

Royal British Legion Oxfordshire



Special Branch Compliance Issue

(This Newsletter is produced quarterly Apr, Aug, Dec annually)

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Message from the County Chair - Pete Eldridge

This **Special Edition** of the County Newsletter is a gentle reminder of the work needed to be completed by Branches at this time of year to ensure that you are Compliant with the requirements metered out by the Royal Charter, Membership Handbook and Charities Act 2011. With all the turbulence of the past few years, what with COVID, the changes from County MSO to MEO and the associated incumbents and the Branch officer churn now is the time to remind everyone in the County Branches of the Report Submissions and timescales for events at this time of year. I make no apologies to those Branch Officers who are aware of the contents of this Newsletter, however, the Branch submissions last year very nearly placed the County into special measures. My Team and myself are on a mission not to let this occur again this year. Where possible in the timeframe County Officers have been out to visit Branches to remind them of the rules and regulations that Branches must adhere. Linked closely to this are the efforts being undertaken for the forthcoming 100th Oxfordshire County Conference to be staged at the Carterton Community Centre on 01 Feb 25, which requires inputs from Branches.

My team have put together in this Special Newsletter the requirements placed on the County and the roles that Branches play this includes Officer Elections and Oxfordshire County and Branch Compliance and Committee Succession

Since this newsletter is about Oxfordshire County and Branch Committees Compliance, I will take the opportunity to state some obvious but difficult requirements as the RBL moves forward:

- a. **Difficulties** in my role as County Chair I am aware of the difficulties both the County and Branch Committees have their work cut out trying to recruit new members and officers. I would however ask that all Oxfordshire County Branches make every effort to be compliant so that they can be actively involved in the submission of candidate for County officers and to be able to vote in elections.
- b. **Succession**, please wherever possible try to talent spot all members capable of having a role in either County or the Counties Branches Committees and Officer roles. Succession is an important and essential part of how the RBL continues in its national participation of providing full and needed support to our beneficiaries around the world.

Pete Eldridge



Oxfordshire County Committee

County Committee Members

President

Mrs Ann Mid-Winter (contact via County Chair)

Chair

Mr Pete Eldridge Oxfordshire.Chamain@RBL.Community¹

Vice Chair

Mrs Fiona Lovesey (contact via County Chair or County Secretary)

County Secretary

Mr Rob Lovesey Oxfordshire.Secretary@RBL.Community²

County Treasurer

Mr Andrew Bowes Oxfordshire.Treasurer@RBL.Community³

County Parade Marshal

Mr Peter Clarke Oxfordshire.ParadeMarshal@RBL.Community⁴

County Training Officer

Mr Derek Bradshaw Oxfordshire.CTO@RBL.Community⁵

County Standard Bearer

Mr Tjark Andrews (contact via the County Parade Marshal or County Secretary)

¹<mailto:Oxfordshire.Chamain@RBL.Community>

²<mailto:Oxfordshire.Secretary@RBL.Community>

³<mailto:Oxfordshire.Treasurer@RBL.Community>

⁴<mailto:Oxfordshire.ParadeMarshal@RBL.Community>

⁵<mailto:Oxfordshire.CTO@RBL.Community>

Other County Committee Members

Mr Brian Leach (contact via County Secretary)

Legion Staff

Membership Engagement Manager (MEM)

Mr Chris Jones Central.MEM@RBL.Community⁶

Membership Engagement Officer (MEO)

Ms Lebo Nyoni Oxfordshire.MEO@rbl.community⁷

Poppy Appeal Manager (Oxfordshire)

Mr Yanto Evans YEvans@britishlegion.org.uk⁸

Financial Year End 2023-2024



Our MEO Lebo, will be issuing official guidance shortly but here are a few tips:

- The Legion Accounting Year is **1st July to 30th June**.
- Fully audited accounts MUST be submitted to the MEO and County Chair by 30th September (to remain a Compliant Branch)
- ***Do not wait for the Branch AGM!***
- ***Branches that can say to all three of the following statements will be eligible to use the small return form***

⁶<mailto:Central.MEM@RBL.Community>

⁷<mailto:Northamptonshire.MSO@rbl.community>

⁸<mailto:YEvans@britishlegion.org.uk>

1. **Less than £500 income in the year** - excluding receipts from the Royal British Legion Head Officer (ie BFI Interest)
2. **Less than £500 expenditure in the year** - excluding payments to the the Royal British Legion Head Office (ie WS Benevolent Fund and Poppy Appeal transfers)
3. **Less than £5,000 total balance across all bank/investment accounts** (excluding BFI and CCLA accounts) as 30 Jun.

