

BRANCH REGULATIONS

Made by Council in relation to the administrative structure review (based on v2 of the draft Branch Terms of Reference under the Bognor Regis Resolution proposals)

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1. The Branch Regulations give guidance to the Trustees and Branch members on how their Branch is organised and structured and how it is to function.
- 1.2. In these Branch Regulations words and expressions to which meanings are assigned by the Royal Charter, Rules and Byelaws shall have the same respective meanings.
- 1.3. These Branch Regulations shall be construed with the Royal Charter, Rules and Byelaws and, if there is any discrepancy the Royal Charter, Rules and Byelaws shall prevail.

2. INTRODUCTION – LEGAL STRUCTURE

- 2.1. All Branches are unincorporated charities (unless local law requires them to be something different) and therefore Branch committee members are the Trustees of that charity¹. The governance and management of the Branch is entrusted to the Branch Committee (“Trustees”), who comprise the Branch Officers and other elected Trustees. The Branch Committee is to exercise a controlling oversight and act upon the affairs of the Branch in accordance with the Royal Charter and Governance Handbook.
- 2.2. Branches, while legally separate from the Royal Charter body (registered charity number 226686 and SC037673), are subject to the oversight of the Council which is the overall governing body for the Association. Branches are to implement policies issued by the Council.
- 2.3. Article 2 of the Royal Charter defines the Object (the Purpose) of the Association and that of all Branches of the Association:

“The object for which the Association is established to promote, through comradeship engendered by its members, the welfare by charitable means of all serving and former members of Our Air Forces, their spouses and dependants, together with the widows and widowers and dependants of those who died whilst serving or subsequently.”

3. FUNCTIONAL PROVISIONS

- 3.1. All Branch correspondence must show in clear, legible characters the Branch’s full name: being the Royal Air Forces Association XXXXX Branch, the Branch address the

¹ Byelaw 18 (2)

Branch's Registered Charity Number (if any) and the Branch number as issued by HQ. The signatories of all correspondence are to clearly designate their appointment in legible, prominent characters. No one is authorised to use Association headed paper in a manner which may be misleading or may give the recipient the impression that they have a contract with the corporate body of The Royal Air Forces Association.

- 3.2. All Branches must be contactable via email. Trustees may claim reasonable expenses from the Branch General fund, for carrying out this function.

II ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

4. BRANCH COMMITTEE

- 4.1. The Branch Committee shall comprise of a minimum of three (3) Trustees and a maximum of eleven (11) Trustees of whom there shall be three (3) Officers, that is a Chairman, Treasurer and Secretary. A Branch may also agree in general meeting to elect a Vice-Chair as an Officer of the Branch. A minimum of three (3) non-conflicted Trustees, to include one (1) Officer, shall form a quorum.
- 4.2. Branches are to elect the Trustees from their Branch members, to serve for one (1), two (2), or three (3) years, as decided by vote at the Branch Annual General Meeting (AGM) and in accordance with these Branch Regulations..
- 4.3. All Trustees are to be members of the Association and must meet the requirements of Byelaw 9.
- 4.4. Trustees are to follow in every respect the duties and responsibilities as outlined by the Council and the BMC and are to adhere to all Association policies and procedures.
- 4.5. Trustees are to meet at least quarterly to properly execute and fulfil their obligations.
- 4.6. The Trustees shall have the management and control of the affairs of the Branch and the day-to-day administration of the property and income thereof with the power to delegate, subject to such instructions, reservations or restrictions that they may think fit, any of their powers to a sub-committee appointed from amongst the members of the Branch or otherwise constituted for the purpose.
- 4.7. The Trustees shall be responsible to Council for carrying out the Object of the Association as set in the Royal Charter Article 2 and the functions and duties of a Branch as set out in the Royal Charter Article 4 and 20; Rules 1, 3, 7, 8, 27 and 36; and Byelaws 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 18, 20, 25, 26 and 30.

- 4.8. Trustees shall ensure that any issues that may affect the future reputation of the Branch or the Association are notified promptly to the Secretary General or their nominee.
- 4.9. Trustees should identify those members of the Branch who do outstanding work for the Branch and who may be deserving of formal recognition for their efforts and nominate them accordingly for either an Area or National Presidential Certificate or a State award.
- 4.10. Trustees should liaise with local RAF stations/units, University Air Squadrons (UAS), military charities, Air Cadet Sqns and adjacent Branches.
- 4.11. Trustees shall ensure that Branch members are kept informed regarding Branch activities, and that beneficiary welfare need are met as far as is reasonable.
- 4.12. Trustees shall lead Branch membership recruitment and fundraising activities.

5. BRANCH PRESIDENT

5.1. The role of a Branch President

- 5.1.1. The Branch President is an optional ²appointment of the Branch to serve for as many three-year terms as decided by the Branch. The President must be a member of the Branch.
- 5.1.2. The Branch President shall hold office for three (3) years from the conclusion of the Branch AGM at which they were elected to the conclusion of the AGM in the year their term of office expires.
- 5.1.3. The Branch President need not be a Trustee.³ It is for the Branch in general meeting to decide whether or not of Branch President should be a member of the Branch Committee and a Trustee. If the President is not a Trustee, they may attend and speak at meetings of the Trustees but may not propose, second or vote.
- 5.1.4. A Branch President should have the ability to 'open doors', establish useful contacts and bring influence to bear to promote the best interests of the Association within the local community.

5.2. Key responsibilities of a Branch President are to:

- 5.2.1. Give clear, constructive and comprehensive encouragement to the Trustees when required.
- 5.2.2. Assist the Trustees with hosting local dignitaries at Branch events.

² Not all Branches have a President.

³ Some individuals are deterred from undertaking this role as they do not wish to be a Trustee. This provides for the Branch to decide whether the President should be an ex officio member of the Branch Committee (and therefore a Trustee) or not.

- 5.2.3. Present Branch awards.
- 5.2.4. Devote the time necessary to attend conferences, meetings and events.
- 5.2.5. Represent the Association within the local community.
- 5.2.6. Preside at the opening of the Branch AGM and give the presidential address.
- 5.2.7. If required by the Trustees, discuss suitable successors for the role of Branch President with the Branch and, having arrived at a consensus, negotiate discreetly and confidentially with the person targeted, to establish a willingness to serve and accept the duties involved.

6. BRANCH CHAIRMAN

6.1. The role of the Branch Chairman

- 6.1.1. The Branch Chairman is the senior elected Trustee on the Branch Committee. The Branch Chairman is to show strong leadership, management and diplomatic skills in ensuring that a close bond and liaison is maintained between the Trustees, the Branch members and their Area. The Branch Chairman should implement policies issued by the Council and the BMC but be prepared to represent the views and concerns of the Branch.
- 6.1.2. The Branch Chairman must have extensive knowledge of all issues affecting the Branch and ensure that it complies with Association policies and procedures. The Branch Chairman must be conversant with the Governance Handbook and other relevant policies and procedures and must be prepared to advise the Trustees accordingly.

6.2. Key responsibilities of a Branch Chairman are to:

- 6.2.1. Chair and manage meetings effectively ensuring that they are planned accordingly to content and time, avoiding the imposition of personal ideas on the meeting but encouraging participation from members.
- 6.2.2. Direct all Branch activities and delegate duties to the Trustees and ensure that these duties are performed effectively and in accordance with Association policies and procedures.
- 6.2.3. Ensure that proper handovers take place between newly elected Branch Officers, Trustees and their predecessors. This includes ensuring that all minute books, correspondence, Association publications, Branch papers and keys are handed over.
- 6.2.4. Ensure the Treasurer has a correct audit / examination undertaken and that this is agreed by both the outgoing and incoming Treasurers and that both are satisfied with the security of cash and cheque books.

