

# **North West Veterans Advisory & Pensions Committee**

Minutes of meeting held Friday 27<sup>th</sup> July 2012

At

Kimberley Barracks, Preston

Commencing at 11.00am

## **Members Present :**

Cllr Mike France (Chairman)(MF) Lt Col. John Lighten (JL)

Tony Hynes(TH) Terry Whitehead (TW)

Cllr Edward Nash (EN) Andy Bacon (AB)

Cllr Gillian Cuthbertson (GC) Stan Rawcliffe (SR)

Michael Grell (MG) Shauna Dixon (SD)

Kevin Hartley (KH)

## **Also Present :**

VWS Officers – Mrs Chris Preston, Eddie Devlin

David Brown – proposed Co-opted Secretary

## **Apologies recieved:**

Brenda Brown (BB) Mike Downes (MD)

<p>1.</p>	<p><b><u>Introduction and Welcome</u></b></p> <p>The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained what the role of the committee was and that it had changed somewhat from what some of the members were used to. He explained that everyone on the committee was now a full member with no co-opted members except the proposed role of Secretary.</p> <p>MF stated that as a committee we would only meet 3-4 times/year due to financial constraints and rules, but sub groups could meet in between and that it was very important to communicate by email between those times.</p>
<p>2.</p>	<p><b><u>Appointment of Co-opted Secretary</u></b></p> <p>MF introduced DB to the committee and asked him to give a brief introduction about himself, which he did. TH asked if DB was aware of the role of co-opted member. MF proposed DB as the co-opted secretary with JL seconded. The Committee carried the proposal. DB was therefore co-opted as Secretary for a period of 12 months.</p> <p>TH stated that 'Declaration of interests' (D of Is) should be on the agenda and that the Agenda should be sent out at least 7 days prior to the meeting. MF accepted the short notice and would clarify the D of I question for the next meeting and pointed out he was learning the role as well but stated that it would be better next time.</p>
<p>3.</p>	<p><b><u>Introduction from Members</u></b></p> <p>MF asked all the members to introduce themselves giving a brief history of themselves, which the members did.</p>

	<p>SD said that she had a D of I as a member of SABRE and a Trustee of Broughton House. D of Is, where then discussed as the handbook wasn't clear. MF proposed that he would ask the Centre for direction. TH seconded this proposal. MF to report back.</p>
<p>4.</p>	<p><b><u>Appointment of Vice-Chair</u></b></p> <p>MF proposed JL for this position, seconded by EN.</p> <p>GC proposed TH also for this position, seconded by SR.</p> <p>MG proposed KH but was not seconded so was excluded from vote.</p> <p>A ballot took place and TW counted the votes with MF.</p> <p>JL was elected as Vice-Chairman. SR said that this position should be for a period of 12 months and this was agreed by all.</p>
<p>5.</p>	<p><b><u>Training, Housekeeping &amp; Notices</u></b></p> <p>MF stated that after first interviews, it was obvious that not much training had taken place previously and stated that training was available and encouraged all to take part unless they had attending within 12 months –</p> <p>Training dates given as:</p> <p>15<sup>th</sup> /16<sup>th</sup> August &amp; 22<sup>nd</sup> /23<sup>rd</sup> August.</p> <p>Day1 (9.30 – 16.30) Day2 (9.30 – 13.00)</p> <p>To take place at Norcross and accommodation is available. MF asked members to book their own places with the centre.</p> <p>17<sup>th</sup> &amp; 18<sup>th</sup> October was to be used as a mop up.</p>

The following members put themselves forward, TH, SR, TW and GC.

MF said the training covers familiarisation of SPVA/VWS service and details on the AFCS and WP Schemes. SR proposed that the new Secretary should attend, MF agreed. MF to forward booking details to all members. TH asked if training included changes in regulations. MF said he would enquire from the centre and report back.

MF discussed the lack of communications between the Centre and the Committee but would try to rectify this. MF then produced the documents, JSP765 and JSP764. It was agreed that MF send all members these documents via email along with the VAPC handbook.

MF gave out blank business cards to all members, but also showed a sample of one that he had produced himself. MF to discuss business cards with the centre.

ID cards were mentioned and it was felt all members should have the same. MF to discuss with the centre. Letterheads were also handed out although electronic versions as available – MF to circulate.

TH asked about VA&PC leaflets. MF to circulate current leaflets by email.

Expense forms were given out and MF stated that an electronic version was available. MG said that it would be useful to all members that any information, which may be of use to the Committee members, should be emailed to all members, no matter who acquires the information. This was agreed by all.

