastern units) and University Barracks, Manchester (Northern England – North Western units). The CO of URNU Oxford organised the First Sea Lord's annual Hudson Dinner which was held this year at the Ashmolean Museum with Cdr U representing the Captain, and a number of URNU Oxford TOs and

cadets assisting with the hosting. Other activities included CLM weekends, sea time for a limited number of cadets and their TOs, always fewer days in this term than others, sports and Adventurous Training. At the Maritime Reserve (MR) sailing competition the Holt Cup, URNU teams dominated, winning the overall event. Looking ahead to the Christmas leave period, a number of URNU cadets, TOs and permanent staff will be taking part in the RNWSA annual Snowsports Festival.

6. *Representational Events. URNU personnel attended Remembrance ceremonies around the country, often alongside their collocated MR units or USUs, on behalf of the Naval Regional Commanders (NRCs), at the request of individual MECs or in support of affiliates or other authorities. At both London (2 Nov) and Manchester (9 Nov) Poppy Days the URNU were out in force in support of the NRCs. Trafalgar or Taranto Night dinners were held at most units, sometimes even a Trafanto Night, and often with affiliates in attendance or as a joint activity with collocated MR units. Many units are now preparing for their Christmas Balls, social events playing a big part in unit life and a useful preparation for life in the Service for those who subsequently join.*

7. *Honorary Officers. At the time of writing, letters have been drafted for signature by NRC (London and Eastern England) to send out to a total of 20 Honorary Officers seeking to form an affiliation between them and either individual units, or possibly in a more regional or national role. This is building on work already done with Hon Capt Simone Roche and the Northern England units, especially Liverpool, Hon Capt Dr Paul Little in Glasgow, and Hon Capt Prof Alastair Adair in Belfast. Hopefully, a significant number will accept the invitation and mutually beneficial affiliations can be developed.*

Sponsored Undergraduates Office

8. *Now fully complemented with the exception of the second of 2 Lieutenants being transferred from DTUS, the SU office has been very busy administering its current responsibilities and increasingly becoming the go-to organisation for all things related to University finance. There remains an ongoing problem persuading external authorities, some within Navy Command in particular, that the Sponsored Undergraduates are an entirely different cohort from the URNU OCs, despite all of them being affiliated to an URNU. This is most obvious in the field of Finance where there is an entirely separate URNU budget but applies across areas such as Sport and Adventurous Training (AT) where numerous inconsistencies in Policy have been identified and are being addressed. DTUS, legacy Naval Bursars and Defence STEM Undergraduate Scheme (DSUS) OCs all have different eligibilities yet all sit on List 7 of the RNR for administrative purposes (as do URNU personnel). Attempting to update policy is an ongoing challenge.*

9. *Recruiting. Despite having been assured that the SU Office would receive full details of all new joiners for the various sponsorship schemes by 1 Sep 23, this did not occur. Notwithstanding DSUS having 35 places to be filled, only 13 joined the scheme this year, bringing numbers up to a total of 28 (against a target of 70). An ongoing recruiting drive from within the URNUs should drive numbers up in the near future along with wider Recruit and Attract efforts. Agreement has also been gained from the*

Head of the Workforce Planning Team to offer DSUS benefits for 4 or even 5 years. This is to widen the attraction of the scheme to high quality candidates already committed to an integrated master's degree. Numbers on the sixth form scholarship scheme which the SU Office administers on behalf of Captain (R&A) are exceptionally low (at 3 scholars only) but indications are that this might slowly now be moving in the right direction.

