



Cheltenham Branch of the RAFA

Branch Strategic Plan 2023

Date Plan was developed: 12 June 2023

Period of Plan: 12 June 2023 – 31 March 2028 to be reviewed no later than annually.

Foundation Documents:

- RAF Association Strategy 2018 - 2030
- RAF Association Operating Plan 2018
- RAF Association Governance Handbook
- Towards 2030 - 2023 Operating Plan
- RAF Association Strategy 2022 (possibly, once it is published)

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 value, support 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.

OVERVIEW OF THE BRANCH

Cheltenham is a large Branch both physically and in terms of membership. It is the beneficial owner of a Grade 2 Listed, four-storey Georgian building, some of which is leased to various business and domestic tenants; the basement area is occupied by the Branch. The Branch currently receives the income from the leased parts of the property; this totals about £50,000 gross per annum. The Branch membership is about 280.

CONTEXT

The Branch has already achieved its 2023 objective of being successful and prepared for a lasting future. However, there are constantly changing and more stringent legislations, and substantial risks, potential and actual, posed by organisational changes, demographics and societal developments. A plan for the next 5 years is needed.

STRATEGIC AIM

Achieve by the end of 2028, improved provision of comradeship and the combatting of loneliness and isolation.

Details: By the end of 2028, 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.

ENABLING OBJECTIVES

Fellowship and Welfare

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

- Combat loneliness of serving and veteran members of the RAF family through expanded programmes of support.
- 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.

- 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 problems of loneliness and isolation.
- 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 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. Enabling Objectives include:

- Champion the interests of our members and beneficiaries.
- Introduce measures to highlight the aims and objectives of the RAFA to new and prospective Members.
- Introduce measures to embrace the broader veteran community to widen the opportunities for Branch members and beneficiaries for friendship, support and social activities.
- Strengthen links with local Service and Cadet Units so that they value an association with the Branch.

Engagement and On-Line Presence

Unless potential and current Members feel that they are satisfied with the management of the Branch, they know and are enthused about its aims and they are offered advantages and facilities that they value, membership levels will decline. Good communications between the Branch and the wider Branch membership is essential to win support to the Branch, make Members feel consulted and informed, and aid feedback. Enabling Objectives include:

- Introduce measures so that Branch Members are and feel consulted about important issues that affect the Branch or themselves.
- 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.

Digital Disadvantage

Digital Disadvantage – the inability to interact with the on-line world fully, when where and how an individual needs to. About one third of Branch members do not have an email address included in RAFA HQ records. This could be because they actually have an email address but decline or have not bothered to provide it, or are genuinely without internet access. The latter is probably most prevalent in the older members. Members without email or internet access are disadvantaged in a number of ways. Firstly, communications to and from the Branch and Association are greatly reduced. Secondly, they are unable to engage in on-line shopping, banking and information gathering. Thirdly, they are unable to use tools such as email, Facetime or Skype to keep in touch with friends and relatives. Finally, they cannot use social media and forums for entertainment, interest and help. Enabling Objectives include:

- Surveys of members without a recorded email to establish the reasons for the apparent digital disadvantage.
- Surveys of all members to identify needs for assistance.
- Mentoring, encouragement and assistance drawing on survey results.

Resilience

The capacity to withstand or recover from difficulties is crucial to continued success and it is far better to build this capacity rather than reacting to highly-damaging circumstances. Enabling Objectives include:

- Ensure compliance with legislation and regulation covering all aspects of the Branch's activities so that RAFA HQ and the Charities Commission have no cause for concern.
- Ensure that candidates for Branch Officer posts have attended National and Area conferences and, ideally, have been Committee Members for at least two years.
- Maintain our premises to a high standard and develop them to support the needs of providing comradeship and for combatting loneliness and isolation.

