**ROYAL BRITISH LEGION**

**BENSON AND DISTRICT BRANCH PLAN (2023 – 2025)**

**BR0730**

1. **INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

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| |  | | --- | | This plan describes the proposed work of the Benson and District Branch of The Royal British Legion for 2023 / 2025 in order to support the local community, other local branches of The Royal British Legion and Oxfordshire County Committee. The branch ethos remains focused on the act of remembrance, benevolence and practical support in the community, encouraging a sprint of friendship, welfare and comradeship, support to the serving military community, veterans and their families, and fund raising in accordance with Legion Policy and guidelines.  For the Benson and District Branch, our primary drivers and focus is to encourage the community in the act of remembrance throughout the year, not only in November and to deliver direct, practical support to the community and other community groups.  Additional initiatives and goals may be added to this plan throughout the period.  The Branch Plan should be read in conjunction with the Oxfordshire County Royal British Legion Plan. The plan is to be refreshed prior to the AGM and reviewed / updated at least quarterly and provided to Oxfordshire County Committee for ratification and comment prior to their Annual Conference (usually February each year)  Where outside limitations have impacted scheduled and planned activities, this has been noted in the “remarks” column and plans will be carried forward as applicable.  The Branch has achieved much since its formation. There is a realistic level of awareness of the Branch in the eyes of the public due to successful Poppy Appeals and there is large observance of Remembrance within the community.  All Branch returns are submitted on time with Branch officers committed to the required use of computerised systems.  Within the committee awareness of changing policies is excellent, we embrace changes but need to adapt more rapidly to follow procedures arising from these. The professionalism that has been increasingly evident needs to further develop whilst increasing the level of comradeship is outstanding. We have a dedicated core of officers and an active committee with which we hope to promote our Branch and to support the Royal British Legion in maintaining their premier position within the ever-increasing number of military charities. | |

1. **OBJECTIVES**
   1. **Branch Community Support.**
   2. **Fundraising**
   3. **Remembrance and Ceremonial.**
   4. **Membership, Recruiting and Events.**
   5. **Training.**
   6. **Administration and Finance.**

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| **2.1 Branch Community Support**  The Branch has undertaken to embrace BCS with some training of “Supporters” having been undertaken. Activity has mainly been telephone Buddying with a minimal home visit. Representation at memorial and commemorative events has been a core activity along with awareness events. |

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| **Objective** | **Target Date / review** | **Responsibility** | **Key Performance Indicators** | **Cost/ Budget** | **RAG** | **Remarks / Evidence** |
| 1. To consider all welfare related advice, guidelines and information from HQ, Region and County - should any be forthcoming! | Ongoing | BCS Rep  Secretary  Committee | Minutes of meetings | Nil | Green  (Ongoing)  All county advice and guidance passed on as required | Secretary/BCS Rep to disseminate all advice |
| 1. Safeguarding. All Officers responsible for knowing their role. Training to be undertaken when possible | Mar 2024  (Review) | All | Minutes of meetings  Training Records | Training Expenses | **Green** | Safeguarding and role documents given to all committee. |
| 1. Wider engagement with neighbouring Branches | Mar 2024  (Review) | Chair and wider committee | Support, liaise and cross pollinate ideas with other local branches to identify “best practice” and new ideas |  | **Amber** | Attendance at other Branch meetings/ events |

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| **2.2 FUNDRAISING**  The Benson and District Branch of the Royal British Legions intent is to conduct appropriate and focused fundraising for both the Poppy Appeal and Branch throughout the year.  Fundraising is affected by the number of military charities and also the national economic situation. During Remembrance tide the Appeal had several static collection points and with collection boxes delivered area wide where possible. Fundraising events throughout the year are planned and attended. |