- 6.2.5. Ensure that the Wings Appeal, welfare and membership responsibilities of the Branch as identified below in paragraphs 26, 28 and 29 respectively, are met.
- 6.2.6. Set an example as an active member of the Association and to be available for advising both the Trustees and Branch members when necessary.
- 6.2.7. Ensure that sub-committees, individual Trustees and members for specialist functions are appointed where necessary.
- 6.2.8. Ensure that all Trustees, Committee members and others filling Branch appointments are aware of their duties and responsibilities and encourage them to undergo training.
- 6.2.9. Wherever possible ensure that all new Members receive an induction to the Branch and the Association.

7. BRANCH VICE-CHAIRMAN

7.1. The role of the Vice-Chairman

- 7.1.1. The role of a Branch Vice-Chairman is to support the Branch Chairman in managing the Branch. The Branch Vice-Chairman is expected to show strong leadership, management and diplomatic skills when deputising for the Branch Chairman.

7.2. Key responsibilities of a Branch Vice-Chairman

- 7.2.1. Deputise for the Branch Chairman in his/her absence.
- 7.2.2. Deal with any specific tasks given to them by the Chairman, such as the organisation of a Branch event or chairing of a sub-committee.

8. BRANCH TREASURER

8.1. The role of a Branch Treasurer

- 8.1.1. The role of a Branch Treasurer is to administer the financial management of the Branch, ensuring that the Chairman and Trustees are always aware of the financial state of the Branch.
- 8.1.2. The Branch Treasurer must be conversant with the relevant provisions pertaining to all financial matters as prescribed both by local law and as set out in the Governance Handbook, the Finance Handbook and other relevant policies and procedures. The Branch Treasurer must be prepared to advise the Trustees accordingly. The Branch Treasurer must always bring to the attention of the Chairman and Committee the financial implications of any decision that they are considering.
- 8.1.3. The Branch Treasurer must present the accounts in a clear and intelligible way at the AGM, bearing in mind that many members may not be familiar with accounting procedures and should answer any questions openly.

8.1.4. The Branch Treasurer should be computer literate to enable him/her to maintain and keep back-ups of Branch accounts in an electronic format.

8.2. Key responsibilities of a Branch Treasurer are to:

8.2.1. Attend the Association's ['Branch Treasurers'] course at the earliest opportunity⁴.

8.2.2. Attend refresher training in accordance with Association policy.

8.2.3. Be responsible to the Trustees for all the financial affairs of the Branch, including the annual accounts and the Branch bank account.

8.2.4. Attend Trustee meetings and produce a report for the Trustees at least quarterly to advise the Trustees and, when necessary, the Branch members on the financial affairs of the Branch.

8.2.5. Control all monetary transactions, ensuring that they meet with the requirements of the Governance Handbook, the guidelines contained within the Finance Handbook and any guidance provided by the local regulators and record these in the Branch receipt and payment ledger, retaining all receipts and supporting documents on behalf of the Trustees.

8.2.6. Ensure that the Branch accounts are subject to annual independent examination (or an audit where the Branch meets the higher financial threshold) and to submit the Branch accounts to the Secretary General or their nominee.

8.2.7. Ensure that all cheques for payment are made out correctly and that they bear the registered Charity number (where applicable) and the Branch title. Cheques should only be made out where there is appropriate supporting paperwork. Also, to ensure that all cheques are signed by at least two (2) of the authorised signatories⁵, normally one of whom shall be the Treasurer, and that they are clearly endorsed 'A/C Payee only'. No signatory is to sign a blank cheque. Authorised signatories must not be family members or cohabitants.

8.2.8. Ensure that the Trustees authorise annually the limit the Treasurer may expend on a single item without reference to the Trustees, and that this authority is minuted.

8.2.9. Ensure that all expenditure, other than petty cash, is authorised by two signatories and that the details of all expenditure are reported to the Trustees at their regular meetings for their approval. All such reports are to be minuted. Also, to ensure that if a petty cash system is in use that it is authorised by the Trustees and that it operates as an imprest system. The petty cash book is to be checked monthly by the Treasurer and at least one other Branch Officer and must be countersigned by these individuals as being correct. The petty cash limit should not exceed £50.

⁴ Details will be published in due course

⁵ Charity Commission guidance on financial best practice – CC25

9. BRANCH SECRETARY

9.1. The role of a Branch Secretary

- 9.1.1. The Branch Secretary has a very important position in that they are responsible to the Branch Chairman and Committee for the efficient management of the Branch administration.
- 9.1.2. The Branch Secretary's role as part of this remit is to organise Trustee and general Branch meetings on a regular basis, to organise AGMs and SGMs and to liaise with the Area, BMC / HQ regularly to update information such as replacement officers, handle all vital documents pertaining to the Branch and control all aspects of the governance of the Branch.
- 9.1.3. The Branch Secretary should be computer literate to enable them to maintain and to keep back-ups of Branch records in an electronic format.

9.2. Key responsibilities of a Branch Secretary are to:

- 9.2.1. Act as point of contact for receipt of correspondence issued by the Council, Area Council or by HQ and to ensure that all correspondence received is communicated to the Trustees for appropriate action.
- 9.2.2. Liaise with the Branch Chairman in the preparation of the agendas for all Branch meetings, including Trustee, Branch and General meetings, ensuring that all the Trustees are provided with the relevant details.
- 9.2.3. Attend and record minutes of all Branch meetings, including Trustee, Branch and General meetings; ensure that such Minutes are made available to all members and safeguard all papers and documents of the Branch, especially legal documents such as insurance policies.
- 9.2.4. Oversee the preparations for the Branch Annual General Meeting and particularly in relation to Trustee elections.
- 9.2.5. Be the first point of contact for any insurance and data protection queries.
- 9.2.6. Be able to access all published handbooks, publications and guides for reference documents electronically.
- 9.2.7. Forward without delay any information required by or on behalf of the Council, or Area Council or HQ.
- 9.2.8. Ensure all returns, including to the Association and regulators, are fully completed, signed and dated and submitted within the determined timescale.

10. TRUSTEES (BRANCH COMMITTEE)

10.1. The role of a Trustee

- 10.1.1. The governance and management of the Branch is entrusted to the Trustees who are to exercise a controlling oversight and act upon the affairs of the Branch in accordance with Charity Law and other relevant legislation and regulation, the Royal Charter and Governance Handbook and the Association's policies and Standard Operating Procedures (SOP).
- 10.1.2. The Trustees are responsible for delivering the vision of the Association which is "... to ensure their [those that are serving in 'Our Air Forces' or who have served and their dependents] sacrifice does not result in suffering, poverty or loneliness..."
- 10.1.3. Paraphrased from the Objects⁶ of the Association, Trustees are "... to promote, through the comradeship engendered by its members, the welfare by charitable means of the RAF family."
- 10.1.4. Trustees are jointly, and individually, legally responsible for the good governance of the Branch: ensuring that the Branch is legally compliant and solvent, and are responsible for all acts and omissions of the Branch. This includes responsibility for ensuring that data protection, health and safety, safeguarding, fundraising and other laws are adhered to. Trustees are individually liable for any liability that exceeds the value of the Branch's assets and is not covered by any form of insurance.
- 10.1.5. A Trustee is to be ever vigilant that they always serve the interests of the Association.

10.2. Key responsibilities of a Trustee

- 10.2.1. Ensure that the Branch fulfils the Association's charitable purposes and objects and does not breach any of the requirements or rules set out in the Governance Handbook.
- 10.2.2. Ensure that funds are spent or earmarked for the purposes for which they were raised and avoid undertaking activities that might place the Branch's funds, assets, volunteers and reputation at undue risk.
- 10.2.3. Ensure that the Branch complies with charity (and other) law and with the requirements of the regulator(s) (in the territories within which they operate), that the Branch prepares reports on what it has achieved, accounts and Annual Returns as required by law and the Governance Handbook.
- 10.2.4. Be fully conversant with and adhere to the contents of the Governance Handbook as well as Association policies and procedures.

