

Minutes of APPG for Reserve Forces and Cadets Annual General Meeting (AGM) and an address by two Future Reserves Research Programme researchers, held in Committee Room M, Portcullis House on 5th July at 1700 hours.

Attendance:

Madeleine Moon MP – Chair Lord West Lord Freeman Lord De Mauley Jim Fitzpatrick MP James Gray MP Julian Brazier MP - Minister Reserves. Adam Fico - Parliamentary Office of James Gray MP Amy Swash – Parliamentary Office of James Gray MP Matthew Ward - Parliamentary Office of Madeleine Moon MP Richard Steadman – Parliamentary Office of Kevin Jones MP Clerks: Colonel (Retd) Hugh Purcell GL RFCA (Honorary Clerk) Kate Peyton GL RFCA	Major General Munro – RF&C MOD Brigadier van der Lande – RF&C MOD Niall Ahern – Employer Engagement Greater London RFCA Mark Demery – Greater London RFCA Kloe Fowler– Defence Relationship Management (DRM)
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The Chair welcomed all to the meeting.

Item 1 - Apologies.

1. There were none.

Item 2 - Election of Officers

2. The following was agreed:

Chair: Madeleine Moon - Lab

Officers: Dr Stella Creasy – Lab
Robert Ffello – Lab
Oliver Coleville - Con
Dr Julian Lewis - Con
Jim Fitzpatrick - Lab
James Gray – Con
David Crausby – Lab
James Cleverley – Con
Lord Freeman

Income and expenditure: There was nothing to report as the sums involved were below the threshold required to report.

Item 3 – An address on Sustaining Future Reserves 2020: Assessing Organisational Commitment in the Reserves
by:

- **Dr. Sergio Catignani, MA (Hons), MLitt (Res), DPhil, FHEA (Exeter University)**, Senior Lecturer at the Strategy and Security Institute (SSI) was awarded a UK Economic and Social Research Council and MOD grant, worth £299,911, to conduct a project titled, "*Sustaining Future Reserves 2020: Assessing Organisational Commitment in the Reserves*". The 3-year project started in November 2014 and is examining factors that shape and influence the commitment of volunteer reservists to serving in the Army Volunteer Reserve.
- And **Dr Victoria M Basham (Cardiff University)**, Senior Lecturer in the Politics Department, is a contributing as Co-Investigator.

The project is paying particular attention to the influence of family life and the pressures of civilian employment on the decisions that reservists make about their commitment to serving and intention to remain in the Reserves.

The project forms part of the 'ESCR Future of the Armed Forces: understanding issues around integration of Regular and Reserve personnel' research programme. The overall aim of the programme is to help identify and understand the cultural, social and economic issues that integration may have for Reserve personnel in the context of their military service, including integration with Regulars, and their civilian lives, especially families and employment, as well as reservist retention issues.

The MOD Sponsor for this project and overall programme is the Assistant Chief of Defence Staff Reserves and Cadets. Research results will help inform some of the pressing issues facing the Armed Forces in the process of integrating Regular and Reserve components and will provide evidence as to the effectiveness of current policy as well as informing subsequent policy directly relating to the implementation of Army 2020 reforms.

The slide headings in bold below – the slides are at Annex A - were used to address the following questions:

- What issues motivate reservists to continue serving in the Army and what issues make it harder for them to commit?
- What roles do families and employers play in supporting reservists to continue serving in the Army?
- How do reservists experience and negotiate the pressures of competing role commitments over time?

Future Reserves 2020 (FR2020) Aims

- They were half way through their research so the findings so far were not conclusive. This was a 3 year project and was being funded by the Research council as well as the MOD.

Reservist Perceptions of how society sees the Reserves

- Wider societal change around Army 2020 would take time, but such support had to be put in perspective of the small number of reservists required.
- There was a need to counter out of date views within parts of society, the military and the retired military fraternity around dangerous activity and a drinking club culture.

Sustaining FR2020: Research Questions

Sustaining Recruitment & Retention

- Reservist perceptions of the 'Offer' would change over time.
- It was felt that there was a disparity between TV adverts for the Reservists and the reality of being in the Reserves.

Army, Family & Employer – Time and Commitment

- Army is competing for time and is greedy.
- Work life balance is a challenge to achieve.