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| **Objective** | **Target Date / review** | **Responsibility** | **Key Performance Indicators** | **Cost/ Budget** | **RAG** | **Remarks / Evidence** |
| 1. To maintain and increase, the amount historically raised through the Poppy Appeal. | Oct 2024 | Chair, PAO and Committee | An annual increase in the amount raised for the Poppy Appeal and the incorporation of “all year round” collecting | Nil | **Green**  **(Ongoing)** | PAO to lead with event planning supported by all the branch members. |
| 1. To maximise support for the Poppy Appeal by providing a supportive and organised environment for volunteers. | March to October 2024 | PAO, Committee, members | Members contributing ideas.  Certificates of Appreciation.  Awards/ thank you evening |  | **Green** | PAO to lead with aid from Secretary and supporters |
| 1. To increase the number of Poppy Appeal Volunteers | Oct 2024  Ongoing | PAO  Committee Members | PAO’s records  Contact with other voluntary organisations | Costs of Press release | **Green**  **(Ongoing)** | Publicity in local press  Contact with cadet units. |
| 1. To Organise a ***minimum*** of 2 public fundraising events per year (local restrictions permitting) | October 2024 | All | Increase in branch fund raising in order to fund branch requirements and to enable a donation to be made to the Oxfordshire or Branch Welfare Fund ensuring the RBL ethos and standards met | Nil | **Green**  (**Ongoing,**) |  |

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| **2.3 REMEMBRANCE AND CEREMONIAL**  The Royal British Legion is the nation’s Custodian of Remembrance, with local authorities having the responsibility for the National Day of Remembrance. Our Branch has historically played a key role in supporting Benson Parish Council in this, with long standing procedures and regular planning meetings. Our members are expected to observe the two-minute silence on Armistice Day and Remembrance Sunday. Our Poppy Appeal links Remembrance with benevolence. Our Branch Standard has been, and is, carried by our Standard Bearer and is present at all events possible, including at the National Festival of Remembrance in the Royal Albert Hall. The Legion expects all Standards to be carried respectfully and correctly. |

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| **Objective** | **Target Date / review** | **Responsibility** | **Key Performance Indicators** | **Cost/ Budget** | **RAG** | **Remarks / Evidence** |
| 1. To continue to train Standard Bearer. | Ongoing | Standard Bearer | Minutes of meeting | Travel expenses | **Green** |  |
| 1. To encourage Branch and Standard participation in events**.** | Ongoing | Committee, Members and  Standard Bearers. | Recorded in Minutes | Possible travel expenses | **Green** | Standard bearers take part in all events permissible |
| 1. To attend where possible, commemorative events organised by Oxfordshire County. | Ongoing | Committee, Members and  Standard Bearers. | Record in Minutes | Travel expenses | **Green** | AFD and other events attended |
| 1. Ceremonial. Plan and deliver support to the Benson Parish Council act of remembrance in Benson in November, and further acts of remembrance throughout the year | May/November 2024 | Committee Members, Standard Bearer  Branch Secretary | Delivery of efficient and safe acts of remembrance throughout the year and **not only** in November |  | **Green**  **(Ongoing)** | Events to be recorded in Minutes, sent to local press.  Events |

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| **2.4****MEMBERSHIP, RECRUITING AND EVENTS**  The Benson and District Branch of the Royal British Legions intent is to continue to recruit, retain and encourage wider membership of the RBL.  38 people were members of our Branch as of September 2023. Members are generally lost to the increasing effects of age or, inevitably, to death and, latterly non-renewal. Ideally, we need to recruit more active participating members than those lost. All new members need to be encouraged to pay through Direct Debit, and to Gift Aid, if they are taxpayers. We need to attract younger members, especially those who may eventually wish to play an active role in the management of the Branch. |

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| **Objective** | **Target Date / review** | **Responsibility** | **Key Performance Indicators** | **Cost/ Budget** | **RAG** | **Remarks / Evidence** |
| 1. Continue to increase branch membership from across the village and wider community | Ongoing year-long tasks Review qtly next in April 2024 | Chair and committee | Steady and manageable increase in branch membership numbers. Encourage existing branch members to recruit branch members from their friends and family | Minimal | **Amber** | Recruitment is hampered by the over-zealous application of GDPR rules across the MoD which denies visibility of service leavers to local ex-military organisations |
| **SCHEDULED YOUTH ACTIVITIES AND ENGAGEMENT WITH YOUTH ORGANISATIONS** | | | | |  |  |
| 1. To foster and maintain links with local youth organisations and schools. | Mar 2024 | Committee | Minutes of meetings | None | ***Red*** |  |
| 9. To arrange youth event for affiliated cadets/ schools | Mar 2024 | Committee | Minutes of meetings | None | **Red** | . |
| 10. To participate in County led youth activities and initiatives, | Mar 2024 | Committee | Minutes of meetings | None | **Red** | To follow the lead with regards to County lead events Branch to liaise with CYO |

