

Minutes of All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Reserve Forces & Cadets held at 1500 hours in Room Q, Portcullis House on 4 November 2015

Attendance:

<p>Madeleine Moon MP – Chair Lord Freeman Lord Rogan</p> <p>Anna - Researcher, Parliamentary Office of Madeleine Moon MP</p> <p>Clerks: Colonel (Retd) Hugh Purcell GL RFCA (Honorary Clerk) Kate Peyton GL RFCA</p>	<p>Commodore Jonathan Fry – Head of Youth and Cadets RF&C Commodore Bob Fancy – Royal Navy Brigadier Matthew Lowe – Army Air Commodore Dawn McCafferty – Royal Air Force Martin Coles – Chief Executive MSSC Mr Duncan Haigh – Assistant Head of Youth and Cadets RF&C Commander Michael Dreelan – Youth and Cadets RF&C Colonel Freddie Kemp – Youth & Cadets RF&C Gary Bushell – CRFCA Youth and Cadets Clinton Riley – CVQO Jason Kitching – CVQO Patrick Taylor – Youth United Foundation Fleur Thomas – DRM Lieutenant Commander Tony Pringle – Director Youth and Engagement, GL RFCA Emma Day – GL RFCA</p>
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The Chair welcomed all to the meeting.

Commodore Fry thanked the group for the opportunity to update them on the state of the Cadet Forces; some of the challenges and opportunities and what had been achieved in the 12 months since he had last briefed them.

The MOD and the Services were very proud of their Cadet Forces, a vital part of the Defence family, that also enjoyed significant political interest and support. There were three reasons for the Cadets Forces:

- Awareness – a visible presence in the community, which helped maintain national awareness of the Armed Forces. Young people have a favourable impression of the Armed Forces’ role in the world.
- Development – the delivery of personal development and leadership skills to individual cadets, which has an overall benefit to society;
- Career Opportunities - former cadets constituted circa 15-20% of Regular and Reserve Forces.

The Sea Cadet Corps (SSC), Army Cadet Force (ACF) and the Air Training Corps (ATC) were community-based, the Combined Cadet Force (CCF) based in schools. Some 131k cadets were supported by 27k adult volunteers in some 3,400 units. Cadet numbers had been stable for some years, but despite an increase in Adult Volunteers on 10 years ago, the trend had been downwards for the last three.

The Cadet Expansion Programme (CEP), a joint programme with the Department of Education, was one area of growth. The CEP was about character, resilience, raising aspirations and motivating cadets to succeed in education. The Phase 2 target was to grow to a total of 500 cadet units in Schools by March 2020 and the Government had mapped three priorities: less affluent areas, areas with low cadet provision and areas where the MOD wanted to generate interest in Armed Forces’ careers. The programme is funded by LIBOR.

MOD had worked with the Services to set a cadet force direction of travel out to 2020 and beyond and for the first time they had a tri-Service strategy with a vision, intent and 9 strands of work that would enable the sharing of policy, effort and good practice across the cadet forces while continuing to focus on delivering a challenging, stimulating and contemporary experience that developed and inspired young people in a safe environment. Priorities were twofold: the CEP and reinforcing the recognition of, and reward to, Adult Volunteers. The latter included easing the administrative burden on volunteers where possible as the Cadet Force experience could not be delivered without the adults.

Commodore Fancy explained that he was the lead Royal Navy (RN) 1* with RN Youth Training and the Cadet HQ under command. The RN had recognised the rich mix of Naval Cadet Forces, composed of the 800 strong Volunteer Cadet Force (VCF), the 20k Sea Cadets Corps (SCC), the 6k Combined Cadet Force (RN and RM) and the 8k Sea Scouts. Thus new governance arrangements were in place and the HQ had been refreshed and become integrated in order to deliver and enhance the cadet experience for all in a safe, happy and challenging marine environment. They were looking to double the number of VCFs (a good model) at shore establishments and naval bases across the UK to help reconnect the RN with this youth organisation and heritage, and at a structure that would deliver common policy governance and better support relationships across the Naval Cadet Forces. They aimed to link cadet units with RN Reserve and University units as well as smaller RN establishments. A critical challenge would be infrastructure management and sharing arrangements. The previous RN approach to wider youth engagement had been uninventive and they would now seek to engage more broadly; CEP would be at the forefront of this work over the next four years.

