

# The Royal Engineers Association

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Patron: HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN



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See Distribution

24 August 2021

## MINUTES OF THE 135<sup>th</sup> MEETING OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE OF THE ROYAL ENGINEERS ASSOCIATION, HELD ON ZOOM ON THURSDAY 22<sup>nd</sup> JULY 2021

### PRESENT

Mr Kenneth Kirk	REA CEO – Chairman
Col M Quare MBE ADC	Corps Colonel
Lt Col M Heffer RE TD	Reserve Officer
Maj I Higginbotham	HQ RE
WO2 P Hernon	62 Wks Gp RE
WO2 (QMSI) D Price	1 RSME Regt
Lt Col (Retd) P Taylor	Airborne Engineers Branch
Mr J Allerhead BEM	London Group
Mr S Wilson	North West Group
Mr M Forder	Eastern Group
Mr K Street	South Midlands Group
Mr R Tootle	Central Scotland Group
Mr D Bardsley	South East Group
Mr S Luscombe	North Midlands Group
Capt D Bell	South Wales Group
Mr D Ormsby	East Anglia Group

### IN ATTENDANCE

Maj (Retd) I Sidebottom	Corps Treasurer
Maj (Retd) IL George	Operations Manager and Secretary
Mr E Hargreaves	Trustee

### APOLOGIES

WO1 (RSM) S Eardley	1 RSME Regt
WO1 (RSM) P Westoby	3 RSME Regt
WO1 (RSM) M Martin	170 (Infra Sp) Engr Gp
Mr D Pinder	Central Southern Group

1. The CEO opened the meeting and welcomed those present.

2. The CEO noted that apologies had been received from those listed above. The CEO mentioned that as this is a Zoom meeting, some members are dropping in and out with connection issues; we have to accept this and cannot influence issues with broadband connections.

3. The CEO then briefed the committee on the purpose of the Management Committee to discuss policy and make recommendation to the Trustees that will affect how the REA operates. All the committee members then gave a brief introduction.

#### **ITEM 1 - TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE 134<sup>th</sup> MEETING**

4. The Committee accepted that the minutes of the 134<sup>th</sup> Meeting were a true record of the proceedings. The Chairman signed the minutes.

**Proposed by:** Mr D Bardsley

**Seconded:** Mr J Allerhead BEM

**Carried**

#### **ITEM 2 - MATTERS ARISING FROM THE 134<sup>th</sup> MEETING**

5. No matter arising from the previous meeting.

#### **ITEM 3 – TO NOTE THE REPORT OF THE BENEVOLENCE COMMITTEE**

6. The Operations Manager presented the Benevolence Report for the 6 month period ending 30 June 2021 and discussed the following areas:

- The unaudited amount spent on benevolence cases for the period 1 Jan – 30 Jun 2021 was £93,880.72, which is £44,495.280 less than the same period in 2020. The reduction in cases is down to caseworkers not able to visit clients, builders not able to give quotes and councils not operating properly.
- There have been 188 cases submitted to the Association and 33 declined cases during the period 1 Jan – 30 June 2021. The majority of the 188 cases in this period are new cases. Support has been in the UK and worldwide with clients in Germany, Singapore, Malta, France, Zimbabwe, Malaysia, Spain and Lanzarote.
- The Operations Manager also discussed that the Benevolence team is now back in the office a few days a week and working from home the rest of the time. The new Case Management System (Mosaic) is now up and running and there has been some teething problems but the REA staff that use it are now trained and competent.
- The Operations Manager discussed that all Branches should now be aware that there is a process for Benevolence assistance which requires a SSAFA or TRBL caseworker as the first port of call. Some members may not agree with this but the procedures need to be followed and it is not helpful when HQ REA is given a hard time on Facebook for doing the right thing.
- The CEO also wanted to add that the benevolence system is quick and responsive which enables more support to access funds from ABF, TRBL and other charities. This is the correct way with much more support and long-term assistance. If there are issues with caseworkers then the REA can deal with this.

7. The report is at Annex A.

#### **ITEM 4 - TO NOTE THE CORPS COLONEL'S REPORT ON THE CORPS**

8. The Corps Colonel gave the report that went to the Chief Royals Board on the 21 June 2021. The Corps Colonel was able to update the Committee on Operations, Manning, Reserve Forces and the requirement to attract and engage with cadets. He also discussed that the recruits nowadays are

a different generation but still a good quality. He also spoke about the support of the REA to the serving soldier, which cannot be faulted.

