

MINUTES OF THE 26th MEETING
EAST MIDLANDS VETERANS AND PENSIONS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
PRINCE WILLIAM OF GLOUCESTER BARRACKS, GRANTHAM
MONDAY 18th SEPTEMBER 2017

Present:

Patrick RENDALL (PR) Deputy Chair (as acting Chairman).
Larry HENSON (LH) Meetings Secretary.
Ron GATEPAIN (RG) (Coopted Member).
Barry SMITH (BS)
Michael WHITEHEAD (MW)
David TAYLOR (DT)
Dick HURWOOD (DH)
Stav MELIDES (SM)
Ray BOYFIELD (RB)
Ben HODGES (BH) (Coopted Member).

Apologies that were accepted:

Peter POOLE (PR) Chairman.
John BERRY (JB)
Terl BRYANT (TB)
Paul DAVIES (PD)
David WILSON (DW)
Jim WRIGHT (JW)
Charley STREATHER (CS)
Bill DIXON-DODDS (BDD)
David LOMAS (DL)

ITEM 1 Welcome/Opening Remarks.

1. The Deputy Chair (PR) welcomed all present and thanked them for attending.
2. Peter Poole was making progress recovering in hospital after an operation. Terl Bryant (TB) had also been unwell recently and in sending them the Committee's best wishes he hoped they would be back with us attending meetings again in the near future.
3. Paul Davies (PD) had informed the committee that he would resign after Christmas. Charley Streather (CS) had tendered his resignation, had left BLESMA and was moving to Scotland. As there would be no formal meeting of the whole committee before Christmas, PR thanked both Paul and Charley for their work on the Committee. In particular they had provided specialist knowledge of veterans' welfare, which will be missed. He thanked them both.
4. Dick Hurwood had now become a member of the CCG for Leicestershire.

ITEM 2 Declarations of Interest

5. There were no declarations of interests.

ITEM 8. Defence Employment Recognition Scheme in the East Midlands

6. Colonel John Wilson OBE DL who is the East Midlands Regional Employer Engagement Director on the staff of the RFCA gave a short presentation before the main business of the committee. His role is to develop a strategy to engage with employers in the region. He raises awareness with them to support recruiting and retention of regular and reserve forces together with members of their families, including wounded and sick, and Cadet Force Volunteers.

7. He explained that all Local Authorities and 176 businesses have signed the Armed Forces Covenant (AFC) in the region. He has identified 3300 employers in the East Midlands and has a database and many pledges of support. One important issue was that he asked that engagement with industry and business should take place through him. This was because he had become a known focal point and many businesses had expressed a wish that any communication should be through one point of contact.

Information: All

ITEM 3 Apologies for Absence

8. This has been minuted above.

ITEM 4 Minutes of the Last Meeting and Matters Arising

9. RB mentioned that his apologies were missed. There was a slight change to the item on communications and the Chairs meeting was to take place on 11th/12th October 2017.

ITEM 5 Committee Annual Report

10. The Annual Report had been sent to Vets UK and a copy had been circulated. There had been a response to the Chairman however this also included personal feedback. It was hoped that Vets UK would be able to provide the Committee with this feedback after any in confidence details had been removed.

Action: Vice Chairman

ITEM 6 Business Plans Updates

11. It was agreed that any plans including the Strategic Plan would have to be amended and updated as the Committee grew into its role of liaising with its stakeholders. Thus far these included, Vets UK, Local Authorities, Health Authorities and Service Charities not forgetting face-to-face time with veterans with particular focus on hearing appeals and complaints. Over the coming weeks there was to be a meeting with the MOD Veterans Welfare Service (VWS) in order to reconfirm that link and in particular reinforce our monitoring role of the organisation's support for veterans.

**Action: Vice Chairman
Sub-Committee Chairmen**

ITEM 7 Sub-Committee Reports and Future Plans

12. **Health** Dick Hurwood had circulated a report. In it he mentioned the Ambulance Service, which employs a significant number of ex Services personnel and areas of the NHS on which our VAPC might focus. There are 22 CCG's in our area and some are fiercely independent. It appears that Covenant has been signed at the highest level but this has not been cascaded to CCG's who are in the main unaware. Specifically he mentioned the visit to the Defence and National Rehabilitation Centre (DNRC), which is being built at Stanford Hall near Kegworth. This visit for named members of the Committee is pending until a suitable date for those hosting it can be found.

