

Scotland Veterans Advisory and Pensions Committee (VAPC) Meeting

Wednesday the 22th of June 2022, Held Virtually

Present: David Page, Chair (DP); Laura Cox, Vice Chair (LC); Huw Sherrard, Secretary (HS); Andrew Ward (AW); Don Young (DY); Sue Raw (SRa); Stuart Robertson (SRo), Audrey Cuthbertson (AC); Iain Findlay (IF); Mike McCourt (MMcC).

Apologies: Jim Wilson (JW); Ally Gemmel (AG).

1) Previous Minutes

The committee approved the minutes of the last meeting. MMcC asked if there was a summary of the conference held in March, which DP confirmed.

2) Update from the Chair

DP informs the committee it will be the last meeting that they would be resigning as Chair in the days following this meeting, due to work related pressures. LC to act as Interim Chair, in their capacity as Vice Chair, until a new Chair could be appointed later in the year.

DP had written to all 32 local authorities' chief executives, both with the initial introduction and in regards to stepping down, as well as relevant ministers and cabinet secretaries in the UK and Scotland. Similar correspondence had been sent to a number of stakeholders.

DP outlined that feedback on merger of East and West Scotland VAPCs had been very positive, both from UK and Scottish Governments, as well as at a Firmbase level.

LC outlined an intention to continue work and outreach at a Firmbase level in their capacity as Interim Chair, and that a resource describing our work and role would be invaluable for such meetings. LC informed the committee that they had created such a resource, and was in the process of getting it approved.

IF described facing obstacles in establishing contact with their Firmbase in Renfrewshire Council. LC suggested that keeping up the effort in trying to get in touch was all that could be asked for from a member of the VAPC. DP suggested that spending cuts may be driving these difficulties.

DP described a consensus of welcome for the ongoing direction of travel for VAPCs at a national level. The attempt at a UK Chairs level for a Private Members Bill had sadly fallen through, and some statutory reform to VAPCs via the Defence Reform Bill seemed the best upcoming avenue for change. The division between the VAPCs roles as either case work focused, and the issues inherent in members' lack of liability or indemnity, and specialised training, made the move to a policy and advocacy role more attractive. DP reported some discussion regarding how the overarching representative body for VAPCs at a UK level should look, as well as sub groups, as well as the importance of the newly established national Vice Chair for Devolved Nations - which they would be imminently stepping down from.

LC stated they would send an email out following the meeting, and hopes to have a conversation with each member of the committee in the coming weeks. A new Vice Chair was needed, and LC asked anyone interested to step forward. LC to send out new dates for meetings, and informed the committee that they intended to hold the November meeting in person. LC had also assigned members to specific local authority areas, and members should get in touch if assigned LA does not suit. LC intended to invite relevant speakers to each upcoming meeting.

3) AOB

MMcC described an individual who had been in touch regarding compensation for chronic pain and health conditions. They had supported individuals through the process, and the individual won their appeal. They had asked to thank MMcM and the VAPC.

The lack of training for VAPC members was raised. MMcC gave an overview of their experience of the training process from the War Pensions Committees to the VAPCs, which was lacking. HS provided an update on the work of the national Support Sub Group, which had touched on discussing training.

DP thanked HS and Laura, and every member of the committee for their work during their term.

LC proposed a vote of thanks to DP for their time, to which the committee agreed.

Signed as true on by 21/07/22 by Laura Cox, Vice Chair:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L Cox', written in a cursive style.