

**MINUTES OF THE 322ND MEETING OF THE
RAF ASSOCIATION'S CENTRAL COUNCIL
CAVALRY & GUARDS CLUB
SATURDAY 19TH OCTOBER 2013**

Present		Apologies	
AVM N Bairsto	Chairman	ACM Sir A Pulford (CAS)	
AM Sir Dusty Miller	President	Air Cdre A Neal (AN)	
AVM D Whittaker	Vice-President	Mr I McEnnis (IM)	
Dr B Pattison (BP)	Vice-Chairman	Mr B Chandler (BCh)	
Mr P Tagg (HT)	Hon Treasurer	Mr B Darke (BD)	
Air Cdre A Opie (AO)		Mr G Middleton (GM)	
Mr F Barrett (FB)		Sqn Ldr A Morris (AM)	
Mr A Poole (AP)		Mrs J Boothman (JB)	
Mr S Graham (SGr)		Sgt G Evans (GE)	
Mr J Tisbury (JT)		Sgt W Swiggs (WS)	
Mr T Lee (TL)	Non Exec Dir	Mr J W Lee (JL)	
Mr B Cotton (BC)		In Attendance	
Mr M Mason (MM)		Mrs J Easton (SG)	Secretary General
Mr M Clulow (MC)		Mr J Calder (DFIT)	Director of Finance & IT
		Mr B Hounslow (DMO)	Director of Membership
		Mrs A Hunter (HRM)	HR Manager
		Mr R O'Connor (DW)	Director of Welfare
		Mr M Bolton (DFM)	Director of FR & Marketing
		Mr S Hargreaves (SSM)	Support Manager & Sec

The dedication was read by Mr Frank Barrett and condolences were recorded following the recent death of Mike Cocker, previous SE & Eastern Area Director.

1. Apologies for absence

Recorded above.

2. Chairman's Opening Remarks

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the 322nd meeting of Central Council

3. Conflicts of Interest

There were no conflicts of interest recorded.

4. Minutes of the 321st meeting of Central Council

These were approved with the exception of the following points;

Para 7 (Membership costs) –The paragraph on membership costs would be amended to reflect that the Central Council do not, at this present time, seek to take the issue of subscription levels to the next Annual Conference. An article in Airmail and the Chairman's Conference report would provide a clear understanding of the present situation. There would be no need to go to Conference to discuss possible subscription increases.

Para 8 (Dowding House Management) –The minutes would be amended to reflect that a contract for services to pass the management and supervision of Dowding House to a Scottish Housing Association (Hanover Housing), was for an initial 12 month period.

Para 13 (Any Other Business) –The minutes would be amended to reflect that BP only informed members of CC that he was aware that a paper had been distributed by the previous Director of

Resources setting out spending limits. However, he was not aware of this paper being approved by the Executive board, (that existed at the time), nor Central Council.

5. Matters Arising

The Secretary would ensure that the previous minutes were amended in accordance with the points raised under item 4.

Action: SSM

6. Finance

Management Accounts

DFIT presented the management accounts and reported a satisfactory position. The end of year forecast, aided by higher than anticipated legacy income, was above the budget target.

- Homes performance – The overall end of year deficit forecast is in line with budget expectations. Room occupancy for September at 81% reflected a slight drop compared to last year's 83% level. Richard Peck was attaining particularly high occupancy rates at 94% while Rothbury was lower at 68%.
- Areas/ CHQ performance – Overall performance in line with budget although some fundraising initiatives had not been as strong as anticipated.
- Treasury performance – Notification had been received of an 11th dividend in respect of KSF. The amount was not known, however, previous receipts equated to 3p in the £. This would equate to a £100k benefit to the Association. Cash flow position reflected the £500k transfer to the investment portfolio agreed at the last meeting and remained strong.

The lotto initiative through the Air Cadet Organisation (ACO) had realised an income well below the budget target. DFM explained that marketing the initiative to parents, guardians, adult staff and volunteers of Cadets rested with the ACO as gambling licencing laws prevented RAFA from such direct marketing. There was a need to improve communications between the ACO and the cadets' parents, guardians and adult staff members. AO suggested that a discussion with Commandant Air Cadets may well assist in improving the situation. The Chairman asked DFM to produce a report (CC'd to AO) that highlights the issue and offers some options for remedying the situation.