10. UPO Support. The SU Office has struggled to onboard both the OCs joining DSUS, and the Surg Sub Lts accepted on to the Medical and Dental Officers cadetship scheme. BRNC's SUs are pre-Phase 1 (or Phase 0) trainees and, owing to poor scoping of the requirement, are excluded from the Hestia contract whereby UPO support is provided to BRNC and HMS RALEIGH. It is worth pointing out that, although DSUS is a new scheme, SUs have been administered by BRNC since before 1980 at the very latest. Though a Request for Contract Amendment (RCA) has been raised and submitted, it is currently mired somewhere within the DIO with no indication when it is likely to come into force. This has left the SU Office to function as its own UPO, leaving RN Sponsored Undergraduates as the only people in the Royal Navy without appropriate UPO support. Though UPO NELSON is providing valuable assistance once they have been onboarded, the SU Office Admin Officers¹ are having to do the onboarding themselves as Navy-wide the expertise now only lies in the new-entry training establishments. UPO CTC has provide invaluable advice but the actions have to be completed in-house, and we are now dealing with at least one Service Complaint as a consequence of none of the Medics and Dentists being paid at the end of their first month in service.

11. SU Finance. There have been positive movements at last in the area of SU finance. Having finally disentangled the university fees for the Medical and Dental cadets from the URNU budget (G6C) at last, all costs for supporting Sponsored Undergraduates, Sixth Form Scholars and Foundation Year Doctors and Dentists now fall to G47 (Captain (R&A)). A massive increase in the Sponsored Undergraduate Staff Officer (SUSO)'s ePC card to £1,000,000 per month with a maximum single transaction limit of £200,000 has provided a means by which many of the SU university fees can be paid. Those universities that do not accept ePC are being paid using CP&F Variant 3. Neither of these methods are ideal and, having decided 2 years' ago to close down the 'Bills Direct' facility, the Centre is still seeking a compliant method of paying university fees across Defence, but is yet to come up with a better solution. University fees due to Portsmouth University for the UY (Engineers) (UY(E)) and University Graduate Apprenticeship Scheme (UGAS) students who are, in part, administered by Thunderer Squadron, one of 4 DTUS squadrons, are now being paid through the SU Office owing to the withdrawal of Bills Direct. Future administrative arrangements for UY(E) and UGAS are likely to fall to the SU Office with Welfare and Duty of Care (WDoC) going to the URNU through the CO, URNU Solent, once DTUS closes in Sep 24. Transfer of UY(E) and UGAS, in part at least, to the Universities Department is a subject to a separate workstream.

¹ One E1 Civil Servant plus one Team Fisher contractor.

12. *University Cadet Entry (UCE). Now in its third year of operation since being reintroduced for the Sep 21 entry to BRNC, only 3 out of the 5 available UCE places have been filled this year. An Engineering Technician (WE) undergoing her Phase 2 courses at HMS COLLINGWOOD has been identified as suitable for the UCE scheme as an Upper Yardman but is currently medically downgraded. A business case is currently in production to secure funding to deliver a programme to the UCEs during their time at University over and above that which can be delivered through the URNUs to which they are affiliated. Historically UCEs have taken part in external training and other activities over the long summer vacation which is at the core of this initiative to replace current more ad hoc arrangements. This year, in company with a Medical Cadet, one of the original cohort of UCEs joined the Japanese Maritime Self Defence Force (JMSDF) on a leg of its summer cruise from San Diego to Hawaii. Numbers will always be small and unlikely to exceed 20 at any one time even when FOC is achieved (5 UCEs at BRNC / post BRNC training, and 15 at University).*

b. Army (COMEC_Exec_2024_02_D2)

G3/COMEC SITREP/RMAS/FEB24

08 Feb 24

COMEC Secretary

University Officers' Training Corps – COMEC Executive – February Update

1. **Deputy Commandant RMAS (UOTC) overview.** *The end of the autumn term and spring term has focused on the delivery of what training units can achieve to maintain the ATTRACT effect, under In Year Savings Measures (IYSM). Thankfully FY24/25 looks more positive with AT and BFS recommencing in time for the summer ADXs. At a staff level, attention now turns to the delivery of Project IRONSIDE, the Army's project to optimise the firm base and release military assets back to the Field Army where they are needed to deploy. This is likely to see some rapid and lasting changes to the UOTC over the next year.*

2. **G1.** *Gaps and trawls continue to impact WF. The new personnel initiatives being implemented are starting to bear some small fruit, but these too have been impacted by IYSM. However, as per routine postings, we do look forward to welcoming new personnel to the UOTC Group as we bid farewell to others. HQ UOTC continues to operate with one of the SO3 DSUS posts trawled and the other currently gapped.*

3. **G5 Recruitment Plans.** *The second post-Christmas intake was successful in attracting and attesting a small number of additional students. Our online efforts with*

TONIC are being maintained as we start early preparation of next year's freshers still in the school space.

