

**MINUTES OF THE 24th MEETING OF THE EAST MIDLANDS VETERANS AND PENSIONS
ADVISORY COMMITTEE HELD AT THE OFFICERS MESS, PRINCE WILLIAM OF
GLOUCESTER BARRACKS, GRANTHAM ON MONDAY 16th January 2017 AT 11am**

Present:

Lt. Col. Peter POOLE (PP) Chair.
Larry HENSON (LH) Meetings Secretary.
David WILSON (DW) General Secretary
Barry SMITH (BW)
Michael WHITEHEAD (MW)
Charlie STREATHER (CS)
Paul DAVIES (PD)
Bill DIXON-DODDS (BDD)
John BERRY (JB)
David LOMAS (DL)

Apologies:

Patrick RENDALL (PR) Deputy Chair
Terl BRYANT (TB)
Ray BOYFIELD (RB)

ITEM 1. Welcome/Opening Remarks.

The Chair (PP) welcomed all present, thanked them for attending and hoped that it wasn't too late to wish a Happy New Year for 2017. He apologised for the lack of heating but unfortunately we had chosen a time when the kitchens were being refurbished – with a resultant lack of utilities.

ITEM 2. Declarations of Interest.

There were no declarations of interests that would conflict with the work of the Committee.

ITEM 3. Apologies for Absence.

Patrick Rendall (PR) Terl Bryant (TB) and Ray Boyfield (RB)

ITEM 4. Minutes of the Meeting held on 19th September 2016

PP noted that all members had received the minutes and asked if there were issues of accuracy that needed to be addressed.

- It was noted that the award to David Lomas was a British Empire Medal (BEM) as opposed to Member of the British Empire (MBE) as recorded in the Minutes. All congratulated David on his award.

Matters arising.

BDD asked about the amount of work being generated for individual members and PP mentioned the reworked Strategic Plan would answer this point.

ITEM 5. Christmas Lunch.

The Committee discussed the Christmas Lunch held at the Nottingham Forest ground. All agreed that it had been a good event and all those who had made the event possible

were congratulated and thanked. The discussion moved on to the composition of both the veteran attendees and the sponsors. Several members wondered if we needed to involve stakeholders, it was agreed that the mix at the lunch was about right and that the mix of veterans and sponsors worked well. MW said how he found stakeholders welcomed the chance to mix with others. There was a conversation around the difficulties of transport experienced by veterans and general consensus that this could be made easier if all Committee members attended and agreed to pick up veterans – as was already the case for some.

PP said we needed to be clear by March (the next meeting) about our future plans, including whether two functions per annum was a possibility and if so what form should they take? CS said there was a need to involve other organisations such as the 'Not Forgotten Association' or other similarly veteran orientated organisations. By 13 March we needed market research around venues and access to data bases to provide more reliable information about veterans in our region.

Among immediate suggestions were a summer visit to the Arboretum (CS highlighted the 'Ride to the Wall' event) and a Christmas function somewhere in the Derby area. LH mentioned that a decision had been made not to hold winter events in the future – the Chairman agreed that this had been discussed but that he would have to check the minutes from last year to be clear on what had been decided.

ACTION: Committee members are asked to attend the next meeting with clear thoughts about the future of functions organised by the Committee. Written proposals prior to the meeting would be helpful.

ITEM 6. Chairman's Update on Meetings Attended.

The Chairman updated the Committee on meetings he had attended since the last meeting, these included:

- CAC Meeting.
- Chairmans' Meeting.
- Extraordinary Chairmans' Meeting.
- Covenant Meeting.

The minutes of all these meetings had been circulated prior to the meeting (and are attached to these minutes).

ITEM 7 – Strategic Plan.

The Strategic Plan has been amended and all members have received a copy of the updated document.

Action: Comments are required from all members (nil returns are required) Please forward to PP and BS by 28 February 2017.

Some members felt that there were still questions to be answered about the detail of the role of VAPCs. The Chairman believed that the Strategic Plan covered the role well but reminded members that these could be raised when the Committee was visited by staff from Veterans UK.

Included in the minutes of the “regular” Chairman’s Meeting was the outcome of a study into homelessness carried out by the London VAPC in conjunction with Surrey University. Some members believed that this was an interesting piece of work and MW felt that we need to find a contact for a student to do research on homelessness in the East Midlands.

ITEM 8. Sub Committee Updates.

Medical. BDD mentioned the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) of which he is a member. He believed that they were moving in the right direction – but others still had a long way to go. His CCG intended to brief staff and provide an aide memoir about what veterans should expect. They intended to start with GPs and later move to secondary care. BDD said when veterans are referred to a hospital their status should be made clear to staff. The Mansfield and Sherwood CCG is working to produce a model. Further meetings will add flesh to the bones of their plan.

Communications. MW spoke of the problems experienced by members to the website. He was still pursuing the people responsible at the MoD for answers but at the moment he was extremely frustrated. The Chairman pointed out that there was also the option of using the Veterans UK website more comprehensively.

Covenant. DW reported that he attended a meeting in Derbyshire and was disappointed about the lack of action in that area. He said he would follow up on Derbyshire's Covenant – they have signed - and work on how to bring it up to date. He would take forward any outcomes to other Councils and keep the VAPC appraised.

ITEM 9. Combat Injuries Compensation.

The Chairman had provided Committee Members with the papers concerning consultation around a plan to augment the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme (AFCS) with a new scheme which would provide more immediate access to compensation and avoiding the complexities of legal representation. Members had been asked to read the document and come back to the Chairman by 10 February 2017.

CS highlighted anomalies of payment under the current system and was clear that there was a need for these to be addressed as soon as possible. The Committee agreed that we should respond to the consultation.

Action: In order to assist the new members at the next meeting CS would provide a talk on the differences between the current schemes (WPS and AFCS) and provide handouts.

Afternote: The Chairman thanks those who provided input to the consultation, but was disappointed by what was a poor response overall. This relates directly to the

comments of some members about the role of the VAPCs at Item 7. Responses to consultations are important and members have a duty and are expected to put forward their comments. A copy of the East Midlands submission is attached.

ITEM 10 Recruitment.

The Chairman provided the Committee with an update on the ongoing recruitment exercise. There had been a total of six applications and PP, together with Group Captain Ian Hindle RAF (our independent) were to interview later this month. Among the applicants were a number of people with a good background in the services and one, a doctor, had previously served with the RAMC. Once the interviews are complete the results will be forwarded to Veterans UK who will then prepare a list for ministerial approval. Until that process is complete we are not able to discuss the appointments. The Chairman will however keep the prospective members up to date with the committee activities.

ITEM 11. Any Other Business.

- The Chairman asked the Committee to note that Jon Parkin has been retained by the Vetting Agency for a further six months, as a result Rob Rowntree will continue as acting Head of Veterans UK with Sharon tarbet as his deputy. It is the Chairman's intention to invite Sharon Tarbet - and a member of the Veterans Welfare Service to our March meeting.
- The Chairman updated the Committee on the outcome of the bid for the provider of the Veterans Gateway project. Details are available on the MoD website.
- The meeting then closed at 12.50pm.

ITEM 12. Date of Next meeting:

Prince William of Gloucester Barracks 11am Monday 13th March 2017