Action: DFM

Designated funds expenditure showed a contribution to RAF HCPT pilgrimage to Lourdes. This was a project to fund a tour for children with disabilities from RAF families and was a relatively small amount of funding that had been particularly well received.

Rafa YOUTH membership numbers would be included as part of the monthly membership statistics report within future Management accounts.

Action: DMO

Risk Register

Serial 1, 2, 3 - The Chairman highlighted the main risks around welfare and in particular the timescales associated with the strategic direction.

AP commented that the issues would be discussed under agenda item 8a, but that it was subject to the on-going mapping exercise in identifying geographical gaps in welfare provision through HWOs. DW announced that data from 2013 will be published in Jan'14 and presented to CC in Feb 2014 along with the key welfare messages to be delivered at next year's Annual Conference. He reminded CC that Area welfare teams had been tasked to identify and produce case studies of welfare interventions on a monthly basis. Although there was some reluctance from Area offices in obtaining case studies, due in part to confidentiality issues, DW suggested that this task may become a formal objective as part of the area welfare staffs job descriptions.

The Chairman reiterated the importance of ensuring a source of compelling material that demonstrated the fantastic welfare interventions that RAFA had made. He was not confident that the membership and public understood this was happening and as such, believed that serial 1 of the risk register should be upgraded to high risk. SGr and FB agreed that the Association should both communicate and publish 'good news' stories and capitalise on the increased referrals from RAFBF.

The President commented that HWOs often had a purely local focus in their excellent work for the Association. It was incumbent on all members of CC to use their expertise to broker between volunteers and remove obstacles when they are preventing the delivery of welfare. The Chairman added that stories of the excellent work of the Station RAFALOs also needed to be captured.

Serial 9, 10, 11 – DFIT mentioned that a targeted action plan would be prepared to capture progress on delivering the IT strategy.

Serial 19 – In response to the risk of a continued decline in fundraising income, DFM reported that although Pub lotto would continue in its present form, the Association would possibly look to promote the purchase of more machines to increase the scope of the initiative.

Following the Vice President's request, the Sec Gen agreed that DFIT would provide CC members with an end of year report of general fundraising income trends compared to previous years.
Action: DFIT

7. General Purposes Committee (GPC) Report

JT (as GPC Chairman) updated members of CC on the work of the GPC. Although business and correspondence between GPC members had been conducted predominantly on Huddle, the electronic functionality had not been well used by GPC members in the main. It was decided that Huddle training for trustees would be required at the earliest opportunity. SSM would issue some protocols and procedures for using Huddle ahead of organising some training.

Action: DFIT, WS, SSM

Lead trustee members were asked for their comments in relation to a review of the Association's regional structure. It was generally accepted that the regional structure was set up primarily for social and sporting reasons. Although these activities were no longer the focus of the areas (due in part to an ageing membership), the respondents felt that the current structure was still useful in providing a platform and conduit for the consideration and dissemination of information. The general consensus was that the regional structure should not be influenced by Central Headquarters and therefore the recommendation of the GPC was that the regional structure should remain in its current form. BC commented that the regional structure was particularly important in Northern Ireland where many members would not be able to attend Area meetings in Scotland and therefore this structure allowed them to conduct business more effectively and with more involvement from members.

Area Councils had been asked for their views on potential increases in Associate member subscriptions. The general consensus of the Area Councils was that Associate member subscription levels should remain unchanged and subject only to the agreed RPI increases. It was therefore the GPC's recommendation that Associate members Subs should remain unchanged. This was supported and endorsed by the CC.

8. Policy issues

Respite Care Homes: AP provided an update on the work of the Homes Continuous Improvement Group (HCIG). The charging formula was being considered, by understanding the true costs of a guest's stay, to provide an attractive and sustainable rate to potential fee paying guests. A targeted marketing approach, supported by the Homes managers, would be implemented. AP reported that

good support was being received from CHQ and Homes staff. Information gathering was nearing completion and a full detailed report would be presented at the next meeting of CC.