⁶ Royal Charter Article 2

- 10.2.5. Attend any training required, as directed by the Branch Chairman, or in accordance with Association policies to ensure they remain conversant with changes in legislation, regulation and Association policies.
- 10.2.6. Attend Branch meetings and participate in decision making, managing the Branch's resources responsibly and acting with care and diligence.
- 10.2.7. Act with integrity and avoid any personal conflict of interest or misuse of Association funds or assets and not receive any payments out of the Association's funds other than reasonable and necessary out-of-pocket expenses, such as the cost of travel to attend meetings.
- 10.2.8. Assist with the Wings Appeal and other fundraising activities within the Branch.
- 10.2.9. Respond in a timely manner with requests from Council or the Area Council, as well as being a key liaison between members of the Branch and the Area Council representatives.
- 10.2.10. Assist in appointing any necessary sub-committees or in making individual appointments for any special duty or position.
- 10.3. All Trustees and sub-committee members are to accept and sign the following agreement "I acknowledge my responsibility as Branch Officer/Trustee and agree to follow in every respect the duties and responsibilities as contained in the Royal Charter, the Governance Handbook and the Finance Handbook and as required by the Council and the relevant charities law. I also agree to my contact details being published (hard copy and digitally) subject to data protection laws. I will be vigilant in serving the interests of the Royal Air Forces Association at all times."⁷

11. TRUSTEE ELECTIONS

- 11.1. A blank nomination sheet ⁸is to be circulated to Branch members or, if available, placed on the Branch notice board or published on the Branch web site, not less than twenty-one (21) days prior to the AGM.
- 11.2. The nomination sheet must list each Branch Office, and its tenure (one (1), two (2) or three (3) years as agreed by the Branch in General Meeting). The nomination sheet must also identify the position(s) the candidate is being nominated for and require the following information: name of nominee/ candidate, proposer and seconder. Nominees, proposers and seconders must all be members of the Branch and must sign the form to indicate their consent to being nominated, their proposal and seconding as appropriate.

⁷ This is a reduced version of the forms signed by Council and all members of its sub-committees

⁸ A template will be developed

- 11.3. No individual canvassing is permitted. Candidates may submit a CV no longer than one page of A4, with a passport-size photo attached.
- 11.3.1. Candidates may wish to consider what will help the decision of voters: for example, Association / RAF-specific experience, relevant professional experience and a personal statement.
- 11.3.2. Candidates should note that CVs may be edited before they are distributed to members. Candidates may be asked to make alterations (which they can accept or decline).
- 11.4. The Branch President, or other nominated member who is not standing for election, will take the chair during the election of the Branch Chairman.
- 11.5. If present, those standing for committee positions may be asked to identify themselves. Voting is to be by a ballot of the Members of the Branch present unless the position is unopposed in which case the person is elected automatically. Only those Branch members present at the meeting are eligible to vote. However, a member who has not paid their membership subscription in the current year shall not be entitled to vote at any General Meeting of the Branch in that year if their subscription is in arrears by more than one month unless payment of their subscription has been suspended, postponed or waived under Byelaw 7 (6). In the event of a tied vote for an election to Office, the members are to be invited to vote again by secret ballot, and if this procedure still produces a tie, the matter is to be decided by lot.
- 11.6. No individual shall be elected or appointed to more than one (1) Officer position (Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer) on the Branch Committee⁹, but this shall not exclude a Trustee from undertaking one (1) additional specialist function (e.g. Standard Bearer, Branch Welfare Officer etc.) on behalf of the Trustees.
- 11.7. To avoid conflicts of interests and / or conflicts of loyalty¹⁰, Branch Officer roles (Chairman, Treasurer, Secretary and Vice-Chairman if appointed) must not be held by close family members (i.e. spouses, partners, parents / children, or siblings as well as spouses and partners of siblings: "conflicted Trustees") **SAVE THAT** conflicted Trustees may continue to act provided that **EITHER**:
 - 11.7.1. the total number of Trustees is not less than five (5); and
 - 11.7.2. only one of the conflicted Trustees is a signatory for the Branch bank accounts together with other duly appointed and authorised Trustees, **OR**

⁹ This avoids conflicts of interest.

¹⁰ The Essential Trustee CC3

11.7.3. in the event of there being less than five (5) Trustees the Branch Secretary may apply in writing from year-to-year on behalf of the conflicted Trustees to the Council for consent to serve jointly on the Committee (subject to sub paragraph 11.7.1 and 11.7.2).

11.7.4. Paragraph 35 of these Branch Regulations shall not apply to this clause.

11.8. In the event of a vacancy arising amongst the Branch Officers, the same shall be filled for the remaining period of the Branch's electoral year until the end of the original term, by co-optation of an existing Trustee, which will be subject to confirmation by election at the next Branch Annual General Meeting.

11.9. In the event of a vacancy on the Branch Committee which reduces the number of Trustees below the minimum of three (3), the vacancy shall be filled for the remaining period of the Branch's electoral year until the end of the original term, by co-optation of a Branch Member to the Branch Committee. Providing that the maximum number of Branch Committee members is not exceeded, the Branch Committee may co-opt up to two Branch Members to the Branch Committee. Co-opted Trustees must meet the eligibility criteria set out in Byelaw 9 (The Council – Qualification and Removal) and may propose, second and vote. Co-opted Trustees shall serve only until the next Annual General Meeting where they shall be eligible to stand for election to the Branch Committee.

12. RETIREMENT, RESIGNATION OR DISMISSAL OF TRUSTEES

12.1. The Association recognises that there are certain circumstances when the relationship between the Branch Committee and a Trustee must come to an end. The following circumstances will make the role of a Trustee untenable:

12.1.1. The Trustee's written notice of resignation.

12.1.2. The Trustee ceasing to meet the other eligibility criteria set out in Byelaw 9.

12.1.3. The Trustee becoming incapable for medical reasons of fulfilling the duties of a Trustee.

12.1.4. The Trustee being directly or indirectly interested in any contract linked to the Branch's activities and failing to declare that interest.

12.1.5. The Trustee failing to attend meetings regularly. Trustees are expected to attend meetings and any Trustee who is absent for two meetings in a twelve-month period, shall have their position on the Branch Committee reviewed by the Branch Chairman.

12.1.6. Any Trustee who is absent for three (3) consecutive Committee meetings in a twelve (12) month period shall be deemed to have vacated their seat unless a good and

sufficient reason has been given and is duly recorded in the minutes as acceptable to the Trustees.

- 12.1.7. The Trustee failing to fulfil their duties and responsibilities or not meeting the requirements of the role profile.
- 12.2. The Branch Chairman reserves the right to ask a Trustee to relinquish the Trustee's office if there is an evident conflict with the Association's mission, values and objectives, or where there is failure to accept a majority decision of the Trustees.
- 12.3. The Branch Chairman shall update the Charity Commission (or other regulator as required) of any change in Trustees and shall notify Secretary General or their nominee, of all changes.
- 12.4. In the case of the Chairman being subject to one or more of the above reasons for Dismissal etc. then the President or the Branch Vice-Chairman may preside.
- 12.5. In the event that the Branch Committee seeks to resign en-masse or a Trustee resignation will reduce the number of Trustees below three (3), the notice of resignation shall not take effect until the vacancies are filled in accordance with clause 11.9¹¹. If no members, who meet the eligibility criteria set out in Byelaw 9, are willing to be appointed a Special General Meeting must be called to consider Branch closure. In such circumstances the existing Trustees remain responsible for the orderly closure of the Branch.

13. OTHER BRANCH APPOINTMENTS

- 13.1. Branch members can be appointed to carry out Branch roles, including Branch Life and Branch Vice-Presidents, as required by the Trustees. The Trustees, at their first meeting¹² following the AGM, will make further specialist appointments. These appointees are appointed by function (Standard Bearer, Branch Welfare Officer etc.) and have no voting rights on the Branch Committee, unless they were also elected as a Trustee at the AGM.¹³

¹¹ Mass resignation by the Trustees is classed as a 'Serious Incident' and the resigning Trustees are required to report this both to their local charity regulator and the Secretary General or their nominee. The Association is required to make a parallel report to the regulator.

¹² Additional appointments or to replace individuals may be conducted at any subsequent meeting of the Trustees.

¹³ In responding to the many Branches who have reported that they have members willing to undertake other roles in the Branch, however, they are unwilling to do so as they do not wish to take on the responsibilities of being a Trustee.

