



## Annual Conference 2022 – Questions and Answers

Thank you to everyone who took the time to attend Annual Conference, whether in person or virtually. Please find below answers to questions raised at the conference.

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### About the conference

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**Q:** Can documents and ballot papers for future elections be sent out by email as a matter of course rather than waiting until things go wrong. It provides for wider distribution amongst the members and aids the democratic process – Mr Robert Miller

**A:** On review of the elections process, we have agreed that we will use electronic channels first and post where it is requested/needed. Although in some circumstances, we do not have the option of emailing first. For example, the Motion of Urgency and appeal were allowed at the last minute, so there wasn't the time to email them in advance.

**Q:** The pandemic has shown that we can work remotely. Can we actually justify the cost of a physical conference using charitable funds? – Mr Robert Miller

**A:** We review conference costs and attendance regularly to ensure that charitable funds aren't spent unnecessarily, but we also understand that in some situations meeting face-to-face has additional benefits. We'd welcome your branch proposing it as a motion next year, if you'd like to, so this can be discussed further.

**Q:** Will the Legion consider holding a National Event in the North of England? – Mrs Linda Simpson

**A:** We welcome branches and members proposing places for the conference to be held; unfortunately, we haven't had any nominations this year. But we are delighted to confirm that Southport will again be hosting the conference in 2026.



Q: Whilst it is productive to have a virtual attendance, it should be constructed in such a manner that it allows complete, and full attendance to all the three days. Important items such as the Standard Bearers Competition and Presentations of the Awards is missed by these full paying members – Mrs Sheila Pilling

A: Thank you for your feedback, we will look into this for next year.

Q: Can facility be made for online delegates to see presentations, cups and trophies online next year? – Mr Keith Orton, Bergen-Hohne Chairman Germany

A: Thank you for your feedback, we will look into this for next year.

Q: Can we have an outline list of all questions and their answers made available after Conference? – Mr Alan Wrotchford

A: Yes, that is this document.

## **Funding**

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Q: There needs to be more transparency on all Area Trust funds, Dorset has been trying for years to get clarification of the use of and the purpose of area Trust Funds to no avail. Multiple excuses need to stop, and the use of these charitable funds need to be fully available to all – Mr Ian Jarvis

A: Thank you for your feedback, this motion was passed at the conference so we will share an update when the Board of Trustees has reviewed it.

## **Membership**

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Q: May I ask the conference if they would consider taking fees monthly for the people that are struggling to pay their fees in one lump sum. I suggest £2 a month because we all understand DD cost money to collect – Mrs Linda Simpson

A: We understand some members may struggle to pay their fees in one lump sum but unfortunately it costs every time we collect a fee. This means that rather than one fee for the 12 months, we would have to pay 12, which wouldn't be cost effective. Could you suggest to your members that they save two pounds a month, so they have the money ready when their renewal comes round?



Q: Why can we not have an online way of checking membership rather than carrying cards? – Mr Lee Gobie

A: If you are signed up to Office365, then you can check membership status at any time.

Q: In the research about membership, was there any difference between UK based branches and overseas? – Mr Patrick Buerms

A: We are still awaiting the final results, so don't have that level of detail at this stage. However, it's interesting that overall we received a 7% response rate and of those responses 8% were from overseas. This is an excellent response rate from our overseas members as they make up 4% of membership.

Q: Communication is a key factor as chairman I have noticed that a lot of people do not keep their details updated so how can the branch, county or even head office keep these people if they are not associated to a branch – Mr Andrew Clark

A: Unfortunately, there isn't a connection between details being up to date and being a member of a branch. Branches are helpful in making sure their members inform us of the change of address, etc. but there are still many members who do not have any contact with their branch so if they move and don't tell us/the branch, we will be in the same position.