ACTION PLAN AND MILESTONES

Topic	Action	Target/ Measure	Milestone / Deadline	Responsibility	Evaluation of action / Actual result achieved
Fellowship	Provide more varied entertainment and social functions.	Monthly Sandwich Lunches have become standard. Committee team-building informal social events have been introduced. Significant events (eg 100 th Birthdays, Battle of Britain) are marked by a social activity.	1 January 2024	Nick Price Vice-Chair	
Welfare	Identify Branch Members willing to take on responsibilities as Assistant Welfare Officers.	Formal training by HQ has been completed.	1 January 2024	Welfare Officer Committee	

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Welfare	Ensure redundancy for Welfare work.	Adequate records and a guide for their access and use are in place.	1 January 2024	Welfare Officer AWO when recruited	
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 January 2024	AWO when recruited	
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 January 2024	AWO when recruited	
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 January 2024	AWO when recruited	
Membership	Solicit feedback from Membership.	A Membership Survey has been conducted.	By 1 January 2024	Branch Chairman	
Membership	Liaise with other organisations serving the interests of the wider veteran community	Active membership of Gloucestershire Armed Forces Covenant Partnership. Develop links with Cheltenham veteran organisations such as RBL, RNA, SSAFA and Aden Vets		Chairman, Vice-Chair and volunteers	

Topic	Action	Target/ Measure	Milestone / Deadline	Responsibility	Evaluation of action / Actual result achieved
Membership	Establish better links with local RAFAC units.	Liaison officers have been appointed to each of the Cheltenham RAFAC squadrons	By 31 December 2024	Volunteer	
Engagement	Improve Branch web site.	There is regular updating and development.	To start by 1 May 2024	Volunteer	
Engagement	Install a new electronic notice board.	There is regular updating and development.	To start by 1 May 2025	Volunteer	
Engagement	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 2024	Volunteer	
Engagement	Exploit Air Mail and local papers.	At least two articles or features per year are carried by Air Mail and local newspapers.	To start by 1 Jan 2024	Volunteer	
Engagement	Exploit local radio	Mention on local radio stations is made at least once per year.	1 Jul 2025	Volunteer	
Engagement	Ensure better participation in local and national Services and Parades.	A team of standard bearers is available to be drawn on for attendance.		Branch Chairman and RAFALO	

Topic	Action	Target/ Measure	Milestone / Deadline	Responsibility	Evaluation of action / Actual result achieved
Engagement	Recruit volunteers for a range of non-Committee tasks	At least 4 new volunteers have been recruited	By 31 December 2023	Chairman and Committee	
Digital Disadvantage	Carry out surveys to establish requirements.	Surveys of all members have been completed and the results analysed.	By the end of 2023	Chairman	
Digital Disadvantage	Recruit IT mentors.	Subject to survey results, IT mentors have been recruited from the membership or professionals.	30 June 2024 but conditional on survey results identifying a need	Committee Volunteers	
Digital Disadvantage	Institute a training/mentoring programme.	Subject to survey results, a programme of instruction, assistance and self-help has been constructed and disseminated to members.	31 December 2023 but conditional on survey results identifying a need	Committee and Volunteers	
Digital Disadvantage	Develop an IT help room	Subject to survey results, a room with the necessary equipment and internet access has been created.	By 30 April 2024 but conditional on survey results identifying a need	Committee	
Resilience	Improve Committee oversight of external building management agents.	Establish a new building management strategy.	By the end of 2023	Building Custodian and Committee Officers	

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Resilience	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 internal review and recording has been implemented.		Branch Chairman and Vice-Chairman	
Resilience	Provide training on responsibilities of Branch Committee Members.	Training measures including formal seminars by HQ, mentoring and provision of training packs are in place.			
Resilience	Monitor national and HQ initiatives and developments, and take necessary action to take advantage from them or mitigate adverse consequences	Continuous monitoring and notification to the Committee	Continuous	All Committee members	
Resilience	Identify in advance prospective 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.			
Resilience	Ensure that premises meet high standards of compliance and cost-effectiveness.	Institute a programme to bring premises up to a standard to meet all health and safety legislation, and serve Branch interests.	By the end of 2023	Building Custodian and Committee Officers	

MONITORING

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