

## **Branch Strategic Plan, reviewed at Branch Committee Meeting January 2020**

## **Cheltenham Branch of the RAFA**

**Date Plan was developed:** 6 December 2018

**Period of Plan:** 1 January 2019 – 31 December 2022 to be reviewed no later than annually.

### **Foundation Documents:**

- RAF Association Strategy 2018 - 2030
- RAF Association Operating Plan 2018
- RAF Association Governance Handbook

### **THE NEED FOR A STRATEGIC PLAN**

First and foremost, the direction of the Branch and its priorities must be established; this will define the corporate view of success and prioritise the activities that will achieve this. Secondly, a strategic plan ensures that everyone is working towards a common outcome and not going in different directions. A strategic plan simplifies decision-making as it allows distracting initiatives to be rejected, it helps align all the Branch's resources to maximise its success and is a means of measuring progress towards defined goals/outcomes. Finally, a strategic plan is a powerful tool in communicating to Members the direction of the Branch and associated key activities.

### **VISION**

***We will support, value and seek to enhance the lives of the local members of the RAF Family.***

## MISSION

***To promote, through the work of the Branch's Members, the comradeship they engender and the fellowship they share, the welfare by charitable means of the RAF family.***

## STRATEGIC AIM

***Create by the end of 2023 a Branch that is successful and which is prepared for a lasting future.***

## OVERVIEW OF THE BRANCH

Cheltenham is a large Branch both physically and in terms of membership. It currently administers on behalf of the RAF Association HQ, a Grade 2 Listed, four-storey Georgian building, some of which is leased to various business and domestic tenants; the basement area is jointly occupied by the Branch and the Branch Club<sup>1</sup> with much of the space and facilities being shared between the two. The Branch currently receives the income from the leased parts of the property. This currently totals about £50,000 gross per annum. The Branch membership is 480 of whom about 37% are Associate Members of the RAFA.

## CONTEXT

There is a need to update governance, practices and procedures of the Branch and Club in order to satisfy changing and more stringent legislation.

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<sup>1</sup> The Branch Club was formed and operates under the authority of the Branch Committee. The Branch is the "parent" of the Club which is its trading subsidiary.

The Branch Committee has recognised that the Branch and Branch Club have each been highly successful but has identified a number of ways in which this bedrock can be built on to achieve major improvements. The Committee is now larger and more capable than before, and is keen to capitalise on this and establish a sound foundation for an enduring future for the Branch and Branch Club.

## **STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE**

By the end of 2023, Members and beneficiaries will be confident that they will be treated with respect, and that we will value and support each other, actively seek to provide help to others in the RAF Family, provide positive and memorable experiences from the Branch, work hard to meet and exceed expectations of fellowship and welfare, ensure that needs will be listened to with warmth and sensitivity, and provide opportunities to be active participants in the Branch, the RAFA and the local community.

## **SUPPORTING OBJECTIVES**

### ***Fellowship and Welfare***

The provision of Fellowship and Welfare Support is the central *raison d'être* of the Branch. Supporting Objectives include:

- Meet the needs of the Branch's welfare beneficiaries, through an expanded range of welfare products and services.
- Become the first point of call for all members of the local RAF family seeking help or information.
- Develop programmes to support local serving personnel and their family's mental health and wellbeing.
- Combat loneliness of serving and veteran members of the RAF family through expanded programmes of support.
- Identify the local RAF family's current, un-met and future welfare needs (through analysis of available research, surveys and data).
- Ensure that Members, including those with disabilities or restricted mobility, have access to high quality and affordable facilities and services in or near central Cheltenham for meetings, social gatherings and entertainment functions for the promotion of friendship and fellowship.
- Ensure that Members value the number and variety of entertainment and social functions provided to them.
- Establish fellowship and friendship as core values in the Branch, with particular emphasis on the problem of loneliness.
- Identify Branch Members willing to take on responsibilities as Assistant Welfare Officers.

- Build in redundancy for Welfare work.
- Ensure that formal training by CHQ has been completed by Members involved in Welfare work (External and CHQ training courses, SOVA and DBS checks).
- Establish documented links with ex-Service charities and care homes in the area, and implement a robust system for regular dialogues about potential Branch assistance.

### ***Membership***

Members are the lifeblood of the Branch and, without a steady resupply of new ones, the Branch will haemorrhage and die. A healthy Membership is essential to any organisation, particularly ones comprised of volunteers; without Members in sufficient numbers, with commitment to the Strategic Aim and willingness to help, little progress can be made. The Branch Committee needs active and experienced Members, and a pool of other Members from which to draw support and replacements. Supporting Objectives include:

- Champion the interests of our Members and beneficiaries.
- Put in place a robust succession plan for Branch and Club Committee Members.
- Ensure that candidates for Branch Officer posts have attended National and Area conferences and, ideally, have been Committee Members for at least two years.
- Introduce measures to highlight the aims and objectives of the RAFA to new and prospective Members.