Action: AP, DW

Although the President agreed that using industry standards was helpful in a benchmarking exercise, he was less comfortable with using this as a basis for setting rates for paying guests as the Homes delivered a unique service that could not be compared to hotel stays for example. AP whilst agreeing with the President was committed to ensuring that trustees understood the true costs of running the homes. The Chairman noted that the 2 priorities were to firstly, use industry standards to inform charging rates and secondly, to clearly articulate the costs of running the homes.

Huddle Training: WS joined the meeting via Skype and updated CC on the use of electronic communications and document file sharing and storage, namely Huddle. He mentioned the importance of the correct storage of information to inform decisions and management of the online document registry including the storage of archived files and documents relating to work that was on-going. He suggested standardising file naming on Huddle and ensuring correct access permissions for users and workspace leads. WS agreed to provide a bullet point brief to DFIT & SSM with some proposed recommendations.

Action: WS

The implementation of this work would allow appropriate training to be organised for trustees on the functionality and capacity of Huddle. A Huddle training session would be organised for trustees ahead of the next CC meeting.

Action: SSM, WS

PR & Communications: BP announced that his recent Comms paper would be loaded on to Huddle in due course. The SG mentioned that copies of the Communications plan to complement BP's paper (that the staff team was working towards) were available for members of CC. TL suggested that the Association should firstly, look at the target audience, then the media outlets available and finally, make a decision on how to deliver the communications. The Chairman asked the GPC, on behalf of the Central Council, to take this work forward and report back at the future meetings of Central Council.

Action: GPC

9. Membership Initiatives

The Membership Initiatives paper had been expanded to include those from RAFALOs and the Association was working with AO and RAF members to progress these initiatives. HoDs and Lead trustee members were asked to continue to progress the initiatives listed within their area of responsibility. Areas were still being asked to submit potential items for discussion.

AO confirmed that he had written to Stn Cdrs and RAFALOs to encourage them to continue supporting the initiatives.

FB mentioned the on-going issue with branch members being able to access RAFA offices when they are located on RAF Stations.

Schools Project

The Chairman remarked that it was inappropriate for Tier 3, Serial 8 of the initiatives paper to be on hold. It was important for the Association to ensure that they had an active schools programme particularly around the forthcoming centenary commemorations of WW1 and the formation of the RAF. There was considerable discussion around the table on this subject. The Vice President suggested that this initiative has been talked about for a considerable amount of time, without any progress made. DMO agreed that a schools project would be considered, but would involve

considerable resources to be made available. DFM was unsure about the anticipated outcomes for implementing a schools programme. FB and BC mentioned respectively the TRBL schools programme and the local activity in schools that RAFA was doing in Northern Ireland. There were various suggestions from members of CC including; that RAF Schools Liaison teams were involved, BSOs were used to present in schools, older veterans could be invited in by schools and DVDs and CD Roms should be included as part of a school presentation pack.

The Chairman suggested that although the outcomes may be difficult to define, it was important that we were involved in a schools project and that we can use best practise and resources already available to us to deliver a schools programme. The Chairman tasked DFM to compile existing resources, used in Northern Ireland and elsewhere, and liaise with the ACO and Schools liaison teams to discuss how best to access educational establishments.

Action: DFM

The President agreed and believed that we should be coordinating our offering with the other RAF Charities. The Chairman confirmed that there was a general consensus to do something and that, following DFM's query about who should be operationally responsible for delivering the initiative, suggested that material should be provided by CHQ along with briefings and support, to allow branches to deliver the project. He further commented that significant financial resources had been set aside for this sort of purpose and had not been used.

The SG agreed that following some research and development into elements such as the target audience, properly costed options and a report would be produced for trustee consideration at the next meeting.

Action: SG

The Chairman asked for a proposal that the Association should allocate funding of up to £25k out of membership initiative funds for this initiative. AP proposed, seconded by JT. All members were in favour of the proposal with a review of the amount allocated in due course.