4. **G7 Military Training.** *In the summer, several units are looking to deploy to Northern Ireland and others to Scotland, with a continuing aspiration to concentrate our efforts geographically. Other units are rotating round available locations in England, less visited and used by the busy Field Army. Another main effort will be UOTCs loading their successful AOSB candidates to the summer RMAS Commissioning Course Short (CCS), providing 2Lts to both the Army Reserve and UOTCs themselves.*

5. **G7 Overseas Training.** *Conducting an overseas training exercise (OTX) remains a highlight for many OCdts in the UOTC and we continue to strive to provide this ATTRACT activity. Oxford UOTC are scheduled to deploy to Gibraltar on Ex BARBARY WARRIOR, with Yorkshire OTR deploying to the Netherlands in partnership with the Dutch Defensity College. In this partnership YOTR will be expected to deliver key enabling activity, thereby allowing the Dutch students to train on ranges and field exercises, as well as providing the training to their own British students alongside. Any further opportunities will be grasped where possible as funding permissions allow.*

6. **G7 Adventurous Training (AT).** *Approximately half our units conducted winter Alpine AT over the Christmas and New Year period. Units are now identifying the available opportunities into the next FY. The usual numerous UK and overseas AT activities undertaken during the upcoming summer period maybe reduced, but the aspiration to deliver remains, including general multiple AT 'taster' packages as part of ADX. This will be vital to deliver on the offer for the newly recruited cohort and cement the UOTC experience for the Inters and Senior OCdts who were not able to deploy on winter AT. Courses such as the Summer Mountaineering Foundation (SMF) qualification and other expeds will now take place for some, producing the usual spectacular photos and personal experiences which are such a vital part of the ATTRACT every year at Freshers' Fairs.*

7. **G7 Other Training.** *The triumph of the Hacking for Defence (H4MoD) dynamic estimate process, trialled last summer by the UOTCs, has been well recognised. A version of this is now being written into the new RMAS Regular Commissioning Course, currently undergoing its final touches and implementation under Project ADAIR. Although a very successful pilot with the UOTCs, it is as yet unclear whether this can be repeated in the summer again. There is no lack of 'problem' sponsors from UK Defence, but organising and funding the model is not yet confirmed. The ADAIR work will move on from the Regular Commissioning Course later this year to the RMAS CCS, which will then have an impact on the Module A & B that the UOTCs currently deliver. Project IRONSIDE may also have an impact on our training, but the details of this much wider effort are as yet unclear.*

8. **G8 Finance.** *The financial position remains challenging, to say the least, across Defence with increasing pressures. Supporting inflow, AOSB through-flow success,*

along with EtR efforts all remain key outputs of interest for the UOTCs, along with close scrutiny of our budgets including Reserve Service Days (RSDs).

{electronically signed}

T J Irwin-Parker

Lt Col

COS UOTC

- NOTED: The Chairman noted financials and possible savings were a regular concern for the Army and asked if this was an area of focus for the other services. It was noted the other services were less impacted at present.

c. Royal Air Force (COMEC_Exec_2024_02_D3)

20240131 – 6 FTS COMEC Report

8 Feb 24

COMEC EXECUTIVE MEETING 22 FEB 24 – 6 FTS REPORT

Comdt 6 FTS Overview

1. *Student recruitment, attestation and induction has been the focus of the UAS over the last quarter with 6 FTS maintaining the capacity to recruit 1000 students. There have been a very healthy number of applications which should result in a final student population of mid/high 900s once all attestation is complete. A review of the Accelerated Training Pathway (ATP) resulted in a 1* decision to pause the accredited training programme which has afforded Officer Cadets the ability to integrate into Phase 1 training at the start of Module 2. This has given 6 FTS the opportunity to review the ground training syllabus and implement a revised programme.*

