Wx Sec 2130

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18 Sep 23

**WESSEX RESERVE FORCES’ AND CADETS’ ASSOCIATION**

**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2023**

**HELD AT RNAS YEOVILTON, YEOVIL AND HOSTED ON ZOOM**

**ON THURSDAY 14th SEPTEMBER 2023**

**MINUTES**

**Present**

Mr R Deeks DL (representing President) President

Mr A Campbell Incoming President

Colonel L C A Ranson TD Chair

Mrs P Golding OBE Vice-President

Colonel E T Bolitho OBE Vice-President

Mr D Fursdon Vice-President

Mr A Saddiq Vice-President

Colonel J Thompson TD DL Chair City & County of Bristol

Commander PJ Burne RD RNR Chair Devon

Maj R Wharton TD\*\* Chair Gloucestershire

Colonel M Wills MBE Chair Wiltshire

Brigadier N C Beacom QVRM TD Chair Somerset

Mr A Mann BSc MRICS Chair Estates Committee

Mr P Wright FCIB Chair Finance Committee

Colonel P G Mitchell MSc CEng MRAeS ae psc+ Chair Cadets Committee

Major General W J O’Leary QVRM TD DL Chair Engagement Committee

Mr S Whitbourn CFIPD FCIM FILM MRUSIDSS Chair REEG

Colonel P A Jobbins OBE GM RD\* Vice Chair Marine

Colonel G A McDade Commander HQSW

**In Attendance**

Brigadier S P Hodder and 21 members of the Association Executive and 81 members of the Association in person and online.

**Keynote Speakers**

Mr Jason Day & Mr Luke Sperry Value for Money/Future Defence Infrastructure Strategy Presentation