Brize Norton Membership drive

DMO reported on the recent activity to recruit new members at RAF Brize Norton. Staff attended RAF Brize Norton for 3 days with a target to recruit 300 new members. Although only 56 members were recruited, an additional 150 personnel provided contact details that will be used to communicate information with the intention that some of these personnel will be converted into members in due course. The staff manned membership stands at various locations on the Station. There was a hugely successful social night hosted by the Association. 250 station personnel attended a 'Brize Factor' Karaoke competition. The Association received fantastic support from the catering contractors and the Station Executive and RAF Personnel as a whole. The breakeven point for the activity was 104 members, but as the membership sign ups were via direct debit and GAYE, the initiative should become cost neutral by year 2 and should realise a longer term profit. There would be a staff de-brief for those who attended and further membership activities at other RAF units in due course.

10. RAF Centenary

The President provided an update on the RAF Centenary preparations. The Sec Gen had attended a briefing session for the Assistant Chief of the Air Staff (ACAS) in his capacity of having overall responsibility of the centenary celebrations. The President has met with the other service charities and a draft paper will be forwarded to ACAS and the Air Force Board in November. The next steps would be to identify tangible objectives and the activity required to fulfil the objectives. The 4 RAF Charities would allocate a total of £20k to conduct research in order to inform the most appropriate activities. A more detailed paper with tangible objectives will be produced for trustees in due course.

11. Information Papers

The Chairman thanked the Lead Members and Directors for informative briefing papers. In a brief discussion with the Council, the following issues were highlighted:

- A new welfare manager and 2 new Homes managers had recently been appointed.
 - DW to produce information on developing the welfare initiatives for the next meeting.
- Action: DW**
- rafa YOUTH membership numbers were below the target estimate. Youth Membership Officer was working hard. A meeting was planned with Commandant Air Cadets. Some branches were purchasing group memberships for their local cadet Squadrons. This should be encouraged and may result in a surge in uptake.
 - The Cadet Award is awarded in conjunction with the ACO and would be part of the rafa YOUTH prize system run by the Youth Community Manager.
 - The Flying Scholarships would remain allocated on merit and administered by the Membership Support Officer.
 - DFM agreed to include Direct Mailing comparisons following the decision to use data more efficiently in targeting only those who have responded positively within 5 years. The figures will show a cost saving without any significant drop in income generation.
 - Door to Door attrition rate has been less than expected. Intending to double the amount spent on the initiative in 2014.
 - The Air shows and Events income has been particularly good as a result of better weather this year and improved relationships and partnerships with the RAF Falcons and Red Arrows.
 - A marketing agency had been appointed as a preferred provider for planned and budgeted marketing activity.
 - Storybook Wings would be re-launched to ensure that the scheme had longevity and relevance, including widening the scheme to reservists and commuting personnel in the UK.
 - Still awaiting the results of the RAF FF tender process.
 - The funded AF covenant Regional coordinator posts provide a better position for RAFA for working alongside the FF. As they become confident in these new posts, it may be possible to develop their roles.
 - A formal response to GMB's pay claim had been submitted. The union members' ballot on the offer was awaited. There was a possibility of further discussion if the GMB members did not accept the offer.
 - Area Directors were involved, through DMO, in any personnel reviews following the structural changes made last year.
 - The issues at Newark Club were being dealt with by the Area Council and would soon be concluded.

12. Any Other Business

JT reported on the planned Military Tattoo in Birmingham. More RAFA Standards would be welcomed. There would be merchandising and fundraising activity. Any Standard Bearers that wish to parade were to inform Paul Baker, Area Director, W, M & SW.

The CC approved the request of Camborne & Redruth branch to change their name to Camborne, Redruth & Illogan Branch with immediate effect. Proposed by JT, seconded by AP. All were in favour.

JL had recommended that any singular operational item above £10k and not contained within the agreed budget should be authorised by Central Council. The Chairman asked that the CC agree to this request and formally approve the recommendation. Proposed by the Chairman, Seconded by FB. All were in favour. The SG and DFIT agreed to update the current financial authority policy document for the next meeting as it was agreed that the current authority document was out of date and not fit for purpose. The Chairman thanked JL for persisting with this issue.

Action: SG, DFIT

The next meeting of the Central Council will be on Saturday 14 December 2013 at 10am at the Cavalry & Guards Club (TBC).

N Bairsto
Chairman