If you are unsure whether your Branch meets the criteria and wish to clarify, please contact your MEO. Providing the Small Return, eliminates need for audit and the Authority To Disclose (ATD) Letter.

For your info over the last few years late submission i.e. last week of December not being processed has been a factor in branch non-compliance.

Who has a role in the Annual Accounts?

1. Compiled by the Branch Treasurer
2. Checked and signed by the Branch Chair
3. Agreed by the Branch Committee
4. Accounts are only Audited if they exceed values noted in the Guidance – ALL Oxfordshire Branches can be Independently Examined if they exceed the Small Branch criteria and are below Audit threshold
5. Presented to Branch AGM before end of November.
 - Ensure that your return is signed off at a Branch Committee Meeting before being submitted for audit (if required).
 - Do NOT wait for your AGM. To ensure that you get an up-to-date bank statement, if necessary pay a small amount into your account in the last week of June to get a statement by the end of the month.
 - Your return must be submitted to the MEO and County Chair by no later than **30th September** (but preferably by the end of August, if at all possible, please). **Do not send these direct to Haig House or the now defunct Office in Aylesbury (or its PO Box). This could render your Branch Non-Compliant.**
 - Email copies direct to MEO and County Chair.

Branch AGM and MS1

The Branch Annual General Meeting must be carried out between **01 Oct and 30 Nov** yearly where the MS1 should be completed. The MS1 Form is then to be submitted to the MEO before the **31 Dec**. There have been instances whereby Branches have misunderstood this regulation and have held their Branch AGM outside of these dates. The Regulations for a Branch to be Compliant are very clear, all Annual

General Meetings are to be completed by **30 Nov** annually. There is then a period to enable governance and administration to take place in completing the MS1 and submitted to the County MEO by **31 Dec**.

It is recommended that Branches process the MS1, MS1B and MS1CSB in November ready for signatures during the Branch AGM (MS1, MS1) and submit them not later than the second week of December so they can be processed before the festive period. When submitting MS1s of all types please **copy the County Secretary at oxfordshire.secretary@rbl.community**.



Election of County Chair and Vice Chair

Albeit late this year, due to COVID and the churn with the MSO/MEO, the County has been given permission to hold the election of the County Chair and Vice Chair in the same year (albeit the County Vice Chair will be for 3-years to deconflict future elections with the County Chair which will be for 2-years following this election). All Branches should now have received paperwork for nominations for these roles from Branches. The cut off date is **09 Sep 24**. If you wish to apply you must be nominated by your Branch with a CV from the candidate to the MEO. If there are more than one application for either role then an election will take place by Compliant Branches at the 100th County Conference on 01 Feb 25.



Election of County Committee Members



Introduction

There have been quite a few changes to the administration and running of County Conferences during and since the pandemic. We have now been guided by the Membership Council Representative to move back to running the Oxfordshire County Conference according to the Membership Handbook (MHB). This particularly involves the procedure for elections of County Chair, Vice Chair and Committee Members. In addition, new County appointments of County Officers have been introduced. This brief note to County Branches provides explanations of the changes and information on the new County Officer roles.

County Compliance

For the county to maintain compliance it is essential that the correct procedure for the election of President, Chairman, Vice Chairman and County Committee is carried out:

- Only County Compliant Branches, i.e. those who have submitted their Branch Accounts by 30th September and MS1 by 31st December may:
 1. Nominate a single individual for County Chair and a Single individual for County vice Chair.
 2. Nominations for County Committee Members. Compliant branches must nominate no more than one current member per branch for each post at their branch General Meeting candidates must be members of the RBL. It must be stressed that nominations for County Committee is one for each post e.g. there are currently 7 committee thus unless the number of existing committee and nominations exceeds 15 all valid nominations can go to the Annual Meeting of the County Conference
 3. All Candidates wishing to take office are required to submit a CV and statement.
 4. Nominated Candidates for Chair and Vice Chair will be submitted to Branches for ballot on a ballot paper provided to compliant Branches. These are to be returned in a provided prepaid envelope.
 5. Nominated County Committee Members will be balloted for by County Compliant Branches during County Conference.