### ***Engagement***

Unless potential and current Members feel that they are satisfied with the management of the Branch and Club, they know and are enthused about its aims and they are offered advantages and facilities that they value, membership levels will decline. Supporting Objectives include:

- Execute marketing campaigns to recruit RAF veterans and serving personnel into the Branch to ensure a balance of Ordinary to Associate Members consistent with the Association as a whole.
- Introduce measures so that Branch Members are and feel consulted about important issues that affect the Branch or themselves.

### ***Communications***

Good communications between the Branch and Club Committees and the wider Branch membership is essential to win support to the Branch, make Members feel consulted and informed, and aid feedback. Supporting Objectives include:

- Introduce a single, common information and communications technology infrastructure and software systems to optimise collaboration and re-use of data across the Branch.
- Expand website and social media access.
- Ensure that Committee Members have easy access to concise, accurate and timely management information.
- Ensure that Branch Members have easy access by a variety of means to timely information about the Branch, events, notices and news.

### ***Profile***

A high profile internally, locally and nationally helps in the recruitment of new members, encourages public support for the RAFA and Branch, develops pride in Members and publicises the Fellowship and Welfare Support functions. Supporting Objectives include:

- Exploit opportunities to raise the Branch's profile nationally.
- Increase awareness of the Branch's purpose and key activities among local clubs, associations, local authorities, social service providers and charities.
- Increase understanding of the Branch's purpose and key activities within our membership,
- Strengthen links with local Service and Cadet Units so that they value an association with the Branch.

## ***Governance***

Sound governance is essential to underpin everything that the Branch does. It provides a secure framework which focuses effort and provides protection for the Branch and Committee Members against a background of increasing legal, economic and social demands. Supporting Objectives include:

- Ensure compliance with legislation and regulation covering all aspects of the Branch's activities.
- Encourage confidence in Branch Members that the Branch operates efficiently and effectively.
- Ensure that Members of the Branch and Club Committees are fully trained to enable them to discharge their responsibilities fully.

## ***Finance and Budgeting***

A healthy income with secure control, a practical and pragmatic financial plan, and a modern accounting system form the cornerstone of any effective and efficient organisation. Without adequate financial resources the Branch cannot hope to provide more than token levels of fellowship and charitable support, and a financial plan is key to both gaining and using those resources to the best effect. Furthermore, any semblance of financial irregularity could place the Branch and its reputation at grave risk. Supporting Objectives include:

- Implement and operate a well-developed financial plan that is reviewed and updated periodically.
- Ensure that financial activities are conducted using modern business methods.
- Ensure that there are documented responsibilities and associated authorities for expenditure.
- Develop and provide financial training and tools for all budget holders.
- Develop a rolling 12 month forecast and 18 month cash forecast for the Branch.

**ACTION PLAN AND MILESTONES**

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Target/ Measure</b>	<b>Milestone / Deadline</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Evaluation of action / Actual result achieved</b>
Fellowship	Provide more varied entertainment and social functions.	At least four social/entertainment functions per year have been introduced.	To start by 1 May 2019	Haydn Smith	In abeyance but tentative plans for future events
Welfare	Identify Branch Members willing to take on responsibilities as Assistant Welfare Officers.	Formal training by CHQ has been completed.	31 January 2019	Welfare Officer	No candidates as AWO yet identified
Welfare	Ensure redundancy for Welfare work.	Adequate records and a guide for their access and use are in place.	31 March 2019	Welfare Officer	Awaiting introduction of CMS-2
Welfare	Identify welfare needs with ex-Service charities.	Points of contact with all local ex-Service charities have been established and they are polled at least twice per year for welfare needs	1 June 2019	Welfare Officer	

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Welfare	Identify welfare needs with local care homes.	A list of major care homes in the area and their contact details has been created. The points of contact are polled twice a year for welfare needs.	1 June 2019	Welfare Officer	
Welfare	Provide comradeship to RAF veterans in care homes.	A list of any ex-RAF members in local care homes has been compiled and they are contacted at least every six months.	1 Jul 2019	Welfare Officer	
Membership	Identify candidates to fill Branch Officer posts after incumbents leave.	Candidates have been identified; they understand the relevant responsibilities and are willing to accept them. They have attended National and Area conferences. Ideally, they have been Committee Members for at least two years.	31 December 2019	Branch Chairman	Partially satisfied.
Engagement	Solicit feedback from Membership.	A Membership Survey has been conducted.	By 1 April 2019	Branch Chairman	
Communications	Improve Branch web site.	There is regular updating and development.	To start by 1 May 2019	Branch Secretary	Web site up to date.
Communications	Improve the use of electronic notice board.	There is regular updating and development.	To start by 1 May 2019	Keith Baalham	The notice and is frequently updated.