2. *The Tutor aircraft fleet continues to be upgraded with a revised navigation and electro-conspicuity aids being added. The expected winter weather, allied to the Christmas Break, has meant reduced flying output over the last quarter although priority tasks have been achieved. Workforce challenges at a few sites remain, although the recruiting of Air Experience Flight pilots to deliver cadet flying and Air Experience Stream sorties is buoyant with a steady stream of quality applicants in evidence. The civil servant staff gapping and recruitment restrictions across Defence continue to impact the delivery of routine output at some UAS. A change in command mid-December saw Gp Capt Matt Barker MA BSc take over as Comdt 6 FTS and OC (19)T Wing post has now been filled.*

UAS Recruiting

3. 2023-24 recruiting period has been successful with 1,117 applications. 507 were selected to target 400 new entrants for the 2023 cohort whilst allowing 20% for attrition through the pre-employment process. 483 medicals have been completed with 287 (59%) Fit, 128 (27%) Temporary Medical Unfit & 68 (14%) Permanently Medical Unfit. Processing applications has run better than before with medicals increasingly available in good time and at a reasonable distance from the student/UAS. TMU cases have remained at some locations with 128 decisions still pending. Using an assumption of 50% attrition from the pending TMU, we anticipate 950 to 960 Officer Cadets by 31 Mar 24.

HQ 6 FTS Careers Office

5. The 6 FTS Virtual Armed Forces Careers' Office (VAFCO) along with the UAS Bursar Scheme remains open until 31 Mar 24. The VAFCO manages applications for all RAF professions, however applications for pilot are amongst the highest with c.200 progressed over recent months². The UAS facilitate their medical cadets through the Medical Selection Board and Officer Selection. To date 10 candidates await officer selection in February and a further 4 have progressed onto medical selection boarding. The UAS Bursar Scheme offers Defence STEM Undergraduate Scheme (DSUS) support those opting for engineering officer, offering them an opportunity to receive an annual bounty and up to £9,000 towards their academic fees. 10 have been provisionally selected for this route.

Force Development and Adventurous Training

6. 6 FTS continues to deliver military training to all UASs covering aspects of first aid, weapon training, security and fieldcraft. Elements of this training have been accredited to the Military Skills Module (MSM) of Phase 1 Officer Training. However, due to resource constraints this formal syllabus will be paused from Mar 24 and an interim programme implemented that will focus on foundational military skills and leadership training. The UAS have conducted a variety of expeditions both within the UK and overseas. These events continue to be a huge part of the attraction and supports retention whilst also nurturing aspects of leadership and personal development. Examples of activities include skiing in locations across Europe, rock climbing in Spain and Malta, mountaineering in Italy, sailing in Croatia, and canoeing in Sweden. The Inspire Adventure Award, supported by the RAF Charitable Trust saw the UASs pitch for financial support to enable expeditions in locations otherwise out of the financial reach. In 2023 this enabled a trekking expedition Greenland and canoeing in Canada. The 2024 award was made to two combine teams, 'team Northwest³' will realise a mountain biking expedition to Vancouver Island in Canada, and 'team Northeast⁴' will conduct a trekking expedition to Patagonia.

Infrastructure

² 20 selected for Phase1 training, 40 passed Officer Aircrew Selection (OASC) and awaiting medicals. 30 awaiting Officer Aircrew Selection in Feb/Mar 24 and 35 still to qualify for OASC attendance.

³ Liverpool UAS and Manchester and Salford UAS.

⁴ Yorkshire UAS and Northumberland UAS.