The Reservist's Experience of the Proposition: Recruit-centrism

- New financial benefits benefit some but make some older members jealous.

Entertaining the Reservist

- New emphasis on training at home and overseas.
- Images on the TV translate into much classroom work
- Some training needs to be repetitive.
- Requirements need to be tailored to units that are unlikely to deploy.
- Too much is on offer for some.
- Too many demands on Employer, Community and Engagement, Recruiting, etcetera risk basic skills being diluted if away all the time.

The Reservist's Experience of the Proposition: Promotion & Equipment

- Ex-regulars are spoiling promotion opportunities.
- Course scheduling and quality needs improving and too often it reflects the cycle/needs of the Regulars rather than that of someone's spare time.

The Employer Proposition

- Reluctance to declare reserve service to an employer.

The Missing Variable? Family Support/Supporting families – The White Paper acknowledged the role of families.

- Securing family support is key to sustaining the reserve beyond 2020.
- Families are key to enabling reservists to serve.
- Impact of Reserve Duty on families and the encroachment on their time.
- More needs to be done to engage the family.
- Bounty as a benefit to family.
- Role for unit social events, but costs involved (child care, travel, and etcetera).
- Army Families Federation keen to support reservists.

Conclusions and Recommendations

- Employer engagement is recognised as important however reserve service happens in spare time.
- Better scheduling of courses required – avoid cancellations.
- Resources could be better directed towards the 'old guard'.
- Support to families and family support important.
- Employer Engagement to be directed at Line Management.

Further Project Information & Results

Item 4 – Questions and Answers

Major General Munro raised the following points:

- This research was testing the view of the Reservists, shining a light on what the MOD did not know and would provide it the opportunity to be objective.
- As the size of the sample interviewed and number of units involved was still small, they should guard against initial statements about what they were finding being too definitive.
- The Reserve was a broad church and the perception of a reservist from Northern England might differ to one from London about the same thing.
- The Reserve was in transition and there were some things the MOD was getting right and some that still needed to be refined; the Family area needed careful consideration, as did the requirements of Phase 1 and 2 training, as a proportionate price paid for being a reservist.

Lord West thought that as the number of Black/Asian/minority/ethnics (BAME) in the Reserves was only 3% it was a concern for General Carter, the Chief of the General Staff. He asked (1) if any issues been identified that were discouraging individuals from these communities from joining, as these would need to be addressed first, and (2) had they looked at the USA which was hugely successful in getting BAME into its forces. **Dr Basham** replied that they had not looked at BAME specifically, but that they had interviewed a large number of people from different backgrounds. Also, their project was part of a broader programme and other project teams were working in different parts of the country who they hoped would capture some of this information in such multi-cultural places as Bristol. Regarding numbers, the Reserves were predominantly white and it was also interesting how often the USA came up as having a good model for its Reserves. **Dr Catignani** added that the University of Lancaster was looking specifically at BAME groups in the Reserves and had selected three different regiments to reflect disparity and variation. He believed that it was generally thought that the USA looked after their military much better than the UK.

Lord Freeman, having looked at this some 25 years ago when full employment had generally resulted in poor recruitment, asked if this was the case today. He was also concerned about the reputation of the NHS regarding its acceptance of Reserve service and had its recruitment figures for specialists improved. **Major General Munro** replied that the Regular Army tended to suffer from poor recruiting when the job market was buoyant but it was the opposite for Reserves and when it was a safe environment, employers were happier to let Reserves have time off for Reserve service. **Dr Basham** replied that there were huge disparities between different NHS Trusts among which was how much paid annual leave a reservist got.

Lord de Mauley asked about families, as the time required of a reservist was often family time rather than employer time and that there was not a one size fits all solution. **Brigadier van der Lande** replied that one reason for why the MOD had targeted employers was to protect a reservist's employment. They were also encouraging employers to give additional paid leave, or at least unpaid leave to allow two weeks training a year to take place and to ensure that this time off for training would not impinge on the reservists' annual leave allowance, which benefitted families. **Lord West** commented that it was important to keep Regular leavers records up to date so that contact was not lost.

In the absence of the chair due to a second division bell, Lord West closed the meeting by thanking Dr Catignani and Dr Basham for their research and said that he looked forward to the publication of their report.

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