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| **2.5 TRAINING**  We have a balanced Committee, with differing levels of knowledge and proficiency. There is a need for induction training in Branch Management in house and for succession planning. The Chair, Vice Chair, Treasurer and Secretary to attended Branch Management training |

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| **Objective** | **Target Date / review** | **Responsibility** | **Key Performance Indicators** | **Cost/ Budget** | **RAG** | **Remarks / Evidence** |
| 1. Succession Planning | Ongoing  *Review* | Committee | All members to attend each course identified as being of direct relevance. | Possible reasonable travel expenses | **Red** | Training Matrix |
| 1. Ensure the Branch Chairman, Vice Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer RBL attend County run training courses | March 2024 | Chair/ Vice Chair | Ensure key committee members are trained and therefore suitably qualified to hold their post ensuring the RBL standards and requirements are met and where possible excelled | Possible reasonable travel expenses | **Amber** | Branch Management Training to be undertaken by committee members. |
| 1. Increased Awareness of Duties and Responsibilities. | Ongoing  Review Quarterly | Committee | Attendance at Branch Management Courses as required.  Background reading and information disseminated to committee.  Focused discussions. | Possible reasonable travel expenses | **Green** | Periodic reminders of duties required at branch meetings |

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| **2.6 Administration and Finance**  The Branch is competently run, and there is a high level of professionalism, this however is dependent upon a limited number of key Officers. The Branch has benefitted from various sources of income and is financially sound. This provides a firm foundation from which to carry on moving forward. All matters that arise are properly progressed, with key issues being discussed and recorded within the relevant Minutes, which are kept on file. All returns are submitted on time. Technology has been incorporated into various levels of Branch business.  However, there is a need to ensure that all Officers are correctly and fully inducted, both at local levels and nationally. We need to move easily accept the changes arising from technology and to consider succession planning for all Officers. However, this will be limited until such time the Legion is able to deliver the requisite training courses. |

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| **Objective** | **Target Date / review** | **Responsibility** | **Key Performance Indicators** | **Cost/ Budget** | **RAG** | **Remarks / Evidence** |
| 1. To ensure continued efficiency through scrutiny and understanding of all the RBL Guidelines. | Ongoing | Committee | Key points recorded  in Minutes | None | **Green** |  |
| 1. Submit MS1 paperwork in a timely manner | November 2024 | Secretary | Following the AGM,  the Branch Secretary submit the  completed MS1 to  County in accordance  with  County timelines | Nil | **Green**  **(Ongoing)** | Key factor in securing a vote at the County and National Conferences.  2023 MS1 |
| 1. Submit the End of Year finances in a timely manner | June 2024 | Treasurer / Secretary | Ensure the accurate  and timely  submission of the branch End of Year finances in  accordance with  County timelines | Nil | **Green**  **(Ongoing)** | 2024 finances  submitted to the satisfaction.  of the RBL on time and a full  and accurate reflection of branch finances. |
| 1. Hold a planned and structured AGM each **November** | **11 Oct 24** | Chair and Secretary | Hold an AGM each November to  vote in new committee members and branch officials, review the  branch Bye Laws and Branch Plan | Nil | **Green**  **(Ongoing)** | 2023 AGM held in  October 2023. |
| 1. Draw up Branch Plan by November each year for review and agreement | November  2024 | Chair, Vice and Secretary | Produce a Branch Plan covering activities and aims, to be reviewed  and updated at least quarterly. To be  provide to the County Chairman for comment  by December 2023 for review prior to the  County AGM in 2024 | Nil | **Green** | Completed in 2023  and  passed to  the MSO and County Chairman.  Branch quarterly reviews in January, April, July, and October |
| 1. To ensure that all authorised personnel use Office 365 and MAP to   its full capability. | Ongoing | Chair  Committee | Officers to use RBL accounts | Nil | **Green** |  |