9. The report is at Annex B.

#### **ITEM 5 – TO NOTE THE REPORT OF THE RECRUITING COMMITTEE**

10. The CEO gave a brief on the Recruiting Committee and the following points were discussed:

- The CEO discussed that the strategy is very active and Garry O’Shea and Kevin Street are assisting with the development of technology so HQ REA can be connected with everyone and able to support members and families.
- Kevin Street asked about guides for Group Directors, Deputy Group Directors, etc. The CEO explained that guides for the Groups and Benevolence are being produced and that he may need support from committee members to assist with these.

**Action: HQ REA** will ensure the points raised above are actioned.

#### **ITEM 6 – BADGE OF MERIT**

11. The Operation Manager discussed the procedure for the Badge of Merit and that all information was in the July HQ Circular. Julia Ferguson is the person in HQ REA to contact and Branches must liaise with the Group Director to ensure that the paperwork is with HQ REA by the 1 December 2021. The Deputy Group Director is a good point of contact if the Group Director is new. The CEO mentioned that the word count is low as the write up must be straight to the point.

12. The CEO discussed the Chief Royals Commendation which is twice a year but the REA will only put someone forward for the New Year’s award. This award is for REA members who have carried our exceptional work. The necessary paperwork will be available soon.

**Action: HQ REA** will ensure the points raised above are actioned.

#### **ITEM 7 – CORPS MEMORIAL WEEKEND AND 2021 & 2022 EVENTS**

13. The Corps Memorial weekend and events for 2020 and 2021 were discussed.

- WO2 (QMSI) Daz Price covered the main points for the Corps memorial which included:
  - Friday 17 September – 1200hrs Arrival and 1800hrs Reception and Dove Cup darts in the WOs’ & Sgts’ Mess
  - Saturday 18 September – 0900hrs Corps SM’s update, 1000hrs Standard Bearers Competition, 1400hrs concurrent activity with Cadet Open Weekend and Station Open Day. 1400hrs Auction, 1830hrs REA Formal Dinner.
  - Sunday 19 September - 0900 hours Memorial parade at the Obelisk. 1000hrs move to Rochester for the service in the Cathedral and the parade in Rochester High Street.
  - The cut-off date for this event is the 26 July 2021.
- Rick Tootle as the Captain of Standards discussed the Standard Bearers competition and the response so far.
- The Corps Colonel discussed that two Elizabeth Crosses will be presented at the Memorial parade at the Obelisk and that this will be the first opportunity for two years for the Sapper Family to get together.
- The Operations Manager discussed the final events for 2021, which included Founders Day at TRHC, REA AGM on the 8 October on Zoom, Sapper Sunday on the 10 October

at TRCH, Field of Remembrance on the 11 November at Westminster Abbey and Remembrance at the Cenotaph on the 14 November.

- The CEO mentioned the events for 2022 but highlighted the Gibraltar weekend from the 20 – 23 May 2022, which is celebrating 250 years of Sapper involvement on the Rock.
- WO2 Paul Heron gave a brief on the REA Winter Dinner Night at Chilwell on Saturday the 27 November 2021 at Chilwell, which can host 200 people seated. Kevin Street and Iain George will assist when required and will liaise with WO2 Paul Heron.

#### **ITEM 8 - FINANCIAL UPDATE**

14. The Corps Treasurer briefed the members on the value of the REA, which included the cash reserves, investments and dividends. He then discussed that the market is currently very strong and the dividends for the year were good. The Corps Treasurer confirmed the REA financial situation is very healthy and that he and the CEO have constant discussions with the Investment managers and the account is managed well.

15. The CEO discussed the legacies that the REA has received this year and how the legacies are very important in sustaining the operational income. He also explained about engaging with major projects such as RBLI and the Sports pavilion at Brompton Barracks. The REA is currently in a good position as income continues to flow and we are now looking at investing in a house, which will produce a steady income.