The SCC was unique because of its charitable status and the quality of maritime experience it offered young people. Since 2012 it had upped training activity by 12%, doubled international exchange opportunities and increased time on the water by more than 16%. The training experience had been enhanced by creating a maritime career opportunities portal, redeveloping the training programme, launching the cadet record of achievement and CV and investing in better facilities and support. The largest investment had been in the offshore environment, where the charity had raised £4.8m to design, build and deliver its new flagship, TS Royalist. Offshore adventure, the ultimate expression of maritime experience and training, could be life changing and already it was evident that cadets were staying longer. Last year the SCC delivered over 401k hours of boating experience, awarded some 11k recognised boating qualifications and 1,800 First Aid qualifications, outcomes that were fully coherent with and complimentary to the MOD 2020 Cadet Strategy.

The Sea Cadet experience explored the life skills, value and qualifications wanted for young people, with a view to delivering long terms goals that included wellbeing, improved career opportunities and increased participation in local communities. 7k responses from cadets and parents to a recent survey had given overwhelming support to this approach and over the next 5 years they aimed to sharpen and fully realise this plan. The RN was fortunate to have the Sea Cadets and the excellent support of the MSSC.

Brigadier Lowe showed a slide with 2k ACF and CCF locations plus statistics. The location coverage was universal except for very rural areas, but it did include detachments in the Orkneys, the Shetlands, the Hebrides, the Scilly Isles, the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands. The ACF and CCF combined had more people than the Regular Army and the majority of the CCFs in public schools were located in the South of England. There were 4 lines of activity in the 2015-18 plan – people, enablers, training, policy and assurance – which all supported the Adult Volunteer. This plan faced two challenges; the 11% shortfall in Adult Volunteers and the 89% whose motivation needed to be sustained. A culture of safety had to be created to ensure that the adults were safe to work with minors, the children were safeguarded and that the Army could demonstrate that the risk could be managed; this all involved training. Currently the ACF and CCF adults were undertaking safeguard training more regularly than they would have liked and until it could be proved that they were operating a safe system of safe people; this required a balance to be struck between time spent training and time spent with the children.

98 out of the 100 schools in CEP Phase 1 were still going, cadet numbers continued to grow and Phase 2 would grow the number of cadet units in schools to 500 by 2020. However, they first had to find and train the adult staff the headmaster wanted to run the CCF, and as schools had not always understood the commitment they would need to explain this better. The reward would be greater cadet force coverage, improved educational outcomes and greater reach into the ethnic minorities and STE demographics.

Air Commodore McCafferty explained that the Air Cadet 2020 Strategy that had started in 2012 was fully aligned with what the MOD was doing. The ATC, including Adult Volunteers, was circa 58k strong, whereas the RAF was 31.5k. In recognition of the changing size and shape of the parent service they had taken what was good in the previous strategy and improved it, focussing on Adult Volunteers, Staff Cadets (18+) and modernising the cadet experience. Leadership, Teamwork and Citizenship were the core basis of the syllabus and there was a new focus on STEM and Cyber training (they had added Cyber to the Radio Communications badge); Carol Vorderman, an Honorary Ambassador, had done great work in the last year promoting air cadets. They were also looking at modernising their links with the Defence and the Aviation Industry as cadets was also about providing a bridge to future careers. Linked to this was the Cadet CV (attached) which translated everything that a cadet could do into easily understood English. Thus a cadet could verify what they had done and download it into their university form or CV.

Among the challenges there were also opportunities. As the RAF would probably lose more bases, thereby reducing the ability to parent Cadet Forces, there was a trial in Scotland looking to overcome this. Air experience flying was no substitute for gliding, no gliders had flown since March 2014, but they hoped for some recovery by the end April 2016.