A Welfare Case dealt with by KH was discussed. The centre are reassessing it and the client is getting a better deal. KH said that he is a Caseworker for RBL and The Veterans Agency. TH said it would be a good idea for all members to be CRB checked. MF said this would come down to cost and thought it unlikely but would ask the question and report

	<p>back. ED said that members don't need to be CRB checked in the normal sense of the work that they carry out.</p>
<p>6.</p>	<p><b><u>Setting up Sub Groups</u></b></p> <p>MF gave an over view as to what he thought would be a good way to proceed, although he was open to suggestions.</p> <p>Three sub groups were presented with the following headings:</p> <p><b><u>Mapping</u></b> – identifying who is on the ground, partnerships, networking, spreading the word.</p> <p><b><u>Monitoring</u></b> (Governance) – appeals, SPVA, VWS, legal aspects, policies.</p> <p><b><u>PR Group</u></b> – Leaflets, press statements, website to promote.</p> <p>AB said this was a good idea and that sub groups could meet and then report back to the main committee.</p> <p>TH said that the sub groups could take a specific role for a specific geographical area. MF said that although good in principle we don't have the personnel to do that and did not therefore recommend geographical areas. EN said the groups could cross over into the community covenant areas.</p> <p>TW said that more consistency was needed on how we approach the various areas. MF proposed that members would select which subgroup they would find of interest and asked that they email him with their selection. JL thought that there would be some overlapping with the monitoring and mapping groups. MF stated that hopefully this would not happen as each group would have terms of references. It was discussed and agreed to change the name of the monitoring group to Governance group.</p>

	<p>MF said he would email everyone after the meeting and seek nominations to form the sub groups. The Committee felt that it would be beneficial if a letter clarifying what he would expect from these groups is attached. MF and JL to draft this letter.</p>
7	<p><b><u>Website and Pen Pictures</u></b></p> <p>MF said that the current website was poor and needs to be improved. He proposed that every member submit a pen picture, with photo giving a brief overview of their history/relevance to the committee. He asked that this be submitted to him by September 2012.</p>
8	<p><b><u>Business Plan &amp; Purpose</u></b></p> <p>MF is to work with JL and DB to prepare the plan which will be sent out to the members for their thoughts. MF said that he had asked other Chairmen to send copies of their plans. SR said the plan needs to be focused and relevant.</p>
9	<p><b><u>Appraisals for re-appointment</u></b></p> <p>MF stated that part of his role was to appraise all members once a year and that he would like to do this in September and passed round the form he was given from the Centre for the appraisal. TH asked how this could be done when he hasn't known the person for more than 12months. MF stated he would get clarity from the Centre and report back.</p>
10	<p><b><u>Around the Region</u></b></p> <p>MF said he would like this item on the agenda so the members can discuss what is going on with regards to events and networking around the region. There are no members in Cumbria or Cheshire but he is looking at addressing this problem.</p>

11	<p><b><u>Veterans Welfare Service</u></b></p> <p>ED – gave us a presentation on his role and the role that the Service has in conjunction with the Committee. He gave an overview of the SPVA and VWS who are employed by the MOD. There are 4 welfare centres in the UK and also a free helpline.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Glasgow</li><li>• Kidderminster</li><li>• Gosport</li><li>• Norcross</li></ul> <p>There are 60 Welfare Managers employed by the Service.</p> <p>MF asked for the contact details of the VWS staff in this region and that it would be a good idea for the committee to go out on the ground with the staff. It was agreed that this would be very useful. ED to distribute contact details.</p>
12	<p><b><u>AOB</u></b></p> <p>GC informed the committee that a scam email had been sent out from her PC. A few members said they did receive the email but had not opened it, but would delete it.</p> <p>KH mentioned about the universal credit benefit and that he had good information about this benefit. He would, with the committee’s permission, email it to all members. He stated that the welfare cases had increased due to client’s money having been stopped.</p> <p>MF said that if anyone had a good contact within the DWP – it would be</p>

	<p>useful to invite them to a meeting. KH said that at the Job Centre Plus - Vicky Trussler would be a good contact. Her role deals with ESA.</p> <p>EN said that Fylde Borough Council gives exemptions to War Widows.</p> <p>MF thanked everyone for attending, confirmed his list of actions/jobs and stated that he would report back as soon as he could.</p>
13	<p><b><u>Date of next Meeting</u></b></p> <p>MF to confirm date and venue of next meeting, but it would be the first half of October. Some members said that Friday's were not good.</p>