#### **ITEM 9 – FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR CORPS EVENTS IN 2022**

16. The CEO discussed the financial support for Corps Events in 2022 and that the Chilwell, Minley and Chatham weekends will receive £8,500 each and the Gibraltar weekend will receive £12,000 due to the 250th anniversary next year.

17. The CEO confirmed that the Chilwell Winter Dinner will be supported by the REA and the RSM of Chilwell needs to propose a figure for the REA to consider.

18. The CEO also discussed that the money used for events needs to be spent wisely as in previous years at Chatham a lot of money has been spent on three coaches when only one is required.

#### **ITEM 10 – ANNUAL FINANCIAL SUMMARIES UPDATE**

19. The CEO discussed the Annual Financial Summaries for 2020 and said that the Group ones were not submitted until well after the closing date. The Financial summaries are an important part of assessing the value of the Association and with all the Branches and Groups it comes to nearly ½ million pounds. Groups and Branches must be aware of the importance of submitting these forms and the CEO wants a 100% return next year. The CEO will improve the process of sending these electronically and will run a Zoom meeting in September/October for Treasurers to be updated on how to complete the Financial Summary.

**Action: HQ REA** will ensure the points raised above are actioned.

#### **ITEM 11 – UNIT AND BRANCH SUPPORT GRANT**

20. The CEO explained how the Unit and Branch Support Grant was progressing for 2021 and the following points were discussed:

- The grant for this year is £100,000 and so far, for the first six months of the year £71,000 has been spent.
- To date there has been some excellent projects from units and branches including 39 Engr Regt, 36 Engr Regt, West Cumberland Branch and the Gibraltar Branch. However, the CEO still encouraged that Branches and Regiments to apply for the grant as there is still money available.

## **ITEM 12 – REA STRATEGY**

21. The CEO explained the REA strategy and covered the following:

22. The five-year strategy is nearly at its end and when the Recruiting Committee put forward a request to the Trustees about an REA App it triggered the need to plan the next five year strategy. This must be a planned way forward and not to be rushed and understand what the future looks like. This was started by a survey to the serving Corps and veterans and the results were very positive. The CEO will have this strategy ready for the AGM and it will include methods of how to target and engage the serving Corps and veterans using the latest technology and how to reach out to the most vulnerable veterans with a relevant offer. Feedback is important and the CEO asked the management committee members to be fully involved.

23. Peter Luscombe discussed the need to be engaged with events like Sapper Fest and working with other service groups and charities. The CEO explained that he is in contact with many groups and organisations including Sapper Fest to promote the REA. However as HQ REA has a small staff it is down to the Groups and Branches to liaise with organisations and make connections on the ground or to hold their own events to recruit new members and forge links in their own community. There is a lot of work to be done.

## **ITEM 13 - ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

24. The CEO asked for any final points from the committee and the following was covered:

- The Operations Manager explained that the agenda for the AGM would be sent out for comment.
- The CEO discussed the laptops that are now part of the strategy.
- Phil Taylor asked what the time scale is for the App and the CEO said hopefully March 2022.
- Eric Hargreaves thanked the CEO for an enjoyable meeting.
- Phil Taylor mentioned that Bob Prosser would be going to Gibraltar next year 50 years after he held the scroll at the 1972 parade.
- Scott Wilson asked about accommodation at the Chilwell Dinner, which the CEO said would be available.
- Mal Forder asked what was happening to the 21 Engr Regt motorhome. The CEO said he would confirm this as 23 Engr Regt and 39 Engr Regt both wanted it.
- Peter Luscombe thanked the CEO for an enjoyable first meeting.
- Martin Heffer informed the Corps Colonel that as he is involved with cadets he could help with any assistance if required.
- The Operations Manager confirmed there would be no election or re-election changes to the committee until next year.

24. The CEO closed the meeting and thanked all those attending for being active at the meeting and come back to him if they have any points on strategy. He also mentioned the new phones in HQ REA which do work.

## **ITEM 12. – Date of next Meeting.**

25. The date and location of the next meeting is scheduled for 1000hrs 14 January 2021 on Zoom.

31 August 2021

Operations Manager

Minutes Approved

Dated

Chairman

Distribution:

Management Committee Members

Council Members

Group Directors

Deputy Group Directors

Group Secretaries

Branch Secretaries

CEO REA

Corps Treasurer

## Benevolence Report to the REA Management Committee July 2021

1. **Trends 2021.** For the period 1 Jan – 30 Jun 2021 the number of benevolence cases submitted to the Association by SSAFA, The Royal British Legion and other organisations was 188, this is 77 cases less than for the same period in 2020 ( 265 cases). There are 33 cases declined in this period.