- 13.1.1. **NOTE:** Branch members appointed to Branch roles who are given the right to attend Trustee meetings with full voting or deliberative powers are Trustees of the Branch.¹⁴.
- 13.2. Close family members (i.e. spouses, partners, children, parents and siblings as well as spouses and partners of siblings) must not hold positions in which they approve each other's expenses or oversee and check on the work of another, unless allowed under 11.7.
- 13.3. Close family members should not sign each other's nominations for Association or state Awards.

III MEETINGS

14. BRANCH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING - GENERAL PROVISIONS

- 14.1. A Branch is to hold an Annual General Meeting (AGM) once a year and within three months of the close of the Financial Year, i.e. between 1 January and 31 March each year. Where an AGM cannot be held face to face these may be held virtually. In accordance with Rule 16. (6) & (7).
- 14.2. A notice convening the AGM.¹⁵ must be circulated to all members of the Branch, the Secretary General or their nominee at least twenty-one (21) days before the date of the AGM and placed on the Branch notice board (where possible) or on the Branch web site. This information must be circulated as widely as possible and where members have email addresses it should be sent by email. Included with the convening notice should be:
- A reply slip to confirm attendance or otherwise.
 - Information on how to add items to the agenda for discussion at the AGM.
 - A nomination sheet for Trustees.
- 14.3. The purpose of the Branch AGM is to:
- Review the previous year's activities and to adopt objectives for the following year.
 - Adopt the Trustees' annual report and accounts and receive the independent examination report.
 - Elect Officers and Committee Members (all Trustees).

¹⁴ Confirming that not all Branch roles require the incumbent to become a Trustee and the criteria by which a member given a Branch role would be considered a Trustee

¹⁵ A template will be developed

- Where the Branch has a President, decide whether the President shall be a Trustee and elect the President on three yearly basis.
- Consider resolutions for submission to the Area Conference or to the Annual Conference Committee.
- Appoint delegate(s) to Area and Annual Conferences.

The conduct of elections shall be in accordance with Byelaw 11 (Conference and Elections – Voting).

14.4. AGM Preparation

- 14.4.1. The Agenda¹⁶ is to be discussed before the AGM by the Branch Chairman and Secretary. Any items raised by the members should be included if deemed appropriate.
- 14.4.2. The Agenda and request for nominations for Office and/or Committee are to be circulated to all Branch members, the Secretary General or their nominee, at least twenty-one (21) days before the AGM.
- 14.4.3. Nominations for Officers and Trustees are to be returned no later than seven (7) days before the AGM and shall be checked by the Secretary for eligibility for office or position. The Branch Secretary will create a master nominations list and circulate to Branch members or, if available, place it on the notice board or Branch website along with the AGM Agenda.
- 14.4.4. If more than one person is nominated for an office or position a ballot is to be held at the AGM.
- 14.4.5. If the office of Branch Chairman is due for election, the President¹⁷ should take the chair during the election.
- 14.4.6. The President's address is to contain Association matters external to the Branch.
- 14.4.7. The Chairman should prepare his/her report and review of the Branch plan¹⁸. A Branch plan should include:
- Membership – plan for developing active members through recruitment and retention and taking part in community activities.

¹⁶ A template will be developed

¹⁷ Where a Branch does not have a President, another person in attendance at the meeting who is not standing for the role of Chair may be nominated by those present to chair this part of the meeting.

¹⁸ Successful Branches generally have a written down plan of what the Branch is intending to do during the year ahead– this is 'best practice' and it is hoped will help Branches to thrive.

- Welfare work – plan for providing Branch Support e.g. through hospital and home visiting and the network of hospital and home visiting volunteers for befriending visits.
- Fundraising - plan to maintain and if possible, increase Wings Appeal and Branch fundraising activities¹⁹.
- Functions and events – plan to provide functions and events for members and the wider local community to raise awareness and promote the work of the Branch and the Association.
- Training – plan for Branch Officers and Trustees to undertake training and attend courses / workshops provided by the Association.
- Ceremonial – plan for Remembrance e.g. Battle of Britain, Armistice etc.

14.4.8. The reports given at the AGM should be used as the basis for the Branch Annual Report; a template for the Annual Report is available from the Secretary General or their nominee²⁰.

15. BRANCH COMMITTEE MEETING

15.1. First Meeting after the AGM

15.1.1. The first meeting of the newly elected Trustees²¹ should take place as soon as possible after the AGM.

15.1.2. The Branch Secretary will complete the Form 1056 (Branch Information) and submit it to the Secretary General or their nominee as soon as possible after the first meeting of the Trustees. The deadline for the receipt of this document by the Secretary General or their nominee is 31 March.

15.2. Trustee Meetings

15.2.1. Trustees Meetings must be held at least quarterly. The Trustees meeting must be quorate, if it is not all decisions will be null and void.

15.2.2. Trustees are to promote actively the objects of the Association within its allocated geographical area or branch member constituency in the case of Virtual Branches. Trustees Meetings are the management tool by which the Committee plans and implements its responsibilities.

¹⁹ Fact Sheets 4a and 4b, available on the Members' Portal, provide additional detail on Branch fundraising activities.

²⁰ Provides clarity that there is no requirement to duplicate existing work by the Trustees when producing the Branch's Annual Report.

²¹ The Trustees are elected as individuals who, collectively form the 'Branch Committee'

15.2.3. All Committee members (including those appointed under para 13), both elected and appointed, are entitled to attend Trustees' Meetings.

15.2.4. All Committee Meetings will be chaired by the Branch Chairman unless they are prevented from attending in which case the Vice-Chairman or any other person present will chair the meeting.

15.2.5. Trustees may participate in meetings in accordance with Rule 16 (5) – (7).

15.2.6. The Agenda is to be short, carefully planned and specific to the Branch's work and should be agreed by the Chairman and the Secretary. Papers, letters and reports should be circulated with the agenda. This permits short discussion prior to voting.

15.2.7. An Agenda may include:

- The Dedication.
- Chairman's opening remarks (theme of meeting).
- Apologies for absence.
- Conflicts of interest.
- Minutes of previous Committee Meeting.
- Matters arising.
- Update by Chairman.
- Financial Report
- Reports by Officers and specialist appointments.
- Branch Programme – work achieved – future targets – programme of activities etc.
- Date of next Committee Meeting.

15.2.8. Minutes of the previous meeting are to be circulated before the Meeting.

15.2.9. Correspondence should, generally, not be read out to the Committee. A float file containing recent correspondence should be available for Committee Members to read before the meeting.

15.2.10. When welfare cases are discussed the anonymity of the beneficiary must always be respected.

15.2.11. Reports from Officers and specialist appointments should be circulated with the Agenda at least three (3) days prior to the meeting.

16. GENERAL BRANCH MEETINGS

- 16.1. General Branch Meetings must be held at regular intervals, preferably at least quarterly²².
- 16.2. Members may attend a General Branch Meeting in accordance with Rule 8.
- 16.3. General Branch Meetings are a means for letting the Branch members know what is happening in the Association, BMC, Area and Branch. The Branch Chairman is to report against the objectives outlined at the AGM.
- 16.4. A General Branch Meeting is an opportunity to seek volunteers to help with Branch activities.
- 16.5. The Agenda should be short, carefully planned and specific to the Branch's work and should be agreed by the Chairman and the Secretary. Papers, letters and reports should be circulated with the agenda and/or made available for members to read before the commencement of the meeting. This permits short discussion prior to voting. A social activity may follow. An Agenda may include
 - The Dedication.
 - Chairman's opening remarks (theme of Meeting).
 - Apologies for absence.
 - Introduction of new members.
 - Minutes of previous General Meeting.
 - Matters arising.
 - Update by Chairman.
 - Reports by Officers.
 - Branch Programme.
 - Points for the next meeting.
 - Date of next General Meeting.

17. **SPECIAL GENERAL MEETING (SGM)**

- 17.1. If a Branch has a single matter to discuss / debate an SGM may be called at any time by the Trustees or by written request of not less one-tenth of the members of the Branch.