13. **Communications** Michael Whitehead gave a general brief around Sharepoint and access to further information. Sharepoint was not successful as most people are unable to access it. In addition he mentioned facebook/twitter accounts and said we must be careful and use the accounts only for signposting. After some discussion PR agreed to find out whether there were any Vets UK guidelines for using these accounts. After note: there are currently no guidelines and most VAPCs do not use facebook or twitter. Advice given was that we should use with care. Signposting seems to be realistic.

14. **Policy** BS had already circulated a report. There had been a very good engagement with Local Authorities and some had formed partnership groups where our VAPC had been involved. This had led to us having visibility of their policy documents where we have been given the opportunity to comment and where necessary suggest amendment. BS spoke of the success where the Local Authorities had been able to establish new posts within the outreach organisations to support the development of the Armed Forces Covenant (AFC). Whilst the Local Authorities were at different stages in the development of the project work in regards to the AFC, there appears to be a genuine commitment in most cases and this will help the Service and veteran community in a range of issues including health, education and housing.

15. **Welfare** DT circulated a report at the meeting where he said we should 'umpire welfare' or at least have an overview. After note: Refer to paragraph 11 above where PR and BS are to meet with Sandra Price who is the Area Manager of the Midland Region Veterans Welfare Service. Once this meeting has taken place and the various 'working lines' have been agreed it is the intention that ongoing work with the VWS should fall to the Welfare sub-committee in the first instance.

ITEM 9 Christmas Function

16. PR said that he would shortly be issuing an administrative instruction. The function was to be held at the Leicestershire County Cricket ground at Grace Road, Leicester. It would be run as in previous years. However it was not intended to have a raffle and it had already been agreed that committee members should pay an agreed sum of £20 a head. Funds were being obtained from

charities and hopefully some areas of business. The key thing was to invite veterans and it was hoped that committee members would try to identify those who would appreciate the function.

Action: All

ITEM 10 Any Other Business

17. **Forces in Mind Trust Meeting** BS spoke of the Forces in Mind Trust meeting in Leicester where it would be appropriate for a member of the committee to attend.

Action: Barry Smith

18. **Data Protection** There was discussion about Data Protection and its impact for veterans' issues. The new regulations come into force in May 2018 and guidance has been sought from Vets UK on their impact on VAPCs.

19. **Role of the VAPC** DT raised a question of how we succinctly set out our role when we were meeting veterans and other agencies. This had been a subject of discussion between PR, PP and BS previously and we need to develop an elevator pitch of no longer than a short simple paragraph to explain what we do. It was agreed this would be the subject of further work.

**Action: Barry Smith
Vice-Chairman**

20. **PSNI Enquiries** There was a discussion of the PSNI drawing veterans into enquiries about military action that took place during the Troubles. After note: PR had attended the Chairs meeting where this subject was discussed. If we are aware of any veterans who are included in further Police investigations and they want support/advice including legal advice, they need to be sign posted to the Chair of NI VAPC who would be able to put them in touch with appropriate support.

21. **Further Work** PR thanked the sub-committees for their work over recent months. There seemed to be a real impetus, which had developed from publishing the strategic plan, and the sub-committee leads with their teams taking that direction forward. The strategic plan was a 'living document' that will have to be developed as we gain more experience. It was therefore important that sub-committees should communicate with each other in order that nuances to the way we are beginning to operate can be picked up and amendments to the plan can be made where appropriate. On a note of caution PR emphasised the need to ensure any work we take on fits in with the lives that we lead and did not become an unrealistic burden or unduly onerous.

Information: All

ITEM 11 Date of next meeting.

22. The next meeting is to take place at Grantham at 10.30 am on 22nd January 2018. There will be sub-committee meetings at Grace Road on 4th

December 2017 before the Christmas function as arranged by sub-committee leads.

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