Cdr Ian Allen RN (SO1 REO) Update on the RFCA-Managed Estate

 Optimisation (REO) Programme

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| **ITEM** | **DETAIL** |
| (a) | (b) |
| 1 | **PRESIDENT’S OPENING REMARKS**Mr Roger Deeks representing the President, Mr Gillespie, welcomed everyone to the AGM and thanked them for attending. It has been a great privilege for Gloucestershire to hold the Presidency for Wessex RFCA through a year that has seen excellent progress on strategic matters and the processes successfully completed for new leadership in the posts of Chair and Chief Executive. In keeping with all aspects of the Gloucestershire Lieutenancy, which puts the institution before the individual, our approach was to form a Presidential Group comprising myself, our Vice Lord-Lieutenant, three Deputy Lieutenants and the 2022-23 High Sheriff.  I am immensely grateful to them for their commitment and expertise which has enabled us to give appropriate guidance and support.There have been a great many achievements this year, many of which are reported in this excellent Annual Report produced by the team.  I commend this to you and know that the Chair, Lance Ranson, will highlight the key successes in his Report at the AGM.The RFCA is going through a great deal of change at present and this is keeping everyone very busy.  Since the Sullivan Report was published in early 2020, the Council of RFCAs and the regional RFCAs have been working through a long list of recommendations to prepare the organisation for a future as a Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB).  Many are now complete and we await the final, but most important, piece of the jig-saw which is the primary legislation required to actually establish the NDPB.  Unfortunately, this is unlikely to be in place until 2026 or later, but Wessex RFCA will be well prepared.In the meantime, the Value for Money Review, currently making its way through the MOD and up to Ministers for approval, may bring a major change to the way in which the RFCAs provide and maintain the Volunteer Estate.  We look forward to hearing more about this and other change programmes at a series of update presentations after the formal business of the AGM. One of the most welcome presidential duties is to host the President’s Dinner, which this year was held in May at Tortworth Court near Wootton-under-Edge.  This wonderful event provides a rare opportunity for the RFCA to bring together all of the commanders of Reserve units in the region with the Association Board members and some of the staff.  It is a valuable networking forum where much can be achieved in the convivial surroundings of a formal dinner.  As my representatives, Vice Lord-Lieutenant Roger Deeks and Deputy Lieutenant Susie Hewson thoroughly enjoyed the evening with those who attended and were pleased to congratulate them on their achievements.I have been delighted that my Lord-Lieutenant’s Cadets have been able to accompany and support me and Roger Deeks at several important events.  These included several Royal Visits, most notably the Cathedral Service to Commemorate the Coronation, and the St George's Day Service.  On each occasion they represented their cadet units to the highest possible standard and we wish them well as they continue the development of their cadet careers.  We were also delighted to see that Lord-Lieutenant's Cadets from the region attended the Duke of Edinburgh Gold Award event at Buckingham Palace. Finally, I wish to say thank you and farewell to Lance Ranson and Steve Hodder who are leaving their current roles as Chair and Chief Executive in September.  They have been a great team in recent years.  Members of our Presidential Group were involved in the selection of both of their successors.  We have been fortunate to select and nominate an experienced Reservist in Robert Wharton to stand for election as Association Chair at the AGM.  After a short gap, Steve will be replaced by Brigadier (Retd) Neville Holmes who will arrive as Chief Executive in January 2024.  Brigadier Nev is a former commanding officer of 6 RIFLES and was also Commander South West for two years before being promoted into the Deputy Commander Cadets role at HQ Regional Command.  He brings a great deal of relevant experience and knowledge to all aspects of our role and we look forward to working with him.We are most grateful to volunteer members for their valued support.  Thanks also to the professional team for their skill, hard work and achievements.  Under new leadership, we wish all those who serve the Wessex RFCA continued and rewarding success. |
| 2 | **APOLOGIES**Apologies were received from 91 members who were unable to attend. |
| 3 | **MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING**The Minutes of the Meeting held on Thursday 8th September 2022 were distributed prior to the meeting. We seek approval that these represent a true record of proceedings.**Proposer: Colonel O J H Chamberlain QVRM TD\* DL****Seconder: Colonel G A McDade****Motion carried.****The Chair invited the President to sign the Minutes.****Matters Arising**There are no matters arising from last year’s AGM minutes. |
| 4 | **APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS**A list of new Members, and the various changes that have occurred, are contained in the AGM Booklet.In accordance with Clause 5 of the Scheme for the Association, it is necessary for these appointments to be approved en bloc before the election of the Chair and Vice-Chairs/County Chairs to allow the new members the right to vote.**Proposer: Colonel P G Mitchell****Seconder: Colonel D H R Stephenson CBE****Motion carried.**The Chair welcomed the new Members and thanked them warmly for volunteering their services or agreeing to be representatives of their respective authorities. He stressed how much their support is valued including when required, their help and advice.All members were elected en-bloc. |
| 5 | **ELECTION OF THE CHAIR**The President explained, that in accordance with Clause 10 of the Scheme for the Association, the Chair had to be elected or re-elected each year. Mr Robert Wharton has agreed to be Chair. **Proposer: Colonel J L Thompson TD DL PhD****Seconder: Wing Commander S R Richards RAF (Retd)****Motion carried** Lance Ranson was thanked for his sterling service as Chair over the last five years. |
| 6 | **ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRS AND COUNTY CHAIRS**The Chair reminded Members that Vice-Chairs and County Chairs had to be elected or re-elected every year. All Vice-Chairs and County Chairs, bar two, have expressed a wish to be re-elected. There are nominations for a new County Chair Gloucestershire and Vice Chair Marine. A complete list of Vice-Chairs and County Chairs has been distributed in the AGM booklet. Propose that all Vice-Chairs/County Chairs are elected or re-elected together, en bloc.**Proposer: Colonel O J H Chamberlain QVRM TD\* DL****Seconder: Colonel B S Haggerty TD LLB****Motion carried.**The Chairman thanked all the Vice-Chairs and County Chairs for their continued service and sound advice throughout the year. He thanked both Robert Wharton and Paul Jobbins for their sterling service as County Chair for Gloucestershire and Vice Chair Marine respectively over many years. |
| 7 | **EMPOWERMENT OF THE ASSOCIATION BOARD** The Scheme of Association for Wessex RFCA requires that the Association Board must be given express authority to exercise the Association’s statutory powers and duties without prior reference to the membership. Propose the Motion that the Board be authorised to:Exercise the powers conferred, and the duties imposed on the Association by the Reserve Forces Act 1996, as amended, and the Regulations made thereunder, and to deliver the requirements set by Service Level Agreements entered into by the Council of RFCAs, in support of the Services, without prior reference to the Association, save that this delegation does not extend to any decision relating to the future existence, independence or autonomy of the Association.**Proposer: Colonel D H R Stephenson CBE****Seconder: Colonel C Fletcher-Wood OBE BA****Motion carried.**The Chair thanked the membership for their vote of confidence in the Board and assured them that the Board will continue to govern the Association with due diligence under the leadership of the new Chair. |
| 8 | **CHAIR’S REPORT**The Chair welcomed everyone who had attended and those taking part online. He highlighted that his written report was in the AGM main report to which members had access. He opened by thanking the Chief Executive for his 8 years service. This will be my final Annual Report after five years as your Chairman. Wessex RFCA has offered remarkable support to our Reserve and Cadet units through a period of unprecedented change and unexpected challenges.  On your behalf I have to say how very grateful I am to Steve Hodder and the Mount House and county staff for their hard work and professionalism throughout this time. At all levels the staff have built extremely close links and cooperation with our Service customers with excellent results. Their achievements are clear on every page of this Report and, supported by our volunteers, we can all be extremely proud of our 115-year-old Association!When Richard Haldane formed our Association in 1908 as part of his widespread reforms to Defence, he would no doubt have been keen for us to remain as agile, modern and relevant as possible in order for us to support our Reserves and Cadets. The implemented recommendations of the recent Sullivan Review have enabled us to achieve this and continue to offer real value for money for our annual budget. While the 'pause' on the Government’s legislation means that we are likely to remain as an independent regional association for the time being, on policy matters the 13 RFCAs are operating far more as a single national entity. The Chair went on to highlight the following points:1. **Estates.** You can see in this Report the large number of Reserve and Cadet buildings that our busy Estates team are responsible for.  You will be aware that routine maintenance and regulatory compliance of the estate is currently being reviewed and is very likely to be handed over to a single contractor in the forthcoming year. Our team will continue to be closely involved in the management of these important tasks and will want to ensure that these are maintained to the highest possible standard. Our team will also continue to be closely involved in the project management of a number of developments across the region to ensure that our Reservists and Cadets have the most modern training facilities we can provide. We have also been involved in ensuring that the locations of our units are optimised for the requirements of our Service customers.
2. **Reserves and Recruiting**. The 'package' designed to attract, recruit and retain Reserves continues to evolve as societal changes and individual attitudes mean that units have to offer unique and worthwhile returns in exchange for their Reservists' spare time. It is good to note that the opportunities open for reservists to train, deploy on overseas operations and to take part in sport and adventurous training are better than ever. Many units are doing a fantastic job of highlighting the exciting roles they offer on social media and a major campaign to support recruiting will be launched shortly. However, as the 'champion' of Reserves of all three Services, it is concerning to note the 'centralisation' of the recruiting and induction of both Reserves and Regulars has not worked well and has resulted in net outflows for a number of years. It is very much hoped that this situation can be reversed and Wessex RFCA will do everything that it can to help achieve this.
3. **Engagement.** The Armed Forces Covenant (AFC) continues to be a huge success nationally and is particularly relevant in the Wessex region as we have some of the highest numbers of Regulars, Reservists, Cadets and Veterans in the country. As you can see in this Report, many of our employers and organisations across the region have joined the Employer Recognition Scheme, with more joining on an almost daily basis. Our highly effective Engagement team have been a key element in this success and we need to continue to keep the firms engaged with Defence and encourage closer cooperation between them. As people increasingly turn to the digital media rather than print for their information and entertainment, our media communications are very proactive and engaging with a real focus on attracting potential recruits to learn more about our military units. Do follow us! Another important aspect of the AFC is support for Veterans. While the majority of Veterans go on to enjoy fulfilling civilian careers, there are some who for a variety of reasons find life to be to be rather more challenging. We all have a key part to play in identifying these Veterans in need and ensuring that the Services’ charitable sector is fully supporting them.
4. **Cadets and Youth.** The cadet movement offers a fantastic opportunity for our youth to develop themselves in a fun, challenging, inclusive and safe environment. Our cadet units achieve so much and as the Commander HQSW, Colonel Gary McDade, said on his recent visit to Devon ACF 'Visiting a Cadet unit recharges my batteries!'. Our Professional Support Staff (PSS) in the seven county ACFs work closely with the CFAVs to enable them to focus on training and provide a fantastic Cadet Experience for their Cadets. I am very grateful to the PSS for their hard work and, as ever, I am full of admiration of the CFAVs across all the community Cadet units and CCFs for their dedication and professionalism.  The active leadership and support of our seven Lord-Lieutenants adds so much value to the work of Wessex RFCA and I am most grateful to Mr Edward Gillespie OBE for his role as our President for the last year. I also wish to thank all of Wessex RFCA's volunteers and in particular the Board and Committee members whose expertise and dedication are so invaluable. It has been a pleasure working with you all and I wish you all the very best for the future.