²² These are 'membership meetings' not the meetings of the Trustees i.e. the Branch Committee. The suggested agenda gives an indication of what the meeting might contain, it is not intended that this is prescriptive, and the Trustees should plan meetings which engage and inform members

- 17.2. The Branch may, at an SGM convened for that purpose, by resolution of the Trustees or at the request of a minimum of two-thirds of the Members of the Branch, remove from office or position any Trustee, and may elect another Member to take the place of a person so removed, or of a person who has resigned or of a person who has ceased to be a Member of the Committee.
- 17.3. Seven (7) days' notice of an SGM is to be given to all Branch members.

IV FINANCE

18. Financial Responsibility

- 18.1. The Trustees are collectively responsible for all Branch funds. The Trustees are responsible for ensuring that there are adequate controls and accounting records, and that expenditure complies with the policies and procedures of the Association and with relevant charity law. The Branch Treasurer controls the fund under the Trustees' direction and must report the Branch's financial state to the Trustees at least once a quarter.
- 18.2. The Trustees are to approve the Treasurer's paying limit. The limit is to be established each year and recorded in the Trustees' minutes. Only the Trustees can authorise proposed expenditure above this limit and such authority must be minuted.

19. Policy on the Use of Charitable Funds

- 19.1. All funds held by Association Branches are charitable.²³
- 19.2. Any funds held with restricted terms specified by the donor must be used only within the terms of the restriction.
- 19.3. Any funds donated to or raised by a Branch for Welfare may be used only for Welfare purposes as specified in the Objects in the Royal Charter.
- 19.4. A Branch may not use its funds to subsidise the running expenses or capital expenditure of another Branch.
- 19.5. Branches are not permitted to give grants or to make donations to other Charities except as permitted by the Royal Charter.²⁴
- 19.6. Organised events specifically in connection with the Wings Appeal (such as Wings Appeal Ball), fundraising for the Branch or a Branch function (such as an Anniversary Dinner or a ceremonial occasion) should be treated as part of the normal business of the Branch and should be discussed and agreed at a Trustees' meeting prior to any

²³ The issue of Branch funds being charitable has been raised during the consultation feedback. Membership subscriptions are recognised as donations by HMRC enabling gift aid to be reclaimed. The Charity Commission has confirmed that all Branch funds are charitable.

²⁴ Royal Charter Article 3 (c)

financial commitment being made. They should not be run at a loss, as to do so would incur expenditure that does not qualify as charitable, and any surpluses should be donated either to the Wings Appeal or used for Branch activities if not raised specifically for the Wings Appeal. All the receipts and payments in respect of those events should be accounted for in the Branch accounts.

- 19.7. Branches are permitted to use Branch funds to undertake Remembrance events.²⁵ Branches must attempt to secure services at little or no cost. Expenditure must be reasonable and proportionate. Local Authorities must be encouraged to meet the costs of any Civil Act of Remembrance, even if the Association organises an event on their behalf.
- 19.8. Branch funds may not be used to create, clean, repair or update Memorials unless the Memorial is owned by the Branch and responsibility has not been passed to another party. The upkeep of memorials is not part of the Association's charitable purpose.
- 19.9. Branches may spend funds on administrative / organisational purposes (like paying insurance, travel expenses, meeting room rental, etc.); recruiting members, but the money spent must be reasonable.²⁶
- 19.10. Branches may spend fund reimbursing legitimate and reasonable expenses of trustees. Local regulatory advice must be followed in the payment of expenses.²⁷
- 19.11. Branches are not permitted to subsidise Association clubs or any other social purpose from charitable funds whether by way of carrying charges which should properly fall to the club or social purpose, by making loans or by making reductions or deferments of rent due to the Branch from the club.²⁸ To do so would be to misemploy charitable funds and might, after due process, result in the Trustees, personally, being required to reimburse the Branch.
- 19.12. Trustees who misuse or misappropriate Branch funds could, after due process, be held personally liable to refund those funds to the Branch.²⁹

20. Banking³⁰

²⁵ Royal Charter Article 3 (d) e.g. Battle of Britain Day, VE Day, VJ Day, Armistice etc.

²⁶ Royal Charter Article 3 (r)

²⁷ A Branch Expenses Policy template will be produced based on the Charity Commission's guidance.

²⁸ Deferment of rent is only allowable under exceptional circumstance – guidance should be sought from HQ prior to offering any deferment of rent.

²⁹ Guidance on making spending decisions and what branch funds can be used for is set out in Fact Sheet 4a and 4b

³⁰ Sections 20 – 24 relate to the guidance in CC8, CC15, CC15c, CC15d, CC16, CC17, CC32, The Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008. 2009 Order: The Charities Acts 1992 and 1993 (Substitution of Sums) Order 2009 (SI 2009 No. 508). 2014 Regulation: The Charities (Exception from Registration) (Amendment) Regulations 2014 (SI 2014 No. 242). 2015 Order: The Charities Act 2011 (Accounts and Audit) Order 2015 (SI 2015 No.321). 2015 Group Regulations: The Charities Act 2011 (Group Accounts) Regulations

- 20.1. The Branch must maintain its own bank accounts which bear the name of the Branch. On-line banking may be used by the Branch in accordance with these TORs and the Finance Handbook.
- 20.2. All Branch accounts must be held in the name of The Royal Air Forces Association [Branch Name]. Personal accounts or accounts in the name of Trustees must NOT be used, even for temporary cash balances.
- 20.3. Every cheque in the chequebook is to be endorsed with the Branch's name and the Charity's registered number (if any) (Registered Charity No. xxxxxx).
- 20.4. Branches holding a combined amount (branch, welfare, deposit accounts etc.) in excess of £5,000 must have a reserves policy in place to state why the Branch holds such amounts and what they will be used for.
- 20.5. Branches holding a combined amount (branch, welfare, deposit accounts etc.) in excess of £10,000 in local bank accounts should consider transferring the excess to the Branch Deposit Fund where the funds will be 'ring-fenced' (restricted) for the Branch.
- 20.6. Branches holding any form of investments must comply with all aspects of the Trustee Act 2000 and / or the Charities & Trustees Investment (Scotland) Act 2005 and the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000 (as they may be amended, extended or re-enacted from time to time) or equivalent local legislation for branches outside the UK.
- 20.7. The Branch Treasurer is to maintain an account ledger, either in electronic or hardcopy format. When keeping records in electronic format, regular printouts and back-ups are to be made and stored remotely and securely.
- 20.8. The Treasurer is to record all income and expenditure in each activity fund within the account (e.g. 'General', 'Welfare', 'Fundraising'). All Branch funds, whatever their purpose, are classed as charitable funds.
- 20.9. The Treasurer, under the Trustees' direction, will safeguard the Branch account chequebook, paying-in book and bank statements.

21. Accounting

- 21.1. Every financial transaction, income, expenditure and transfer between accounts must be recorded in the Branch's financial records.
- 21.2. Cash and cheques are to be banked at the earliest opportunity.

- 21.3. All items of expenditure must be supported by invoices or receipts. On rare occasions, when an item of expenditure is incurred for which no invoice or receipt is available, the person incurring the expenditure should create and sign a voucher, detailing what the expenditure relates to and the amount involved. The voucher must be countersigned by an independent Officer of the Branch.
- 21.4. The Branch Treasurer is to reconcile the bank statements with the entries in the ledger and with the chequebook stubs and paying-in book. On each occasion when the accounts are presented to the Trustees it must be recorded in the Branch minutes whether the statements and the ledger had been reviewed and reconciled.
- 21.5. Vouchers, invoices and receipts must be kept for a period of seven (7) years.
- 21.6. Where Branches operate a Petty Cash account, the account must be held by the Branch Treasurer. All petty cash payments and reimbursements must be recorded in the account ledger
- 21.7. In case of cheques being drawn for cash all the supporting receipts must be provided. If the amount on the receipts is less than the amount on the advance cheque, the balance must be returned and recorded in the ledger.