County Role Descriptions Officers

The following County Officers are required:

- a. **County President.** The County President is an appointment of the County Committee who serves in three-year terms for an unlimited amount of time as decided by the Committee. The County President although an Officer, is not a member of the County Committee.
- b. **County Chair (CC)** elected at County Conference. Currently Peter Eldridge.
- c. **County Vice Chair (CVC)** elected at County Conference. Currently Fiona Lovesey.
- d. **County Committee Member.** To be elected to the County Committee, those Members standing for election must be members of voting branches and must be aged 18 or above. They must not have an unspent conviction, have been disqualified as a company director or a trustee, or be undischarged bankrupt. Each County Committee Member occupies a key place in the management of the County, this is in addition to any specialist role they may hold. In conjunction with all other Members of the Committee, they have a collective responsibility to the RBL for the smooth running of the County. A Committee Member should assist in the supervision of the branches within the County which are responsible for giving active support to the organisation, the Poppy Appeal and Community Support.

County Appointments, by County Chair and Committee:

The following County Positions are appointments:

- Volunteer County Secretary, Required. County/District committees must appoint a secretary at the first Committee meeting following the Annual General Meeting (County/District Conference) for a tenure of one to three years. The secretary acts as a focal point for County/District administration, including organising meetings and the distribution of correspondence (ideally electronically), agendas and meeting minutes. They also retain and safeguard vital County/District documents using the MAP and assist the County/District Chair and the MEO in ensuring the effective administration of their area.
- County Recruiting Officer (CRO) Required. The County Recruiting Officer is the main point of contact for advice on and the delivery of Recruitment and Retention campaigns at the County level, ideally suited to someone with a background in recruitment, sales and/or marketing. The County Recruiting Officer is to advise the County Committee on the recruiting structure in the County, planned recruiting activities and the results of such activities. Where there is more than one County Recruiting Office in the County, the most experienced becomes the Principal County Recruiting officer, this role can be rotated amongst the Recruiting Officers. Currently Brian Leach has been Co-Opted as the CRO.
- Treasurer, Required. The County Committee must appoint a County Treasurer. The appointment takes place at the first Committee meeting following the Annual Meeting of County Conference with a tenure of one year. Appointment Currently held by Andrew Bowes.
- County Parade Marshal (CPM). Required. The incumbent must be an A grade Parade Marshal. The County Parade Marshal/Ceremonial Officer is appointed by the County Chair and Committee to be actively involved in the planning and organisation of all County Events which include a ceremonial element. They are to be fully conversant with the RBL's Ceremonial Handbook, bearing in mind that when appearing before the public the prestige of the RBL is in their keeping.

Those involved in all ceremonial procedures must always strive to ensure continuity and uniformity in that their dress, turnout and bearing are of the highest order. The role of County Parade Marshal is subject to the RBL's screening programme detailed within the RBL's Safeguarding Policy. All screenings and mandatory online training must be completed prior to commencing duties. The County Parade Marshal is an appointment that is reviewed annually. Post Currently held by Peter Clarke.

- County Training Officer (CTO). Required. The County Training Officer is usually appointed from within the elected members of the County Committee. However, where there is no suitable candidate, the County Committee can appoint a County Training Officer from within the membership. Post Currently held by Derek Bradshaw.
- County Youth Officer (CYO). Required. The County Youth Officer is appointed from within the members of the County Committee. Where there is no suitable candidate, the County Committee can appoint a County Youth Officer from within the Membership. The role suits someone who has experience of working with young people. The role is subject to the RBL's screening programme detailed within the RBL's Safeguarding Policy. All screening and mandatory online training must be completed prior to commencing duties. Post currently vacant.
- County Poppy Appeal Co-Ordinator (CPAC). Required. The County Poppy Appeal Co-Ordinator is usually appointed from the elected members of the County Committee. Where there is no suitable candidate, the appointment can be filled by a member from one of the County's voting branches. Post currently vacant.
- County Community Support Co-Ordinator/Committee (CCSC). Required. Each County should have in place a CCSC or a Committee. The purpose of the Coordinator/Committee is to support the County Committee and branches to promote BCS and encourage participation. They will also be the connection between the County and the BCS Team and will work together with them to promote good practice and support branches on their BCS journey.
- County Standard Bearer (CSB) Required. The County Standard Bearer is normally the winner of the County Standard Bearer competition or taken part in County Competition or a neighbouring Counties competition and is appointed to the position for the year. Whilst undertaking Standard Bearer duties and taking part in competitions, the Royal British RBL makes every effort to ensure participants' safety. As with any physical activity, all Standard Bearers are required to acknowledge that there may be a risk to one's health and that a minimum level of fitness is required. Current Oxfordshire County Standard Bearer is Tjark Andrews.
- Independent Examiner (IE). This appointment is required at both County and Branches. Full Details can be found in the Membership Handbook under the heading Independent Examiner (IE)

Full details on Roles can be found for Branches in MHB Section 20 and County in the MHB Section 21 Roles.