Our Lord-Lieutenants continue to play a very important role in our activities, particularly in helping us to engage with our communities, ably supported by their Lord-Lieutenant’s Cadets.  I am particularly grateful to Mr Edward Gillespie, the Lord-Lieutenant for Gloucestershire, for his leadership in his second term as our RFCA President and for the huge support he gives to the whole Defence community in Gloucestershire and across Wessex.  Can I also thank all volunteer Members for your input and involvement. We are living through more challenging and interesting times than many of us would like, but I know that you can all be relied upon to continue to help Defence engage with our communities and I am extremely grateful for everything you are doing.  |
| 9 | **SERVICE AND CADETS REPORTS**The Chair highlighted that the Service and Cadet Reports were included in the annual report. Members were invited to ask any questions. There were no questions. |
| 10 | **MEMBERS’ BUSINESS**The Chair introduced the Members’ Business Forum, and outlined that 3 questions have been pre-submitted. These questions were:**Major Vaughan Magor:** What has been the impact of change on Reserve units in the region? What challenges have been overcome?This question was framed around those reserve units who have had to change roles and caps badges. The Chief Executive advised that he was not aware of any major issues and most of the units were happy to change. The majority of cap badges are represented in the South West and there is a wide choice for reservists in our region.**Colonel Rex Stephenson:** What is the plan for Association Membership under the new NDPB structure?The Chief Executive advised that the formation of the NDPB would not take place before 2026. Primary legislation is required. Following the Sullivan Review the RFCAs have made changes and are already operating as an NDPB in most areas. The Chief Executive will cover this further in his presentation.**Brigadier John Hemsley:** We no longer have County meetings which was the main way in which we were able to maintain contact with the various military organisations in the County - most especially ACF and CCF units -   as well as keeping up with what was happening locally in the RFCA. RFCA County members used to have a close personal relationship with cadet forces, fostered at county meetings where it was possible to discuss local and low-level issues with unit and sub-unit commanders.   Now this opportunity for regular personal contact is no longer available, we do not get invited to visit training evenings or other activities, such as annual camp, *etc*.  This matter of liaison has been raised before with a view to improving communication; however, no real improvement has happened?At county level if members wish to be more involved with events and visits they should contact the Joint Services Cadet Committee Chairs, these Committees bring all the cadet units together to share activities and best practice, the County Chairs attend these meetings. It is the Commandants who invite guests to ACF Camps and the Chief Executive asked the Commandants to consider inviting Association members. The face to face Members Briefings are no longer taking place due to the costs and a lack of attendance at some of the briefings. The Board decided not to hold any further individual County Briefing but to use other formats. We have held Members Forums online which have been successful events in a format which has accommodated the whole membership and included guest speakers. The Engagement team have expanded the information they communicate to the membership. The Head of Communications said she would welcome members’ ideas on how we can better communicate with them.Further questions asked by members were:**Colonel John Nash:** Do we know yet which buildings on the RFCA Estate are affected by the potential dangerous concrete issue?Peter Wallace, Director Volunteer Estate Council of RFCAs advised that this issue is not new and an alert was first given in Jan 19 and followed up with a second alert in Jan 23. The RFCAs have been instructed to conduct Initial Assessments and the Surveys are ongoing and should be complete by Dec 23. DIO sits on the Cabinet Office Committee and are directly engaged with the lead technical experts.**Colonel Britt Haggerty:** What is the RFCA’s policy for engagement with cadet units. Commandants used to be invited to the President’s Dinner which was extremely useful?The Chief Executive thanked her for recognising the value of the President’s Dinner and advised that it is Reserve and Board members focused and is a useful networking opportunity. It was a conscious decision that the cadet community is not invited due to the large number of people involved. We may consider a different format in the future but cadet activity tends to take place at county level and the Joint Service Cadet Committees are the best forum. He agreed that cadet involvement at the recent RWxY Open Day was useful and asked units to consider inviting cadets to similar events and that the RFCA can assist with invitations and publicising these events.  |
| 11 | **HANDOVER OF PRESIDENT**The Chair thanked the President for his support and leadership during his tenure and explained that the Presidency now moves to the Lord Lieutenant of Dorset, Mr Angus Campbell. Mr Campbell said that he was honoured to be taking over the Presidency and was looking forward to the year ahead. |
| 12 | **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**It was outlined that it had been agreed that the future AGM would take place on Thursday 12th September 2024. |

