

**Minutes of All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Reserve Forces and Cadets held in Committee Room 6 at at 1700 hours on 16<sup>th</sup> December 2014**

**Guest Speaker:** Commodore Jonathan Fry – Head of Capability & Cadets (RF&C) MOD

**Attendance:**

<p>Madeleine Moon MP – Chair                  Anna Soubry – Minister of State for DPWV                  Jessica Morden MP                  Jim Fitzpatrick MP                  James Arbuthnot MP                    Lord Rogan</p>	<p>Commodore Jonathan Fry (RF&amp;C)                  Commander Michael Dreelan RN - MOD                  Duncan Haigh MOD                  Dr Sheila Fitzpatrick                  Mr Martin Coles CEO MSSC                  Mr Gary Bushell – Director Youth &amp; Cadets CRFCA                  Ms Fleur Thomas - Director Engagement CRFCA                  James Bulman - Madeleine Moon’s Office    <b>Clerks:</b>                  Colonel (Retd) Hugh Purcell – GL RFCA (Honorary Clerk)                  Mrs Kate Peyton – GL RFCA</p>
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**The Chairman** welcomed all and asked the members if they were happy to ratify her as chair of the APPG Reserves and Cadets, as Julian Brazier MP, the previous chair, had recently been appointed Minister Reserves in the MOD. This motion was agreed unanimously.

After welcoming Commodore Jonathan Fry (**JF**), who is responsible for the youth and cadets forces within the MOD, she informed Min DPWV that having been contacted by so many people with no interest in the Armed forces about CCF funding, she would take delight in being able to say that the MOD had been listening throughout the consultation process.

**JF** said that the MOD and the Services were extremely proud of their 131k cadets and 29k adult volunteers in 3300 cadet units around the UK; 320 of the 3300 being Combined Cadet Forces (CCFs). CCFs were increasing in number in the state sector as part of the PM’s Cadet Expansion Scheme (a joint MOD DfE programme) to help develop young people’s character and skills, raise their aspirations and motivate them to engage and succeed in education. The initial target was 100 new units by September 2015 and as of today 64 units had been established, many in partnership with existing cadet units. Another 60 were in the pipeline and the MOD was reasonably confident that it would achieve the target by the due date.

The MOD had been grateful for the schools, the Combined Cadet Force Association and the Council of Reserve Forces and Cadets Association’s full responses during the consultation process around the proposal for a new charging regime. They had provided evidence that not only would many existing cadets units have to close but the number of cadets would also fall, not increase. The Defence Secretary had therefore decided not to introduce a new regime or to charge new units either; a positive result that had been well received. The MOD would continue to fund the first 100 new units while the Defence and Education Secretaries discussed expansion beyond September 2015 with No 10 and HMT on the basis that the programme had been designed to enable any school that wanted a cadet force to have one. The MOD also had to ensure that the infrastructure was in place to support new units without diluting the cadet experience elsewhere. Overall the programme was seen as a success bringing benefit to schools, individuals and the MOD.

There was recognition that the Cadet Expansion Programme had the potential to change the landscape for the Cadet Forces, but despite many reviews over the last ten years Defence had yet to clearly articulate what it required from its cadet forces. So a high level study had been conducted by General Beckett and a small team to answer this primary question. The findings were that the MOD investment in cadets was primarily to do with Youth Development, which reinforced the previous Defence Youth Engagement Review (DYER) that had identified three outputs or outcomes from cadets; youth development, an awareness of the armed forces around the country and what they did, and an awareness of career opportunities which in many cases would lead to recruitment. Beckett also made the point that the MOD needed to be better at articulating the cross Government benefits to be gained from the cadet forces to garner their support, as it was not just the MOD that gained, but Education, Justice, Health and others. The MOD needed to use its cadet forces more deliberately to promote awareness of the military nationwide, to be more positive in the way it engaged cadet forces as a part its broader

engagement strategy and to acknowledge that its primary interest should be in the recruitment outcome, making cadets aware of Service career opportunities. It also needed to think about how to make the cadet forces interesting to young people so that they stayed longer, particularly those aged 15 - 18, when perhaps they might begin to consider a career in the armed forces.

The MOD now needed to get on with implementing some of the recommendations made in the many reviews and his immediate intention was to build a properly structured, prioritised and resourced plan in conjunction with his Single Service colleagues to take the cadet forces to 2020 and beyond. This would include the DYER recommendations to modernise terms and conditions of volunteering in order to incentivise and retain the thousands of adult volunteers and on whom the cadet movement depended. Another part of this work would be to try to reduce the administrative burden to free the volunteers, who the MOD relied on to deliver the cadet experience, to get on with its delivery.

In summary the cadet movement was vibrant, successful and expanding and he thanked the Members for their interest and the support they gave to their local cadet units. If ever the complexity and politics of the cadet forces and adult volunteering became frustrating faith would always be restored by a visit to a cadet unit.

**Jim Fitzpatrick MP** thought this all very positive and the letter announcing the outcome of the CCF consultation particularly welcome. He also mentioned the good work in his constituency by the Reverend Tom Pike, Isle of Dogs, with local reserve and cadet units, the ATC detachment in Bow and Chief Superintendent Dave Stringer with Volunteer Police Cadets (VPC) and community safety – the borough unit forms a central component of the Metropolitan Police's youth outreach programme.

**The Chair** asked what help there was for successful units that would like to expand, particularly in the area of adult volunteers. **JF** replied that they were close to completing a piece of work mapping the number of cadets units against the density of population aged between 13 and 18, which would highlight where the overall cadet provision was lacking or out of balance. The MOD was keen to encourage cadet units in areas where they either did not exist or where the provision was limited. In the case of the expansion programme this meant that the marketing effort put into schools in those areas would increase. Another issue was that communities had to want more cadets and they would be looking at areas where the provision did not meet the demand.

**Jessica McGinnon MP** (name on the tape) said that the three CCFs in state schools in Wales had been well received, but there was a concern that establishing more might be to the detriment of the community cadet forces. **JF** emphasised that the MOD was keen to ensure that an increase in CCF numbers was not detrimental to existing units and part of the process included consultation with the community cadets in the area to make sure there was no conflict. As to encouraging more schools to come forward, a Community Cadet Force conference was planned for March, to which existing schools and schools growing new CCFs would be invited. An important part of the conference would be opportunities for networking and conversations where the positive experiences of those who had recently started a CCF could be shared. It needed to be a slow growing process as a massive and sudden increase in the number of cadets would risk outgrowing the structures needed to support them and diluting the quality of the cadet experience.

**The Chair** said they needed to be proactive at reaching out to new MPs to explain Defence and Engagement and she had been talking to James Grey MP and Hugh Purcell about the next parliament. The idea was to hold a Freshers' Fair in Portcullis House to advertise the various APPGs for the Armed Forces, the Armed Forces Parliamentary Scheme and to make MPs aware of the military reserve and cadet units in their constituency along with contact details. Visits could then be arranged. Attendance at the APPG Reserves and Cadets would also aid understanding. If this Fair were part of the induction process it would hopefully engage MPs from the start, linking them with their reserve and cadet units and in turn leading to more mutual engagement. Hugh Purcell reassured the Chair that his RFCA team along with James Bulman had already engaged with Liam Laurence concerning the Fair and that they would also discuss opportunities in Portcullis House to showcase cadets through the medium of music.

At 18.33 the Divisional Bell brought proceedings to a halt and the Chair thanked all for attending.

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