Q: Does County Level Management need to be strengthened in terms of the link between Branch and Governance? For example, putting on annual events - talks/recruitment drives Etc. (with the area Branches support)? County are in a better position as they surely have access to all the resources, knowledge and access to contacts – Karen Guest, Branch Secretary Potters Bar

A: We are considering all these options as part of our future thinking on membership. Delivering individual membership through a digital experience, as well as how we can improve the branch and club offer, with the county structure playing an important role in supporting those branches.

Q: Could someone explain what the term honorary member means? - D Summerfield, County Chairman, Surrey

A: As yet we don't have an honorary membership, but a motion was put forward that an automated honorary membership could be created for those turning 100.

Q: Is it possible that centenarians can be given a special badge instead? or a letter like the Queen gives? - Karen



A: Our Board of Trustees and Membership team are considering this motion and will share the outcome with you when they have decided.

Q: Janet Talman spoke about the changes with MSO's and said that by the end of May would have a full working team, does this mean new MSO's for areas that do not have one?  
– Mrs Sarah-Jane Hackett

A: We are currently recruiting in every area where there is currently an MSO vacancy. Please be aware though that this does not necessarily mean that there will be one MSO per county, as it depends on the number of branches per county.

## Membership Engagement

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Q: Will membership be looking at the way in which Novacraft supply data to the branches? Often incorrect or out of date making it difficult to engage with our members – Mr Derek Bradshaw

A: Novacraft is a chosen partner and does not supply data to branches. Member data comes from the RBL database, which contains information from the member's application form. If a member changes their name or address, they need to let us know so we can update the database. Branch officers can also check their member data on the Membership Administration Portal and flag any changes required to Membership Services.

Q: Mention was made this morning of the Membership townhalls. I attended the first which was excellent, heard about the third purely by chance and then have had no further notices of Town Halls taking place and had assumed they must have fallen by the wayside. Please can we be assured that there is a system for alerting members of the possibility of attending? – Mrs Susan Foster

A: We always send out details of the Town Halls, ahead of time, in our e-newsletter and branch emails, and details are posted on Yammer in the Membership administration portal.

Q: What can members ask of MSOs? are they limited in how they can help members? Can branch Members go direct to MSOs or do they have to go through their Branch First? – Mr Alan Wrotchford

A: It always depends on the nature of the query and who is best placed to answer, but any member can approach their MSO or other staff member directly.

Q: Many times this morning it has been spoken about making changes, moving forward and working together as the Legion but how can we when branch officials as well as county



officials don't/won't except changes to move forward – Mrs Sarah-Jane Hackett

A: It is very important we engage with members as we make improvements, ensuring we remain relevant and prepared for the next 100 years. Branch and County officers have an important role to play in supporting these developments and we appreciate some members embrace change more readily than others. We have a range of communications and tools to help engage with our members, but we also rely on County and Branch officials to be our advocates and as such to be supportive of those developments and our Legion objectives. If someone is not stepping up and fulfilling their responsibilities, we would suggest raising with the appropriate MC representative in the first instance.

## New Members

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Q: Some years ago the MC advocated an Online BR (sometimes called Holding) where Members could be held until they decide on which BR they wished to join – Mr John Morrison

A: We had to close this branch as it wasn't compliant. For example, it didn't have a committee. But we are examining other options for members who don't want to join a specific branch or aren't yet ready to do so..

Q: The main problem we have with new members who join online, is the branch does not get notification from the membership office. This means we are unfortunately unable to contact and welcome them to the branch officially. Please can branches be notified as soon as members accepted - Ann Whitfield, Wem Branch, Shropshire

A: Currently we don't have a way to notify branches when someone joins, and it would be very costly to develop a bespoke system for this. However, you can check your membership listings on the Membership Administration Portal to find new members.

Q: Why not allocate new members to their nearest branch, but make it clear they are welcome to choose another? – Mr Kenneth Coates

A: This is one of the options we are considering, although sadly some branches are not active and some members are not interested in joining a branch at all.