7. *Birmingham UAS (UBAS) have settled into a more permanent building occupying a former fast jet engineering training facility overlooking the RAF Cosford runway. This offers the Sqn the ability to administer, train, operate and fly from the same facility and is now co-located with Babcock engineers for a truly Whole Force setup. East Midlands UAS (EMUAS) has had to say goodbye to its old Town HQ in Nottingham. The building, owned by the University of Nottingham, required significant repairs to comply with modern building regulations and the prospective bill was not value for money. EMUAS will co-locate with the Army Officer Training Corp (OTC) at its nearby training facility. Work continues to co-locate Bristol UAS (BUAS) with Southampton UAS (SUAS) at MOD Boscombe Down to provide an enduring basing option and to realise efficiencies between the Sqns.*

Light Aircraft Flying Task (LAFT) 2 and Proj TELUM

8. *The LAFT2 contract delivers a broad range of services across 13 sites throughout the UK. The contract supports 6FTS University Student and Air Cadet flying experience and training, plus Army and Royal Navy flying grading through the provision of flying hours, aircraft and engineering support and additional support services. The current contract term ends in Mar 26 and work is ongoing to consider options to maintain current capability and bridge the gap between LAFT2 expiry and the replacement under Project TELUM around 2030/31. This interim period will offer sufficient time to determine the follow-on support contract and the technical solution to meet improved environmental performance in line with HMG, RAF and ASTRA targets. The Grob Tutor continues to serve Defence well as a capable, proven, cost-effective training platform.*

R Capleton

RJ CAPLETON

Sqn Ldr

DCOS 6 FTS

- NOTED: Gp Capt M Barker noted recruitment still underway to achieve mid nine hundred target. Medicals are taking time to complete, and this is unfortunately causing some students to leave. Accelerated training at Initial Officer Training (IOT) is also paused at the moment so cadets are going to IOT at Week 1 rather than Week 7.
 - NOTED: The Chairman asked if the medicals are just for pilots or if this is affecting all branches of the RAF? Gp Capt M Barker noted all cadets are tested to flight standard but there are lots of temporary fails coming through. Capita are the provider for all medicals. Lt Col T Irwin-Parker noted Army are the only service not to use Capita and complete over 1800 medicals per year.
- d. Defence People - (COMEC_Exec_2024_02_D4)
- NOTED: Lt Col J Vere-Whiting noted the MoD are going through a number of changes so there little to update on at this time. Focus at present includes

support for Ukraine, simplifying recruitment process for reserves and addressing retention challenges.

- NOTED: Lt Col J Vere-Whiting noted ACDS priorities include focus on how personnel can flip between reserve and full service, changes of personnel at senior level and governance of reserve forces.
- NOTED: Lt Col J Vere-Whiting noted Lt Col A Coulson was also following up on letter to VCDS from General Wall.

7. COMEC President

- NOTED: As discussed at the previous meeting, the Chairman noted General Wall had drafted a letter to Vice Chief of Defence Staff (VCDS) noting a concerning lack of engagement of the military with COMEC. As agreed the letter was re-drafted highlighting the positives of engaging with COMEC. Professor G Matthews-Smith noted concern the re-draft was not shared with the Executive before it was sent, the Chairman noted this was a personal letter from General Wall and timing meant it could not be delayed further.
- NOTED: The VCDS has responded positively and identifies key stakeholders in Defence (UKSTRATCOM, Defence Academy, ACDS (Reserves and Cadets) and MoD Talent, Skills, Learning and Development (TSLD)) that will link with COMEC and academia. Meeting will be set up in due course.

8. Nominations to the Executive Committee

- NOTED: From Sept 2024, there are four vacancies on the Executive occasioned by the completion of term of office for Mr J Castle, Chairman (eligible for re-election); Dr M Vilnay, Vice-Chair (eligible for re-election); Rev Professor J P Taylor, Treasurer (not eligible for re-election) and Prof M Siva-Jothy, Executive Member (eligible for re-election).
- NOTED: Mr J Norris is stepping down as Secretary from 1st June 2024. Maj I Stoney will take on this role on an interim basis, keeping his current position on the Executive, until a permanent successor is appointed.
- NOTED: The Chairman noted thanks from the COMEC Executive to the Secretary for his service.