Election of Sub-Committee Members for 2026 County Conference

Management and organisation of the County Conference is mandated in the Membership Handbook (MHB), which states that a Sub-Committee to County must be elected annually as part of the preceding County Conference, in addition to County Committee Members being part of this Sub-Committee usually Headed by the Vice Chair is also made up of 3 independent Branch Members - for the 100th County Conference Members of the Carterton Branch were co-opted (this was due to this requirement being missed at last years Conference). As part of the "***Calling Notice***" to be sent to all Branches shortly, Branches will be invited to nominate members to form this Sub-Committee.

The County Annual Meeting of Conference Committee consists of 3 members from the County Committee and 3 elected members nominated at Branch level. Nominations are required from Branches for members to sit on the County Annual Meeting Conference Committee. A ballot will be carried out at the County Annual Meeting of Conference to nominate these Committee Members.

- Nomination form for County Annual Meeting of Conference Committee
- Nominees consent form

Please encourage your membership to volunteer for these positions, the work is not onerous and it helps maintain a successful County Conference

The election and appointment to this Sub-Committee will take place at the 100th County Conference on ***01 Feb 24***.



100th Royal British Legion Oxfordshire County Conference



Remembrance

The following is offered as guidance for Branches as the County has experienced incidents of Branches not following the correct precedence (especially where a representative of the Lord Lieutenants Office is involved), incorrectly dressed Standard Bearers (appearing on TV) and still Branches organising Road Closures/Organising their Remembrance Parade.

2025 is the 100th Anniversary of the Royal British Legion County Conference and plans are well advanced for the event. The Conference will be held on **01 Feb 25** at the Carterton Community Centre commencing at 1000hrs. The Bishop of Dorchester and a Representative of the Lord Lieutenant's Office in Oxfordshire on behalf of HM the King have kindly agreed to support us on the day. Refreshments will be available - that is the hard sell over, we now need you as Branches to assist and support us in accordance with the Standing Orders for each County. As you have seen elsewhere in this **Special Edition Newsletter** there is a requirement for Elections, a time for reflection in the Roll of Honour for all the members that we have lost over the preceding year and a time to celebrate both County and Branch successes. Additionally, there is the usual administration required to provide drive and guidance to the County Chair and team for the forthcoming year. If any Branches have motions or discussion papers that they wish to submit to County Conference and potentially on to Annual Conference please see the **Diary Date Section** for submission timescales. The current Sub-Committee Headed by the County Vice Chair Fiona Lovesey will shortly be releasing to all County Branches the "**Calling Notice**" which relates to the necessary responses that Branches should undertake. Many Branches may not have seen the Calling Notice previously so please take your time to go through and if you have any concerns please contact the **MEO or County Secretary**. Further details will be sent out direct to your Branches and will be published on the County Facebook Page (see link/details and the end of this newsletter).

As mentioned Branches are invited to submit Motion Papers for the Conference. Motion papers on relevant subjects raised by Branches must be submitted in writing to the **Membership Support Officer**. Motions must include:

- The reason for the motion.
- Its effect if passed.
- The main argument in favour.

A form for Motions and Discussions for County Annual Meeting of Conference forms part of the "**Calling Notice**" please complete if you require a motion to be presented at the County Conference. All Motions must be completed on the Annex in the Calling Notice and emailed to the MEO and copied to the County Secretary.

Branches wishing to send a Voting Delegate to the County Conference shall appoint a delegate(s) at the Branch Annual General Meeting. Only Branches that have submitted their Receipts and Payment Accounts on or before the 30th September 2021 and Form MS1 on or before 31 December 2021 shall be entitled to send a delegate to the County Conference. A Branch Delegate Nomination Form is included in the Calling Notice Pack and is to be returned to the MEO copied to the County Secretary by the **30 December 24** following their respective Branch AGM and delegate nomination.

Anyone who currently holds on one of the County Trophies, please arrange to return them to the County Chairman in readiness for their presentation at Conference 2025.

The formal Agenda and other relevant documents will be forwarded to Branches and Groups in late December 2024 early January 2025.

Traditionally a Roll of Honour for Branch Members who have passed away during the year to the County Conference is read out by the MEO. Please complete the Form in the "Calling Notice" if a Branch wishes for the Member to be remembered on the Roll of Honour.

The Royal British Legion plays an active role in Remembrance Parades and can help local authorities organise events at a local community level. Below is a series of guidance notes provided to RBL branches in helping them prepare for Remembrance Parades. It is recommended that if you have any queries regarding a local parade that you consult the appropriate local authority as they have the executive responsibility for the parade.