**BRIGADIER N R HOLMES MBE**  **MR A CAMPBELL**

Chief Executive President

Wessex Reserve Forces’ and Cadets’ Wessex Reserve Forces’ and Cadets’

Association Association

Dated: Dated:

Annexes:

1. List of Vice-Chairs and County Chairs.

Distribution:

Chair

Association Board

All Association members

 Annex A to

Wx Sec 2130

Dated 18 Sep 23

**LIST OF VICE-CHAIR AND COUNTY CHAIRS**

**CHAIR FOR ELECTION**

Mr Robert Wharton Chair

**VICE-CHAIRS FOR ELECTION**

Major Chris Kedward RMR Vice-Chair Marine

**VICE-CHAIRS FOR RE-ELECTION**

Captain Sue Jameson RD RNR Vice-Chair Navy

Air Commodore John Bessell RAF Vice-Chair Air

**COUNTY CHAIRS FOR ELECTION**

Lieutenant Colonel Jon Penhale Chair Gloucestershire

**COUNTY CHAIRS FOR RE-ELECTION**

Colonel Jane Thompson TD DL Chair City & County of Bristol

Air Commodore John Bessell RAF Chair Cornwall

Commander Jane Allen RD Chair Devon

Brigadier Donald Wilson CBE Chair Dorset

Brigadier Nigel Beacom QVRM TD Chair Somerset

Colonel Martyn Wills MBE Chair Wiltshire