HEADQUARTERS ROYAL SIGNALS
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RECORD OF DECISIONS AND ACTIONS OF THE 166TH CENTRAL COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE ROYAL SIGNALS ASSOCIATION, ON THE 4 SEPTEMBER 2026.

Present:	Brig CJ Thackray	RSA Chair
	Col E Bruce	D Corps Col
	Col D Craft	Gen Sec
	Col E Swift, ADC	Corps Col
	WO1(Corps SM) L Pell	Corps SM
	Mr W White	Area 1 N
	Mr K Bates	Area 1 S
	Mr H Ferguson	Area 2 N
	Mr M Nevill	Area 2 S/NI
	Mr P Osment	Area 5
	Ms G Pettigrew	Area Rep Wales
	Mr R Jephcote	Arae Rep Scotland
	Mrs T Muers	Asst Gen Sec
	Mrs E Cooper	RSA Admin Asst
	Mrs S Purdy	RSA Ops Mgr/Mtg Sec
Apologies:	Mr G Marsh	Area 4
In Attendance:	Lt Col P Jenkinson	COS

Discussions/Decisions/Actions

Item 1: Chair's Introduction

1. Chair thanked members for their support and hospitality during his first year and highlighted the value of engagement with branches across the Association. He encouraged branches to continue inviting him to branch and Association events where appropriate.
2. The Chair provided an update on discussions with the Corps Executive Board regarding proposals to address the gradual decline in RSA

membership. A proposal to formalise relationships between serving units and RSA branches had been considered by the Board; however, it was agreed that current operational pressures on the serving Corps meant that the proposal would not be taken forward at this time. The Board remained supportive of developing relationships between serving and retired communities at a local level, and further data collection had been requested to assess branch views. A briefing on this work would be provided later in the meeting.

3. The Chair also noted that competing work commitments would continue to affect his availability from time to time.

4. Finally, the Chair welcomed **Sarah Purdy** as the new RSA Operations Manager and congratulated **Tracey Muers** on her appointment as Assistant Corps Secretary.

Item 2: Actions carried over from the 165th Central Committee Meeting on 25 February 2026

5. The committee agreed the minutes from the previous meeting were an accurate record.

Item 3: Matters Arising from Record of Decisions

6. The Meeting Secretary confirmed that all actions arising from the previous Record of Decisions had either been completed or were being progressed as routine business apart from one.

7. An update was provided on the appointment of a new Scotland Area Representative following the decision of Jeff to stand down from the role after many years of service. Derek Lambert had agreed to succeed him and would attend the virtual Central Committee meeting in February as part of the handover process. Subject to approval, his appointment would be formally ratified at the AGM in March 2026.

    a. **Decision: The Central Committee supported the nomination of Derek Lambert as the next Scotland Area Representative, with formal ratification to take place at the AGM.**

Item 4: General Secretary's Report

8. The General Secretary welcomed recent staffing changes within RHQ, congratulating **Tracey Muers** on her appointment as Assistant Corps Secretary and welcoming **Sarah Purdy** as RSA Operations Manager. Members were asked to allow time for the new team to fully establish itself.

9. Website Update

    - The revised RSA website which had been reworked one year earlier, was reported to have bedded in successfully. Branches were able to link directly to their social media platforms, which improved access to current information.

- The website platform was now being upgraded to provide RHQ with greater flexibility in managing content.
- A temporary freeze on major website changes would be implemented during the migration period from 8 September.
- Members were advised that Last Post requests submitted during the migration week may experience a short delay in processing.

10. Branch Standards

- Members were reminded that the laying up of branch standards in Blandford Garrison Church remains a final option where no suitable local arrangement can be found.
- The preference remains for standards to be laid up locally where possible.

11. Future of the Association

The Gen Sec provided an update following consideration of the RSA membership proposal by the Corps Executive Board.

- The Master of Signals has recognised the issue of declining membership as a significant challenge and requested further work before any decisions were made.
- It was reported that RHQ was undertaking three strands of work to inform future discussions:
    - Distribution of surveys to current RSA members, serving personnel, and recent service leavers to understand expectations of the Association.
    - Identification and analysis of successful branches to capture and share best practice.
    - Development of enhanced communications with both branch members and the wider RSA membership, including approximately 9,000 to 10,000 members registered through the national branch structure.