22. Annual Report and Accounts

- 22.1. The Branch's Financial Year ends on 31 December annually. Each Branch must prepare an annual Trustees report and accounts³¹. It is the responsibility of the Trustees to ensure that the report and accounts are a true and accurate reflection of the Branch's activities for the previous year. The report and accounts are to be signed by the Branch Chairman (or other nominated Officer of the Branch in the absence of the Branch Chairman), following approval by the Branch Committee.
- 22.2. The completed accounts, financial records and any supporting documents are to be examined by an independent examiner who must provide an independent examination report prior to the Branch accounts being presented to the AGM³². The Treasurer should attend the AGM (or present good reason to the Committee / Meeting if their attendance is not possible) to answer questions.
- 22.3. Approval of the Branch accounts must be recorded in the minutes of the AGM.
- 22.4. If requested by the Council or BMC³³, the Branch accounts must be audited by a qualified auditor, or an Association Internal Auditor. Any expenses incurred by the Council due to such audit taking place will be paid for by the Branch fund in question.

³¹ A template will be provided.

³² Examiners must follow CC32

³³ Normally where there are concerns over non-compliance with the Governance Handbook, or Charity Law or financial matters etc.

- 22.5. A copy of the Trustees' report, accounts and independent examination report must be submitted to the Association's HQ within three (3) months after the close of the Financial Year. The report and accounts do not have to be approved by the Branch AGM prior to being sent to the Secretary General or their nominee.
- 22.6. The annual report, accounts and the report of the independent examiner must be provided to any member of the Branch upon request.
- 22.7. After the first full year of a new Branch, Branch accounts must be completed. However, if the Branch wishes to attend Annual Conference, the Branch must submit accounts irrespective of whether they have been formed for less than a year.

23. Internal Financial Controls - Protection Against Fraud

- 23.1. It is each Trustee's responsibility to ensure that proper precautions to avoid fraud are implemented. These include but are not limited to:
 - 23.1.1. The bank account is to be kept in the name of the Association Branch.
 - 23.1.2. The account is to have a mandate of up to four (4) signatories, two (2) of whom must sign every cheque and / or authorise every payment.
 - 23.1.3. The signatories must be Trustees.
 - 23.1.4. Signatories are not to sign blank, undated or partly completed cheques.
 - 23.1.5. In case of cheques being drawn for cash all the supporting receipts must be provided. If the amount on the receipts is less than the amount on the advance cheque, the balance must be returned and recorded in the ledger.
 - 23.1.6. The chequebook and paying-in book are to be kept under lock and key.
 - 23.1.7. Bank statements are to be checked as soon as possible upon receipt. Any unexplained entry is to be investigated immediately.
 - 23.1.8. Money collected for specific purposes is to be properly accounted for and any surplus brought to the main account.
 - 23.1.9. Expenses payments are to be approved by the Trustees. Expenses will only be paid if they comply with the principles of the Finance Handbook which is the policy on expense claims issued by the Finance Department. Expense claims containing mileage rates should be checked by the Branch Treasurer. Mileage should be paid in accordance with current HMRC practice.
 - 23.1.10. Invoices or receipts must be obtained for all expenditure incurred.

24. Appointment of Trustees to Hold Land or Premises

- 24.1. Where the Branch acquires or holds land or premises the Committee shall appoint The Royal Air Forces Association (corporate body) as sole trustee to hold such land or premises for and on behalf of the Branch. (Branches are unincorporated associations, with no legal personality and as such are prevented from owning land or premises in their name.)
- 24.2. The Royal Air Forces (corporate body), acting as sole trustee for and on behalf of the Branch, is bound to act in accordance with the instructions of the Branch Committee provided such instructions are lawful. (Where a Branch closes such land or premises reverts to the Royal Air Forces Association.)
- 24.3. Where, prior to 15 May 2017, not less than two nor more than four Ordinary or Life Members of the Branch have been appointed as trustees to hold Branch land or premises for and on behalf of the Branch (“Property Holding Trustees”) Property Holding Trustees must meet the requirements of Byelaw 9. After the date of commencement of these Branch Regulations any transfer of the legal title by one or more Property Holding Trustees shall only be made to The Royal Air Forces Association (corporate body) who will hold the land or premises as sole trustee for the Branch.

25. General

- 25.1. There is a common misconception that an Association Branch and Club are one and the same entity. This is not the case. The Branch, as a Branch of the Charity, has no part to play in the supply of alcohol.
- 25.2. An active Branch is often a successful Branch. Members who enjoy their meetings will support the Association and will make a greater and more willing contribution to the Charity’s work.
- 25.3. A Branch without its own premises needs a regular meeting place. The location should be convenient to most of the members, accessible by public transport if possible and with car parking facilities. Costs will be a consideration in choosing a location.
- 25.4. Branches should meet at least quarterly. Branch General Meetings may be combined with a social activity. Events of a political nature must not be held and speakers from other charities who may see the occasion as a fundraising opportunity should not be invited.
- 25.5. It is important that guests of the Branch are properly looked after, particularly if they are from another organisation. Members should be asked beforehand to take care of guests, though, the Chairman will usually act as host, assisted by other Branch Officers. The Branch should brief a guest as to exactly what is required of

them at the activity, what the procedure will be and whether they will be asked to speak.

- 25.6. Some branches may wish or indeed need to 'meet' virtually, and if so this can be a good way of engaging members who might otherwise not get to see fellow members.

26. Wings Appeal

- 26.1. The Wings Appeal, which provides a large part the Association's benevolent income, depends on the involvement of Branches and volunteers. The Charter requires Branches to give active support to the organisation of the Wings Appeal. It is, however, a year-round activity and is not confined to Battle of Britain Week in September.
- 26.2. In addition to the September collections in their area, Branches should attempt to raise funds throughout the year.
- 26.3. Comprehensive instructions on the organisation of the Wings Appeal are contained in Wings Appeal Guide to Organisers. This document outlines Branch responsibilities for fundraising.
- 26.4. Where appropriate, each Branch is to organise the Wings Appeal within its area of responsibility. The HQ Community Fundraising Team offer guidance and assistance to Branches and holds regular fundraising workshops around the UK. Success is dependent upon adequate preparation started well in advance. At the first Trustee meeting following the AGM a Branch fundraising sub-committee may be created.
- 26.5. The fundraising sub-committee's work may involve:
- Checking that the Branch Wings Appeal boundaries reflect the Branch's capabilities, that the boundaries are agreed with neighbouring Branches.
 - Assessing the opportunities for static collection points which may be 'manned' or 'unmanned'.
 - Ensuring that security arrangements for money collected are adequate.
 - Ensuring the health and wellbeing of those members and volunteers undertaking fundraising activities are protected.
- 26.6. Raising funds for the Wings Appeal continues throughout the year.
- 26.7. Any event in which a Branch is involved, although it may not have a fundraising aim, may be utilised for fundraising e.g. talks, church services, parades etc.

26.8. It is important that, when running an event, the Branch is quite clear that it is not permitted to trade. All it may do is ask for donations. The distinction is important as charities are not allowed to trade without being subject to VAT regulations.

27. Other Forms of Fundraising

27.1. Branches should persuade their members, and anyone else who is likely to support the Association's work for the service and ex-service community, to donate money to the Association. The following should be considered:

27.1.1. Legacies. A person may make provision in their will to leave the Association a sum of money, a specific item or a percentage of their residuary estate. Information and guidance may be obtained from the Secretary General or their nominee.

27.1.2. Gift Aid. A person may donate regularly to the Association, usually on an annual basis. If that person is a standard rate (or higher) taxpayer, the sum given may be increased by the tax if the donation is made in the form of a gift.

27.1.3. Online Giving. When members or Branches set up online donation sites/pages to raise funds for the Association they must clearly specify where the income will go. Otherwise donors might assume that all the donations will be given to the Wings Appeal. However, if a Branch sets up an online giving page to fundraise for an event managed by the HQ Community Fundraising Team, all sponsorship (whether online and offline) must be sent to the HQ Community Fundraising Team directly and is not to be allocated to the Branch in any circumstance.