9. COMEC Prize:

- RECEIVED: An update from Ms C Kinkead.
- **ACTION: Lt Col T Irwin-Parker asked if students on degrees longer than 3 years can be nominated noting current guidance. Ms C Kinkead noted she would consider and clarify after the meeting.**
- **ACTION: Ms C Kinkead suggested there should be recognition for cadets who achieve 2nd and 3rd place for the COMEC Prize. Following discussion, it was agreed they would receive a certificate and £100 each subject to Treasurer confirming funding was available.**
- NOTED: The Chairman noted if selection criteria are aligned to MEC prize this will make nominations easier for COs and cadets to apply for the COMEC prize. Ms C Kinkead noted COMEC is more prestigious noting it is the best of the best for the UK and this might motivate more nominations.

10. COMEC Constitution & MEC Terms of Reference:

- **ACTION: Rev Professor J P Taylor will bring an update to the May meeting.**
- NOTED: Professor G Matthews-Smith suggested circulating any revisions to MECs before the AGM so they have chance to reflect. The Chairman noted this would be considered at the May meeting.

11. Conference

- NOTED: The COMEC AGM and Conference has been confirmed for 3rd September to 5th September at RAF Cranwell. The conference will include discussion on various themes including Agile Combat Employment (ACE) and a tour of the Battle of Britain Memorial flight. The formal dinner will be held at Petwood Manor.
- NOTED: The Secretary noted thanks to Sqn Ldr R Capleton for organising the conference to date on behalf of the RAF.
- NOTED: A number of speakers were suggested including Mandy Hickson, the first female tornado pilot.

12. Any Other Business:

- **ACTION: The Executive to consider a formation of a working group to see how MECs are financed. The Chairman noted this will be considered at the May meeting when the Treasurer is present.**
- CONSIDERED: The Executive to consider alternative venues for the COMEC Committee meetings. The Chairman noted this has been considered a number of times over the years and generally the conclusion was that London was the best destination for colleagues to travel to. A wide-ranging discussion was had regarding sustainability, different meeting locations (including offers to host), increased virtual meetings and COMEC supporting costs from those travelling further away. The Chairman noted if MECs were struggling to support travel costs (especially those furthest away) the Treasurer had noted previously that the COMEC Executive budget may be able to help on an individual basis. It was suggested a poll and/or further discussion could be had on meeting locations following the AGM.
- NOTED: Dr F Ruddell asked about the status of the new President. The Chairman noted this is linked to discussions with the ACDS noting many senior officers that have retired, and been approached, have already acquired positions in various organisations. Maj I Stoney suggested considering a serving officer noting this would provide a live direct link into the military.
- NOTED: Professor G Matthews-Smith invited colleagues to the 2024 International Conference on Armed Forces in Society at Edinburgh Napier University between 22-28 August and to contact her for booking (including accommodation).
- NOTED: Discussions were had about making the MECs more relevant to universities and cadets. Professor A Haniff noted Edinburgh MEC are inviting cadets to discuss what they want from their MEC. He is also noted the importance of including climate change and net zero in discussions as this was an important issue for cadets. Professor G Matthews-Smith noted she was also

undertaking an evaluation of cadets in Scotland and this could be widened to the rest of the UK. The Chairman noted this could be published as a COMEC Occasional paper. It was suggested the COMEC website could host a page on MEC / cadets' activity although this would incur a cost to set up and would require regular updating.

13. Dates and Venues of Future Meetings:

- CONSIDERED: The dates and venues of future meetings:
 - Thursday 16th May 2024 (ULOTC, London)
 - 3rd – 5th September 2024 AGM & Conference (RAF Cranwell)
 - Thursday 21st November 2024 (ULOTC, London)
 - Thursday 20th February 2024 (Virtual Microsoft Teams Meeting)