12. Events and Key Engagements

The Gen Sec detailed the upcoming events but focused on those related to the 50th anniversary of HRH The Princess Royal as Colonel-in-Chief (2027). It is hoped that HRH The Princess Royal will attend three Royal Signals events during the anniversary year.

- Corps Weekend 2027
    - The Princess Royal Parade and activities on Elizabeth Field that usually took place on a Saturday will move to Friday 18 June 2027.
    - The change had been made to maximise the likelihood of attendance by HRH The Princess Royal.
    - Additional displays and activities were planned to showcase the development of the Corps during her 50 years as Colonel-in-Chief.

a: Action: Members were asked to publicise the date of the Corps weekend early to maximise veteran attendance.

b: Action: Members advised that accommodation on camp may be limited and that, to ensure attendance, they might have to book accommodation off camp.

- 50th Anniversary Celebration in Scotland
    - A major anniversary event was being planned in partnership with Lord Lyon and 32 Signal Regiment.
    - Potential locations included Edinburgh Castle, Stirling Castle or Dundee.
    - Dates were being considered for either July or September 2027
    - The event was expected to include participation by Scottish and Northern Ireland elements of the Corps, together with RSA members.

- Celebration of Corps Military Music
    - An event celebrating Royal Signals military music was being developed, potentially at Salisbury Cathedral.
    - Proposed participants included the Welsh Male Voice Choir, a Military Wives Choir, the Royal Signals Northern Band, and the Pipes and Drums.
    - The event was expected to take place in spring 2027.

13. Additional Initiatives

- RHQ was exploring the commissioning of a commemorative statuette to mark the Princess Royal's 50 years as Colonel-in-Chief.
- Work was underway to rename the Royal Signals Northern Band as "The Princess Royal's Band of the Royal Signals", subject to approval.
- Branches were encouraged to propose ideas for future regional events to strengthen engagement across the Association.

a: Action – Area Reps were to propose ideas for future regional events to strengthen engagement across the Association.

Item 5: Asst Gen Sec's Report

14. Benevolence and Welfare

- During the previous six months, the Royal Signals Charity awarded 185 grants to serving and retired members of the Corps, totalling just under £150,000.
- 32 grants were awarded to serving personnel to fund emergency travel home following bereavement or serious illness within their families.
- The charity provided death-in-service grants following the deaths of one Regular and one Reserve soldier. Payments were made directly to units to support families with funeral costs, travel and other associated expenses.
- The annual grant of £35,000 provided to the Army Benevolent Fund (ABF) continued to generate additional support for Royal Signals beneficiaries, with the ABF distributing a greater value of assistance to signallers than the original contribution provided.

15. Travel and Subsistence (T&S)
- RHQ intended to apply closer oversight to T&S expenditure to ensure funding is managed effectively and remains aligned with budgetary constraints.

a. Action: Area Reps were asked to provide forecasts of their Travel and Subsistence (T&S) requirements for the next six months.

16. Branch Standards and Pennants
- Members were advised that commemorative branch pennants from the branches that had submitted an order for significant anniversaries (for example, 75th and 100th anniversaries) would be posted to branches imminently.

a. Action: Area Reps to ensure branches that had submitted an order for pennants contact the Asst Corps Sec or Ops Manager if not received by October

Item 6: Operations Manager Report

17. During the previous six months, the Association had been notified of the deaths of 53 members. Funeral support had been provided in respect of 17 members.

18. The Committee noted continued growth in the Association's digital presence, particularly through Facebook. Work was underway to explore LinkedIn to engage members who do not use other social media platforms. Branches were reminded of the Association's expectations regarding appropriate social media conduct, and it was noted that inappropriate comments would continue to be removed where necessary.

19. Branches
- Members welcomed the successful launch of the Stafford Branch, whose inaugural meeting attracted 29 attendees, representing approximately 60% of those who had expressed an interest in attending.
- The closure of Dorset Branch was noted. Members discussed a proposal for Poole Branch to adopt the Dorset Branch name and invite former Dorset Branch members to transfer their membership. It was noted that this would also allow the Dorset Branch Standard to remain in use.

a: Action: Area 5 Rep to follow up the proposed name change.