27.2. Fundraising for Other Purposes

27.2.1. A Branch may wish to raise money for purposes other than the Association. Such fundraising is governed by special considerations:

27.2.2. If a Branch wishes to raise money for, say, a local children's hospital or other worthy cause it may NOT do so in the Association's name or in any way which leads donors to suppose that they are giving money to the Association (e.g. using the Association logo or Association stationery). Individual members may raise money, but it must be clear that they are doing so on their own behalf and not on behalf of the Association. Association Branch funds may NOT be used to make such donations.

27.2.3. If funds are raised for the running of the Branch, Wings branded tins and/or buckets cannot be used. This is because Wings branding may suggest fundraising for the Wings Appeal³⁴ and create confusion over how the funds raised will be spent.

27.2.4. If a Branch is in any doubt as to the purposes for which money may be raised, the Secretary General or their nominee should be consulted.

³⁴ All Wings Appeal merchandise utilises the Corporate bodies registered Charity No. 226686 (England & Wales), SC037673 (Scotland). All monies collected using such merchandise must be remitted to HQ.

27.3. Joint Fundraising Activities

- 27.3.1. If an event is promoted as an Association event, then all income must be credited to the Association.
- 27.3.2. If an event is promoted jointly with one or more other organisations, then Association people only collect for the Association. If Association members collect for another charity, nothing must be worn or carried to identify them as Association and they therefore act as members of the public, not a representative of the Association. Other charities collect for themselves, with clear labelling on buckets and the people concerned. As a result, income will not be equally split between each organisation.
- 27.3.3. Collectors must not carry two differently branded buckets.
- 27.3.4. If it is a ticketed event for which there is a charge, then the proceeds can be equally distributed among the joint promoters, providing there is an appropriate statement on the face of the ticket.

28. Branch Welfare

- 28.1. Every Branch is required to appoint a Branch Welfare Officer (BWO). The BWO exercises the responsibilities for welfare within the Branch.
- 28.2. Attendance at Branch and/or Branch Club meetings is an important part of the promotion of the esprit de corps and comradeship of the Association which contributes to the positive mental well-being of members.
- 28.3. Anyone carrying out welfare work in the name of the Association, including in a Branch, must attend an Association training course approved by the Association before doing so. This is so that welfare work can be carried out in line with the Association's policies and procedures and in compliance with the law.
- 28.4. All new BWOs and Assistant BWOs (ABWO) must undertake the Association's volunteer recruitment process³⁵ to ensure that safeguarding risks are managed, the minimum requirements of the new BWO role are met and that volunteers / members are clear about what is expected of them in their role and activities.
- 28.5. All BWOs and ABWOs are responsible to the Regional Welfare Team³⁶ for their casework, with beneficiaries referred to them by the Regional Welfare Team. In addition, they would be required to produce a final summary report of their casework to both the Regional Welfare Team and the Trustees (the same report) monthly.

³⁵ <https://www.rafa.org.uk/welfare-training/>

³⁶ The welfare teams are structured to reflect the needs of beneficiaries and may not accord with the 'boundaries' proposed for membership.

- 28.6. Branch members hearing of welfare cases which may require Association assistance must bring those to the notice of the BWO so that appropriate referrals can be made by the Regional Welfare Team. Referrals for Branch welfare support must be made via the Contact Centre or the Regional Welfare Team. It is only by keeping in touch with the Serving or ex-Service RAF community that the Branch can ensure that no case will be overlooked. The Branch Chairman and/or BWO should remind members of their responsibilities in this respect at the Branch AGM.
- 28.7. Branches are encouraged to get involved in the Association's welfare activities at every opportunity. Branch welfare involvement with the serving and ex-Service RAF community might include carrying out volunteer casework, visiting beneficiaries or providing advice and information on behalf of the Association. There is a demand for caseworkers, but other roles are available within every Branch.
- 28.8. To be an authorised Caseworker or Befriender volunteer for the Association³⁷, members must meet strict training and screening requirements which are necessary to protect the organisation, our volunteers, members and beneficiaries. There is also an Information Volunteer role working alongside the Caseworkers and Befrienders. Anybody applying for these roles must meet the criteria in the role description and undergo the recruitment, induction and training programme coordinated through the Regional Welfare Offices.
- 28.9. All Branch friendship visits by Branch volunteers are to take place under the umbrella of the befriending programme managed by the Regional Welfare Team, with those taking part being required to undertake the Association's befriending training course and be recognised as trained befrienders.
- 28.10. All Branches are required to submit a brief monthly report summarising all the welfare activities and welfare spending of the Branch to their Trustees and the Regional Welfare Team using a simple template³⁸ that is compliant with data protection regulations.
- 28.11. New guidelines on best practice in Branch welfare activity and welfare spending have been developed by the Welfare Team in consultation with Branches and endorsed by the Council, and these will be monitored by Welfare Managers.
- 28.12. The BWO, ABWO and anyone appointed to a Branch welfare committee must be familiar with the operating model of the Association and understand the Association's Branch welfare delivery systems and structure. The Regional Welfare Team will be able to advise which courses are available locally for members to receive the appropriate training.

³⁷ Paragraphs 28.7 – 28.12 reflect the welfare policies recommended by the Welfare Committee and approved by Council in February 2019.

³⁸ Template to be developed

28.13. It is essential for all members to follow strict confidential working practices. The Association's Welfare Handbook³⁹ is the primary source of authority on welfare matters and must be studied carefully by all involved in Branch welfare activities.

29. Membership

29.1. Membership - General

29.1.1. Trustees are to note Rules 7-8 and Byelaws 4-7 which apply to membership.

29.1.2. Although Branches are not directly involved in processing the membership fee payments and membership card distribution, they have a crucial role to play in the administration of membership.

29.1.3. Branches can obtain their membership listings and membership reports either online via the on-line Portal⁴⁰ or from the Secretary General or their nominee. Branches should carefully check the listings and report any incorrect details to the Secretary General or their nominee as soon as possible.

29.1.4. Branches are to regularly check their membership listings, on the Portal or via the Secretary General or their nominee, to ascertain which members have not renewed their membership. Branches are to assist staff in contacting those members who failed to renew their membership.

29.1.5. Branches are to endeavour to assist members in renewing their membership, with particular encouragement for self-service use of the Members' Portal.

29.1.6. If a Branch receives a joining application from a potential member, it is to ensure that it has been filled in correctly and send it to the address specified on the form.

29.1.7. If a Branch discovers that any of its members has been accepted despite being ineligible to become a member or has been given a wrong type of membership, e.g. Ordinary member instead of an Associate membership, the Branch must report this to the Secretary General or their nominee.

29.2. Membership Recruitment

29.2.1. The Branch should, wherever possible, appoint a Branch Recruiting Officer who may be supported by other members to form a 'recruiting group'. On appointment the Branch Recruiting Officer should contact the Secretary General or their nominee for guidance. A new Branch Recruiting Officer should if possible, attend any Recruitment Seminar.

³⁹ Currently being re-written

⁴⁰ A programme to roll out access to the Branch Portal to all branches over the May 20 to Jun 21 period will see branches being able to access live membership data themselves and so be able to more easily manage their membership.

29.2.2. All membership recruitment is based on the following approach whether it is one-to-one or a national campaign.

- Contact those, ex-RAF or not, who sympathise with and accept the aims and objects of the Association and are prepared to actively promote such aims and objects.
- Inform them of what the Association does since, despite any HQ-led briefing, communications programme and other publicity, many will have misconceptions.
- Invite them to join.

29.2.3. The most difficult of these tasks is to identify individuals and cohorts in the first place and a Branch should have a recruiting plan which is reviewed annually. The following may form the basis of such a plan:

- Organise a Branch recruiting event to identify ex-RAF personnel and others in the area who sympathise with the Association's cause and to decide how to approach them. At the same meeting Branch members may each be asked for example to recruit one person.
- Organise a Branch Open Day, well-advertised locally, for which support and guidance may be obtained from the Secretary General or their nominee.
- Put up a display in local premises based on the material which is available from the Association's online resources.
- Use advertising in the local press.
- Give Association talks to local groups such as Rotary Clubs, women's and youth organisations and others, bearing in mind the need to cover all age ranges and walks of life.
- Where appropriate, attendance at events at a local Branch Club.