Target shooting, which the cadets loved, was difficult to deliver as there was nervousness about their holding rifles and ammunition, a much legislated area. Finally the capacity of the volunteers was limited yet they were constantly being asked to give more and they were looking to see how they could lighten their burden. To enhance engagement and promote cadet and staff recruitment they planned to exploit their 75th Anniversary in 2016 and RAF 100 in 2018 and they would start the celebrations of the former on 7th February 2016 with a service at St Clements Danes.

Commodore Fry thanked the group for their interest and support and for spreading the 'cadet message'.

Questions

Madeleine Moon MP was concerned that the RN was not monitoring where the cadets went after the cadet force and that they should be tracked and their impact on the wider community monitored. **Martin Coles** replied that for the last four years the main focus for the Sea Cadets had been on boating; every young person had experienced 30 hours boating a year and they had presented a huge number of boating qualifications. A second focus was on 5 long term impacts; Wellbeing/health, Schools, Jobs, Engagement in the Community, and Behaviour (keeping out of trouble). They had done much work to engage the Maritime sector across the UK over the last 18 months and raise the profile of the career opportunities. They were also keen to do more work with the RNLI, to which Madeleine Moon offered to help.

Lord Freeman congratulated the speakers on their presentations, which had been a breath of fresh air. He had three concerns where there may be resistance to the growth of cadets: the attitude of some staff in some State Schools; rifle training and the absence of armouries in schools; and limitations on the number of places to hold annual camps. **Commodore Fry**, responding to the first point, said that one requirement for a school opening a CCF was that it had to have sufficient adult volunteers within the school and that schools fundamentally opposed to cadets would never apply for the CEP. Having been poor at explaining the benefits of the CEP to schools during Phase 1, they were developing literature and a video which would better explain them; this would include the leadership qualifications a school could gain for itself. **Brigadier Lowe**, responding to point 2, said that where a school did not have an armoury, they would look to use a community cadet armoury in close proximity. Another challenge was that the Home Office classified single shot weapons that required a physical action to reload them and self-cocking weapons, differently, so they had to be stored differently. Regarding point 3, ACF camps took place on the Defence Training Estate (DTE) and tended to be held in older facilities, some of which were in poor condition. There was sufficient space on the DTE for now, the camp allocation being made two years in advance, but they were checking to see if it would be sufficient to cater for CCF expansion; the RN and Air agreed, meanwhile Air was looking to develop bespoke camps to counter any shrinkage in the RAF and they might need to stray into Army DTE when priority could become an issue.

Madeleine Moon MP thought the Community Cadet Forces had concerns about the amount of money being ploughed into the new CCFs and how would the MOD ensure that they would not end up being impoverished. **Commodore Fry** replied that the CEP was specifically about putting cadet units into State Schools, not all of which were CCFs, and that they were being careful to ensure that community cadet units were not disadvantaged. The cadet experience would not be diluted and the new equipment they were buying could be used by all cadet units. Part of the CEP approval process was a requirement for local community cadet units to sign up to their being content and that a new CCF would have no impact on their numbers. **Brigadier Lowe** re-enforced this point stating that no resources would be denied the community cadet forces in order to benefit CCFs. **Madeleine Moon MP** acknowledged this argument, but her concern was that as it was unlikely that any schools in her constituency would take on a CCF, and if the community her cadet units could access this money they could expand. **Commodore Fry** responded by saying that the MOD would like to be able to expand the community cadet forces, but without the CEP there would be no new funding.

Madeleine Moon MP asked about Armed Forces Day and whether cadets had taken part. **Commodore Fry** explained that cadets did indeed take part in Armed Forces day. He also explained that last year what had previously been called Uniform to Work Day had been renamed Reserves Day. This had caused some concern among Cadet Adult Volunteers and the MOD's intention was to investigate options for a separate Cadets Day in 2016.

Madeleine Moon MP thanked all for their time, asked that the MOD make one of its targets that cadet units invite their local MPs to visit them once a year and then closed the meeting.

Col (Retd.) Hugh Purcell OBE DL, Honorary Clerk to the APPG RF&C.