20. SOS
- The Support Our Signallers scheme assisted three members during the reporting period. A further training course would be planned before the end of the year.

21. Events
- It was reported that the Association had secured an additional 20 places at the Cenotaph Parade, increasing representation to 80 participants. An update was also provided on Signals Sunday, with approximately 30 attendees expected.

Secretary's afternote: Numbers of attendees at Signals Sunday had increased to 50.

22. Standard Bearers
The Committee discussed the growing challenge of meeting requests for standard bearers at funerals. Members supported further work to explore the development of a wider pool of trained standard bearers, including potential support from serving personnel, reservists and branch members. It was agreed that branch standard bearers should remain the preferred option wherever available.

a. Action: Corps SM to assess interest within the serving and reserve Corps in supporting a wider standard bearer capability.

b. Action: Area Reps to encourage Branches to continue identifying members for training as standard bearers.

Item 7: Corps Update

23. The Corps continued to support a broad range of operational commitments, including air defence operations in the Middle East, support to deployed forces in Estonia, the transition from Bowman to TACNET, and ongoing development of electronic warfare and cyber capabilities.

24. Recruitment performance remained positive, with improved soldier inflow over the last 12 months and all officer recruitment targets achieved through both direct entry and transfers. While challenges persisted in some communications and cyber trades, mitigation measures are in place. The Committee also noted improved retention across key specialist trades, supported by recent financial retention incentives.

25. Reserve workforce numbers remained stable, with overall strength increasing steadily over the last 18 months. A mentoring programme had been introduced for Reserve Commanding Officers and senior leaders.

26. The Committee noted improvements in internal communications through the Vital Link newsletter and Defence Connect platforms, which provided greater engagement across the serving Corps.

27. An update was provided on the Corps Rejoin campaign, which achieved significant social media reach and had generated renewed interest from former members seeking to re-enter service.

28. Members noted the success of international engagement activities, including Defence Cyber Marvel.

29. Engagement with the Army Cadet Force remained strong, with support provided to cadet activities and achievement events. The internship programme (formerly the Gap Year Commission) continued to face recruitment challenges despite the availability of placements across several units

30. The Corps Colonel highlighted the outcome of the recent Joint Services Job Evaluation Team (JESJET) review, noting that all Royal Signals trades had seen an uplift in evaluation outcomes, with supervisors moving into the highest pay band in recognition of their responsibilities and specialist skills.

31. The Corps SM reported that, having only recently taken up post, he had limited updates to provide at this stage. However, he had been in contact with a number of RSMs regarding the planning for the Corps Weekend, particularly regarding accommodating the entire Corps in one location.

Item 8: Area Rep's Update

32. Scotland
    Concerns were raised regarding declining branch participation and attendance at national events, driven largely by an ageing membership, travel costs and the distance to events held in England. Discussion focused on the need for a more regional approach to engagement, including opportunities to deliver activities in Scotland. Support was expressed for planned events north of the border in 2027, with an emphasis on increasing member participation and exploring alternative branch models better suited to current member preferences.

33. Area 1 North
    Attendance at a Veterans Support Study Day highlighted the positive work of the new Valour programme, aimed at improving coordination of support services for veterans. The closure of the annual Eden Camp Reunion Day was reported due to declining attendance and rising costs, reflecting wider challenges faced by veteran organisations. It was noted that, as an alternative, branches had been encouraged to support the forthcoming all-services remembrance event at Eden Camp on 13th September.

34. Area 1 South
    Lincoln Branch continued to address tenancy-related matters, while Sheffield Branch temporarily suspended meetings following damage to its meeting venue caused by a roof collapse. No other significant branch issues were reported.

35. Area 2 North
    Concerns were discussed regarding the renaming of the National Memorial Arboretum's remembrance gardens and the potential impact on veterans' perceptions of the site. Liverpool Branch reported positive engagement and successful use of hybrid meetings to include members unable to attend in person. Southport Branch remained active, and recognition was given to long-serving member Cecil Raynard on his 100th birthday.