29.3. Refusing Membership

29.3.1. Branches can refuse to accept a joining application from a potential member on condition they have legitimate reasons why a person should not become a member of the Branch / Association. The reasons must be considered by the Branch Committee and minuted, and then reported to their Area Representative on the Branch and Membership Committee.

29.3.2. Branches can refuse to accept a member who has already joined the Association online, over the phone or by sending their application form directly to HQ. The process will be the same as in the above paragraph.

29.3.3. The Branch Secretary must inform the applicant in writing or by email if their application has been rejected.

29.3.4. Any person whose application was refused or whose membership has been cancelled based on the Branch's decision has the right to appeal against this decision to the Branch and Membership Committee Appeals should be submitted in writing via the Secretary General or their nominee.

29.4. New Members

29.4.1. All new members will receive a welcome pack to welcome them to the Association and address any questions which they may have.

29.4.2. It is most important that new members are properly looked after by the Branch, and openly welcomed from the outset. They may have high expectations, and if they become disillusioned not only will the Branch lose the member, but the disaffection may spread to others.

29.4.3. New members should be given a briefing on the Association, the Branch and its work soon after joining. It is important that this briefing be given by a member who is well versed in the work of the Association as a whole and in that of the Branch. It is particularly important that the new member be given an explanation as to how their own efforts and enthusiasm for the work of the Association can best be employed.

29.4.4. If possible, new members should at an early stage be involved in a minor capacity in the work of their Branch, perhaps assisting a sub-committee. If interest is aroused, it may lead to more active participation in the future and perhaps an interest in holding Branch Office. If interest is lost the member may be lost.

29.4.5. Above all, Branch Officers and Committee Members must take an interest in new members. New members must feel that interest in them is being taken by their Branch. Some Branches may like to appoint an experienced member to look after new members in the early stages of their membership.

29.5. Membership - Retention

29.5.1. Retention is just as important as recruiting.

29.5.2. A well run and active Branch which involves its members (and particularly the new members) should have little difficulty in keeping them. A large proportion of those who leave do so because they simply do not see enough merit in remaining. It is therefore important that a Branch has an efficient method of supporting membership subscription renewals and strategies include:

- Encouraging Direct Debit as the preferred method of payment. Full details are included in the annual renewal documentation sent to each member.

- Seeking Association employee support – The Secretary General or their nominee provide recruiting advice and support to Branches.

29.6. Branches in danger of closure

29.6.1. Should a Branch believe that it is in danger of closure either through lack of members, or because members are unable or unwilling to take up Committee positions, it should immediately contact the Secretary General or their nominee. The earlier that this can be done the greater the opportunity for the Secretary General or their nominee to advise on the action necessary to guide the Branch.

30. Branch Amalgamations

- 30.1. A Branch which is unable to continue through lack of Trustees or members may amalgamate with another Association Branch.
- 30.2. The 'joining' Branch must obtain approval for the amalgamation from the potential receiving or parent Branch.
- 30.3. The joining Branch and the receiving Branch are to obtain approval for the amalgamation by each holding a Special General Meeting at which the decision is endorsed by majority vote.
- 30.4. The application to amalgamate is to be put by the failing Branch to the Area Council. The application is to be accompanied by certified true copies of minutes from both Branches' Special General Meetings approving the amalgamation.
- 30.5. If the Area Council supports the amalgamation it will set a date by which the following actions shall have been completed:
- 30.5.1. Closing accounts of the joining Branch as at an agreed date have been prepared and independently examined.
- 30.5.2. The financial assets of the joining Branch have been transferred to the receiving Branch. Once transferred these monies become part of the receiving or parent Branch's funds. Any restricted funds must be ring fenced in the receiving Branch's accounts.
- 30.5.3. All bank accounts in the name of the joining Branch are closed.
- 30.5.4. The Standard of the Branch may be laid-up, but once laid-up it must not be paraded. If not laid up, an amalgamated Branch Standard may be paraded but subsequent time will not be counted towards time awarded for tassels.
- 30.5.5. Officers of the joining Branch and receiving Branch certify to the Secretary General or their nominee that these actions have been completed, such certification to be accompanied by a copy of the independently examined closure accounts of the joining branch.
- 30.6. The two Branches will be amalgamated officially only when the conditions set out in paragraph 30.5 are met and the Council has confirmed the amalgamation. Until then the Trustees of the joining Branch remain responsible for its activities.

- 30.7. Once the conditions are met and the Council has confirmed the amalgamation the Association's records will be amended to record the amalgamation and the Trustees of the receiving Branch shall inform the relevant regulator of the amalgamation.

31. Voluntary Branch Closure

- 31.1. A Branch that is unable to continue as a Branch through lack of Trustees or members may close.
- 31.2. The Trustees shall convene a Special General Meeting to consider closure. A decision to close the Branch shall be made by a simple majority vote. A closing Branch may decide that it wishes to become a Registered Members' Group (RMG).
- 31.3. The members may vote to transfer any residual Branch funds to the Wings Appeal, or another Association cause, otherwise the funds will transfer to the Association's general fund on closure.
- 31.4. Following a decision at a Special General Meeting to close the Branch the Trustees shall inform the Area Council. The application to close shall be accompanied by a certified copy of the Minutes of the Special General Meeting.
- 31.5. If the Area Council supports the closure it will set a date by which the following actions shall have been completed by the Trustees:
- 31.5.1. Any proper Branch debts or liabilities are settled.
- 31.5.2. Closing accounts of the Branch as at an agreed date are prepared and independently examined.
- 31.5.3. The remaining financial assets are transferred to the Association in accordance with instructions from the Secretary General or their nominee.
- 31.5.4. All bank accounts in the name of the Branch are closed.
- 31.5.5. The Standard of the Branch may be laid-up, but once laid-up it must not be paraded. If a Branch has migrated to RMG status it may parade the former Branch Standard provided it has not been laid up, but there will not be considered to be a continuity towards time awarded for tassels.
- 31.5.6. The Trustees certify to the Secretary General or their nominee that these actions have been completed, such certification to be accompanied by a copy of the independently examined closure accounts.
- 31.6. The Branch shall not be closed until the Secretary General or their nominee informs the Area Council and the Council that the actions set out in the above paragraphs have been met and the Council has confirmed the closure. Until then the Trustees remain responsible for its activities. On closure, the Secretary General or their nominee will inform the regulator and update the Association's records.
- 31.7. Following closure of the Branch, the remaining Branch members will be transferred to a Branch of their choice.
- 31.8. Trustees at the date of closure shall ensure that minute books and accounting records are retained for seven (7) years.

- 31.9. If the Branch is unable to make such a decision at a Special General Meeting, e.g. due to lack of members or Committee members, the Area Council or the Council may close a Branch in accordance with Byelaw 19 (Branch Closure).

Authority and date of effect

32. These Branch Regulations and any revisions thereto, having been approved by the Council of the Association in accordance with Rule 5, shall come into operation on 1 September 2020 and as from that date any Branch Regulations then in force shall cease to have effect;

PROVIDED that these Branch Regulations and any revisions thereto shall be submitted as a resolution to the next Annual Conference for approval. In the event these Branch Regulation are not approved by the Annual Conference, they shall be void and of no effect but without prejudice to the validity of anything previously done thereunder.

33. Any amendment made to these Branch Regulations by a decision of Annual Conference of the Association shall be deemed to take effect from the date of formal notification of the amendment to Branches.
34. Branches may apply to the Council for a local variation to these Regulations in accordance with Rule 5 (Standard Regulations). Any such application may only be made following a resolution carried by a majority of the Members present and voting at a General Branch Meeting.
35. Any local variation to the Regulations shall be deemed to take effect from the receipt of the formal notification of the approval of the Council.