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Communications	Improve the use of physical notice board.	Existing notice boards have been replaced or refurbished and there are measures to ensure that they are in optimum locations and are regularly updated.	To start by 1 Jan 2019	Haydn Smith	
Communications	Make better use of newsletters.	Bi-monthly newsletters are published by email or, when appropriate, mail.	To start by August 2019	Branch Chairman	Newsletters are sent out mostly monthly.
Profile	Exploit Air Mail and local papers.	A least two articles or features per year are carried by Air Mail and local newspapers.	To start by 1 Jan 2019	Dermot McCarthy	
Profile	Establish better links with local ATC units.	Liaison officers have been appointed to each of the Cheltenham ATC squadrons	By 1 Jul 2019	President	Cpl Sam Mason to be approached to act as liaison with local Air Cadet Units.
Profile	Exploit local radio	Mention on local radio stations is made at least once per year.	1 Jul 2019	Nigel Millington	Chairman will contact local radio stations regarding BoB and Wings Appeal.
Profile	Ensure better participation in local and national Services and Parades.	A team of standard bearers is available to be drawn on for attendance.	Chairman and RAFALO	Branch Chairman and RAFALO	Rafalo's had provided excellent support at funerals and at BoB and Armistice Sundays.
Profile	Make a better contribution to Area and National Conferences.	Formal appointment of a Branch Delegate has been made. There is consultation with Committee Members to agree on a Branch position for submitting and voting on resolutions.	Four weeks before each Conference	Branch Chairman Keith Baalham	Keith Baalham had agreed to stand as Branch Delegate.

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Governance	Implement full, documented compliance with all applicable legislation, regulations and rules.	There is full compliance with all regulations that the Branch is subject to, and a regular process of review and recording has been implemented.	By 1 Jul 2019	Branch Chairman and Branch Committee	Full compliance.
Governance	Improve the exploitation of electronic means for Branch management.	All Branch Committee Members have access to and use an integrated, common system for Committee work.	By 1 Jan 2020	Nigel Millington	
Governance	Decide on the future of the Branch Club.	Decision made.	1 Jul 2019	Branch Chairman and Branch Committee	Young and Gilling arranging for estimates to bring the building up to a sound standard. The costs would influence a decision about moving to a new building.
Governance	Provide training on responsibilities of Branch and Club Committee Members.	Training measures including formal seminars by AHQ and/or RAF Association HQ, mentoring and provision of training packs are in place.	To start by 1 January 2019, all Committee members to have received training by the 3 months from their election or co-option.	Branch Chairman	Most Committee members had attended Governance Seminars.
Governance	Identify needs for premises, facilities and services.	Needs and plans to meet them have been drawn up.	1 Jan 2021	Branch Chairman and Branch Committee	Awaiting results of estimates for building repairs.
Governance	Delegate more to Branch Committee Members.	Delegated responsibilities and authorities of specific Branch Committee Members have been assigned.	1 Jun 2019	Branch Chairman and Branch Committee	Partially completed.

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Finance and Budgeting	Create a Financial Plan.	A Financial Plan that sets out how the Branch will acquire income and how its financial resources will be deployed is in place.	1 Jul 2019	Branch Chairman and Branch Committee	
Finance and Budgeting	Adopt electronic banking.	All Branch accounts have been moved to electronic on-line banking.	1 Jul 2019	Branch Treasurer	
Finance and Budgeting	Devolve financial authorities.	The financial responsibilities and authorities for expenditure have been set out, ensuring that limits are defined.	1 Jul 2019	Branch Chairman and Branch Committee	Branch Officers authorised to incur expenditure not exceeding £100. Minuted for Branch Committee meeting of 2 November 2017.
Finance and Budgeting	Introduce electronic recording of all Branch financial activities.	Databases (eg Excel and Word) to record all Branch financial transactions have been created.	1 Jul 2019	Branch Treasurer, Branch Chairman and Branch Committee	

## MONITORING

This Strategic Plan (and associated Action Plan) will be reviewed and amended if necessary at Branch Committee Meetings at six monthly intervals after its adoption.