36. Area 2 South / Northern Ireland
    Branch activity remained positive overall. Shropshire and Birmingham branches reported strong engagement and healthy attendance, supported by active local communities. Northern Ireland Branch continued to maintain high membership and attendance levels, supported by a programme of commemorative events, visits and social activities, including participation in memorial services.

37. Area 3
    Several branches continued to face challenges relating to ageing membership, declining attendance and limited recruitment opportunities within the region. Bedford, Loughborough and East London branches remained active, while Cambridge, Norfolk and Peterborough were experiencing significant membership pressures. Consideration was being given to adopting a more regional East Anglia model to improve sustainability, supported by larger area-wide events and gatherings.

38. Area 4

No report was presented. A written report is available separately.

39. Area 5
Attendance remained a challenge across much of the area, although branch activity continued. Bristol remains active and in good health, while Salisbury was strengthening links with local military units and trialling new event formats to improve engagement. Efforts continued to develop activity in Swindon and establish a formal branch structure in Colerne.

40. Wales
Cardiff Branch reported a modest increase in membership and improved engagement with local Reserve units. Efforts continued to re-establish activity in West Wales. The Riders Branch remained highly active, delivering successful events including Flying Falcon and the Rally in the Valley, both of which attracted strong attendance. The branch also made a significant donation to the RSA Charity.

Item 9: Awards

41. The Committee approved the following awards, which includes a late nomination for a 60-year membership award.

    a. ***Decision: The following awards were granted.***

40 Year Awards
Robert Bruce – Poole
Steve Phillips – Liverpool
Philip Whitemore - Salisbury

50 Year Awards
Donald Titherington – Liverpool
Stephen Brennan – Harrogate
Stephen Gorman – Newcastle and District
Martin Hudson – Salisbury

60 Year Awards
Peter Skinner – Harrogate
Hermes Adrian Baldacchino – Harrogate
Kenneth Backett – Harrogate
David Aldous - Harrogate
Robert Buckley – Harrogate
Brian Black – Harrogate
Keith Parsons – Scarborough
Syd Wilson – Royal Hospital Chelsea
Derek Layton – Royal Hospital Chelsea
Russell Lindsay – Newcastle and District
Barry Doughty – South Wales
Kevin Justice – York

75 Year Awards
Clifford Webb – Harrogate
Kenneth Johnson - Harrogate

42. Two late nominations for Honorary Awards were considered. Members discussed the standard required for the Association's highest award and expressed concern that the supporting citations did not clearly demonstrate contributions that met the published criteria for exceptional service beyond regular participation and attendance. Whilst recognising the commitment and support provided by the nominees, the Committee agreed that a more robust and consistent assessment process was required. Consideration of the Honorary Award nominations was therefore deferred pending further review.

a. Action: The Area 3 Rep was asked to refine the deferred Honorary Award citations and submit them to the Gen Sec.

b. Action: Gen Sec was asked to establish a more robust and consistent process for the submission and assessment of future Honorary Award nominations.

Item 10: Any other business

43. A request came for clarification on the criteria for the Association's 50-Year Award. It was clarified that qualification is based on a combination of service in the Regular and/or Reserve Forces together with active Association membership. It was confirmed that periods of non-membership do not count towards eligibility. Members were reminded that the relevant policy guidance is available on the Association website within the governance and policy documentation.

Item 11. Date of next meeting

a. Decision: The date of the next Central Committee Meeting will be 17th February.

Item12: Concluding Comments

44. The Chair thanked all attendees for their contributions and highlighted the importance of continuing to adapt the Association's approach to member engagement in response to changing demographics and participation trends. Members were encouraged to support efforts to strengthen branch activity, promote regional engagement opportunities and share good practice across the Association.

45. The Chairnoted the positive work being undertaken by branches, volunteers and RHQ staff in supporting members, delivering events and maintaining the Association's presence across the UK. Appreciation was expressed to RHQ staff for their continued support and to all volunteers whose commitment contributes to the success of the Association.

46. The meeting closed with thanks to all attendees and a reminder of forthcoming Association events and activities.

S Purdy
RSA Ops Mgr

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