Q: I know many Members, not just from our Branch, are suffering with delays in receipt of Membership cards, some waiting over 18 Months. Is there a plan in place to catch up those members that are not in receipt of Membership Cards. In addition, can the Membership Database be more accurately maintained e.g. timely updates with information in the correct



parts of the database. Finally, as an overseas online attendee, can I express my thanks to Lumi for the streaming of the Conference - Carl Thomas, Spain District North Murcia Branch. Dignitaries, Chairman and Delegates.

A: Members can request a proof of membership from the Membership Services team who will send it by email or they can contact us to request a new card. As mentioned at the Overseas Forum, once the card leaves our building, we rely on the overseas post to deliver it, so it is out of our control. The database is updated daily, and the membership listings on the Membership Administration Portal are updated weekly.

Q: How can we get new membership when we can't even get anything to hand out to new members e.g. z cards etc, logo was change over 1 year ago, and this is still unavailable! Why is this? We are missing with the jubilee a great opportunity and RBL HQ has let us down – Mr Anthony Harvey

A: We have a specific section on the Members Page which has all the logos, details of how to use them plus ready-made designs you can download for merchandise etc.

<https://www.britishlegion.org.uk/get-involved/things-to-do/membership/our-members/members-brand-page>

Also, Membership Support Officers are given an allocation of promotional items annually, so please get in touch with them to see if there are any available, and please ask them to include your branch in the order for next year.

We are also working on a better way to provide branches with leaflets and informational materials that they can use at events - please bear with us whilst we try to come up with a suitable option.

Q: Could an app be developed which would assist in new member joining by locating the nearest branches geographically. It could provide the electronic membership card, provide direct comms access to members, voting, news etc. – Mr Simon Dring

A: We already have this facility - when someone joins online they can see a list of the nearest branches. We also have the ability to send direct communications and news to members. As far as voting is concerned, at the moment we have a rule that gives votes to branches only (i.e. a branch has one vote on behalf of its members). As part of the Future thinking we are however looking at a more interactive digital experience for members which aligns with a more attractive membership offer. It is early days as we explore the best way to deliver this.



Q: What MC closed were C/D Holding BRs? The alternative we discussed taking forward was a National Online BR where new Members could be held pending selection of a BR – Mr John Morrison

A: It was a central branch that the MC closed - we didn't have any provisions at the time with regards to the governance of such a branch which is why it didn't work. We are examining other options for members who don't want to join a specific branch or aren't yet ready to do so.

Q: Further to our County Chairman as said. It is the feet on the ground who are getting new members by talking to people daily. Support should be there for us to do this. As you lengthen the process potential new members will be deterred with the long wait to meet like-minded people - Mr Darren Squires, Chard Branch

A: We would agree. The best way to recruit new members is via member get member. The online process for joining a branch is relatively quick and simple. Those new joiners are shared with branches on Office 365 and we would encourage branches to regularly check the status and welcome in their new members at the earliest opportunity.

## Payments

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Q: Motion 4 - electronic payments on-line can be set up to be approved by two people; a bank card is needed to pay into the post office and is essential now that so many banks are closing to enable post office deposits, Rachel Oakley, Member Stowmarket & District Branch

A: The new contract for banking services is being signed now. We absolutely understand the need for Branches to have access to more modern banking.

Q: Debit Cards - online/electronic banking can be set up in such a manner that TWO (2) persons must authorise payment

A: The new contract for banking services is being signed now. We absolutely understand the need for Branches to have access to more modern banking.



## Administration

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Q: Herford branch support this motion and also ask that there be a template for CVs. It was quite difficult to go through all the CVs and pull out the relevant information as each CV was different formats and layouts. Please support this motion – Mr Lee Gobie

A: We are reviewing all possibilities of how we support branches in helping them choose who they vote for.

Q: We need a Military Style - Orderly Room/Chief Clerk - operation in HH. The old style Secretariat the Legion had in the past – Mr John Morrison

A: We have added extra staff to our governance team to enable them to support the Board more effectively.

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