Responsibility for Parades

RBL branches and volunteers play an active part in Remembrance Parades every year and are happy to take on the responsibility of organising such events, but they ***do not 'own' the parades***. Parades are often the responsibility of civic authorities and, whilst most local authorities show a great deal of support for Remembrance, occasionally they ask for the active involvement of RBL branches. RBL remains clear that while their branches are very willing organisers for parades, they must not be left to cover the costs of these important community events.

Note: Under no circumstances must any RBL members be closing the roads for a parade, even on Remembrance Sunday, even if you have a Traffic Management Order (TMO) in place. Road closure is the responsibility of the civic authorities.

Recommended Orders of Precedence

Subject to prior consultation and agreement, and assuming that all those listed are participating, the following sequence is recommended for assembly at the local war memorial for a Remembrance Service and wreath laying. It is also assumed that the Lord Lieutenant or their representative is not present (otherwise they would take precedence as the Sovereign's representative).

The following sequence is recommended for assembly at a local War Memorial for a Remembrance service:

- Band
- Clergy and choir
- Civic VIPs (Mayor, Chairman of Council)
- Union Flag (if on parade) Royal British Legion (RBL) and RBL Women's Section (RBLWS) Standards
- Standards of other ex-Service associations (RNA, Army, RAFA)
- Regular forces (Royal Navy (RN), Army, Royal Air Forces(RAF))

- Territorial and reserve forces
- Ex-Service contingents (preferably in one group, but may be in columns by Service and corps, normally with the Legion leading though there may be variations)
- Uniformed public services (police, fire brigade, ambulance services, St John Ambulance, Red Cross etc)
- Youth organisations (led by Service cadets, then uniformed organisations followed by non-uniformed bodies)
- Members of the public (who should be invited to participate in the public Remembrance event).

Wreath Laying Recommended order (as listed in the Ceremonial Handbook):

- Civic VIPs
- Representatives of regular forces
- Representatives of territorial and reserve forces
- Representatives of ex-Service associations, including Royal British Legion (RBL) and RBL Women's Section
- Representatives of uniformed public services (police, fire brigade, ambulance services)
- Representatives of uniformed voluntary services (St John, Red Cross etc)
- Representatives of cadet forces
- Representatives of youth organisations
- Members of the public.

Health & Safety Notes for All Parades

In the event of extremely hot and sunny weather, the Parade Marshal must ensure that all participants, especially Standard Bearers, are hydrated and kept in the shade and out of the sun for as long as possible. Time the parade for cooler times of the day.

Standard Bearers

Standard Bearers should be attired as per the Ceremonial Handbook, if your Standard Bearer does not have the correct dress or accoutrements for their Standard then seek guidance from the **County Parade Marshal - Peter Clarke**. For CSB Branches - wishing to Parade there Standard **must** obtain approval from the County Chair to ensure that the RBL Public Liability Insurance is enacted. The Chair will authorise and the instruct the County Secretary to record in the County Minutes. CSB Branches that Parade without this approval and are involved in an accident may be subject to personal liability and not covered by the RBL Insurance.



Diary Dates

- **30 Sep 24** - All Branch accounts must be returned to the **MEO and County Chair**
- **01 Oct - 30 Nov 24** - All Branches are to hold their AGM within this Period and Submit their respective **MS1 (returns to the MEO and Chair)**
- **Week Commencing 14 Oct 24 - Calling Notice for 100th Annual County Conference release to all Oxfordshire Branches**
- **24 Oct 24** - National Poppy Appeal commences
- **10 Nov 24** - Remembrance Sunday - National Act of Remembrance
- **11 Nov 24** - Armistice Day
- **30 Dec 24 (1700hrs)** - Branch Nominations for County Committee Members - Election or Re-election of Committee Member (**returns to MEO and County Secretary**)
- **30 Dec 24 (1700hrs)** - Branch Nominations for 3 Independent Branch Members to sit on the County Sub-Committee for County Conference (**returns to MEO and County Secretary**)
- **30 Dec 24 (1700hrs)** - Acceptance of Branch Nominations (**returns to MEO and County Secretary**)
- **30 Dec 24 (1700hrs)** - Names to be submitted for Branch Delegates to County Conference (**returns to MEO and County Secretary**)
- **30 Dec 24 (1700hrs)** - Motions and Discussions papers from Branches are to be presented in preparation for the County Conference (**returns to MEO and County Secretary**)
- **30 Dec 24(1700hrs) - Branch Roll of Honour 2024** - Branches to submit to the MEO and County Secretary the names of Branch Members that have passed during 2024 for Act of Remembrance at County Conference



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⁹<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61555920813671>