2. **Individual Benevolence Cases Considered during Jan – Jun 2021 (Excludes Weekly Allowances and Christmas Grants)**

Category	2021 Jan - Jun	2020 Jan - Jun	2019 Jan - Jun	2018 Jan - Jun
Disabled & Illness	35	85	33	79
Aged	3	4	14	23
Widows	20	18	18	34
Unemployed	53	69	31	71
Miscellaneous	44	52	144	60
Grants not made	33	37	68	11
<b>Totals</b>	<b>188</b>	<b>265</b>	<b>308</b>	<b>278</b>

Regular – Reserve Case Comparisons	2021 Jan - Jun	2020 Jan - Jun	2019 Jan - Jun	2018 Jan - Jun
Regular Cases	150	220	229	234
Reservist Cases	5	8	11	33
Regular Grants	£92,335.72	£132,483.06	£125,663.36	£131,204.70
Reservist Grants	£1,545.00	£5892.94	£13,153.55	£15,856

3. **Cost of Benevolence Cases Jan to 30 Jun 2021.** The unaudited amount spent on benevolence cases for the period 1 Jan – 30 Jun 2021 was £93,880.72. This is £44,495.28 less than the same period in 2020.

4. **Benevolence Committee meetings**

The Benevolence committee met on three occasions in the past year, during these meetings a number of observers are invited from Units across the Corps this gives the opportunity for serving soldiers of all ranks to see the work of the REA and to contribute to the discussion regarding benevolence grants. There continues to be no limit to the level of an individual grant these are assessed on the basis of the individual need. Provided the information supplied by the caseworker is complete then decisions on grants can be made quickly and processed within a week. The out of committee procedures are now well established and grant requests that exceed the CEOs authorised limit of £1000 can be quickly circulated to the members of the benevolence committee and decisions made.

5. **Grants to Charities.** At the last meeting of Council, the trustees agreed that with effect from 2021, the grant to ABF would be £50k, the grant to SSAFA would be £20k.

RHQ RE/4/1/10/1

21 Jun 21

**CR Board** - through Corps Secretary

**RHQ RE UPDATE – 7th CHIEF ROYAL ENGINEER'S BOARD**

**Corps Workforce (WF) Position**

1. **Headline.** The Corps WF position remains stable in terms of SIZE. As at 01 Jun 21 the OR UKTAP strength was 6414 (up from 6165) against an AMPL of 6203. QGE OR strength is 384 against an AMPL of 587; the difference reflects growth which has yet to occur. However, the positive figures do continue to mask under and over strength issues in certain trades and a diversity imbalance (SHAPE). The Officer WF position remain stable with a slight imbalance against AMPL between DE and LE. Outflow (VO) remains very low, just 0.1% above the Army average which runs at 4%. However, signs are starting to emerge of attraction outside the Corps/Army as COVID restrictions ease and the economy picks up. I would not be surprised to see RE VO back to +2% of the Army average by early 2022.

RE TOTAL against AMPL 20.12	Lt Col	Maj	Capt	Sub	Total	WO1	WO2	SSgt	Sgt	Cpl	LCpl	Spr	Total	TOTAL
Workforce Requirement	170	390	457	143	1160	103	347	548	618	1034	1341	2214	6205	7365
Strength	157	392	472	151	1172	107	352	518	560	964	1051	2862	6414	7586
Strength +/-	-13	2	15	8	12	4	5	-30	-58	-70	-290	648	209	221
% of WR Held	92%	101%	103%	106%	101%	104%	101%	95%	91%	93%	78%	129%	103%	103%

Table 1 – OF and OR RE WF as at 01 Jun 21

2. **Inflow (General).** Q1 and Q2 inflow into the Corps remains healthy (good). The OR interim demand plan has reduced all loading; to date the Corps has 477 of 721 SP loaded (66%). At RMAS the Corps continue to attract high quality OCdts; we continue to run three for one place at RSB's. Five females accepted places into the Corps at the last RSB round (5/22).

3. **Females.** The RHQ RE owned campaign plan continues to deliver marginal gains. Currently there are five females awaiting basic training (BT) starts, with a further 16 in BT through to ITT (21 total). Trained strength has improved: Offrs – 107 (9%), Sldrs – 89 (1.4%). The diversity dashboard is attached. The 01 Sep 21 target for the female campaign plan is: Offrs – 110, Sldrs – 110.

4. **PPO - FRI.** The PPO financial incentive for ME Log Spec at OR2/3 level has been effective; uptake has been 26 of 37 (70% uptake) which delivers 78 guaranteed years of ME Log Spec service. Against an FRI investment of £260K, the E1MB estimate a saving of £1.6M against training 26 new ME Log Spec's. The 2nd tranche of the FRI, of a further £200K, will be considered in Sep 21.

5. **ReM - ME GEO.** A higher starting pay for ME Geo has provisionally been agreed by Hd Rem to attract and retain people to the trade with the right aptitude, education, skillset and potential. Implementing higher starting pay as Sappers (OR2) is a cost effective and value for money alternative to the use of FRI's. The change will make an OR02-05 starting salary (post training) of £24,450 realistic and competitive vice a non-competitive £20,400.00/£21230.38 (OR02-01/OR02-02 rates) without a compensating Financial Incentive. Progression to OR02-05 will be on completion of Subsequent Trade Training (STT); the ME Geo 0-2 Course. Implementation will be effective from Apr 22, to match the

STT output from those recruited into ME Geo in FY 21/22. Transitional arrangements will be applied to match the implementation date. **[This remains LIMDIST]**.

6. **JSJET/Pay 21.** A positive result for the Corps with ME Log Spec moving up from Sup 1 to 2. ME POM fell from Sup 3 to 2, but all other trade groups remained in their Pay 16 Sup.

7. **RE Apprenticeship Programme.** Tests are now in place to clear the legacy ME H&P apprenticeship skills test; c180 SP. This will take two years at a bespoke facility at Longmoor. A new skill test facility and delivery arm at Wainscott will reach IOC by Sep 21. This will enable rapid delivery of the MECT Apprenticeship whilst SP are at Chatham.

### **Other Points of Interest**

8. **Army Charities Strategy.** Job evaluations have taken place across the RHQ RE CS; one CS post on RHQ RE AFC8005 is more than likely to move to Grant In Aid (GIA) idc with a further two of the remaining nine posts in scope to also move to GiA. No timelines have been set. In addition of the 11 RHQ RE CS posts, two (E2 and C2) are now long term gapped.

9. **Communications.** Funding has been agreed by the RECCT, REA, InstRE and REVETT to run the comms hub team until 31 Dec 23.

10. **Corps SM.** WO1 Marc Elliott MBE RE has assumed the role of Corps SM, having moved from RSM 26 Engr Regt. In addition, WO1 Nathan Toms RE assumed the role as Senior WO RE Reserves, a new post in RHQ RE.

### **11. Enterprise/Books**

- Short History of the Corps Edn 2. Published.
- Portraits, Pictures & Silver - HQ Mess Edn 2. Oct 21, on schedule.

12. **Corps Memoranda Refresh.** Published on 31 May 21; the next update will be at the +6-month mark.

### **13. Planned Corps Events.**

- 22 Jul 21 - Corps Guest Night.
- 19 Sep 21 - Corps Memorial Day including Col Comdts Lunch.
- 14 Oct 21 - Chief Royal Board (Lite) & Corps Guest Night.
- 25 Nov 21 - Awards for Engineering Excellence 2021.
- 02 Dec 21 - Chief Royal Board (Full).
- 24 Feb 22 - Chief Royal Board (Lite) & Corps Guest Night.
- 14 May 22 - Corps Dinner Night.

14. **70 Years - Col in Chief.** A response is awaited from Palace staff regarding the Corps marking and celebrating 70-years of HM The Queen as Colonel in Chief.

### **Corps Col RE**

Enclosure:

1. RE Workforce Dashboard @ 01 Jun 21; best viewed in A3 format.
2. RE Diversity Dashboard @ 01 Jun 21; best viewed in A3 format.