

Social Security Act 1989

North East Veterans Advisory and Pensions Committee

Minutes of meeting held on 22 March 2013
at 101 (Northumbrian) Regiment Royal Artillery
Kingston Park TA Centre, Newcastle upon Tyne.

Present:	Mr P E Kingham (<i>Chairman</i>)	(PK)
	Lt Col J Heron TD (<i>Vice Chairman</i>)	(JH)
	Mrs S Crosby	(SC)
	Mr A deCourtney- Wellum	(ACW)
	Maj A J P Watson TD (<i>Secretary</i>)	(AW)
Apologies:	Mr B Halfpenny	
	Lt Col B G de la Haye OBE	
	Mr A Heron	(AH)
	Dr D Mayes	
	Mr P Sinclair	

Welcome and Introduction.

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting which commenced at 1100 and it was generally agreed that in the absence of any new direction, the meeting would be conducted under the rules and guidance previously pertaining to War Pensions Committees, coupled with the new VAPC Members handbook.

Item		Action
85	Declarations of Interest	
85.1	The Chairman tabled the Statutory Instrument and reminded members that should anything be discussed at the meeting which might constitute a conflict of interest between their personal life and VAPC business, they are required to declare such interest and take no part in the item concerned.	
85.2	There were no Declarations of Financial or Pecuniary Interest	
86	Confirmation of minutes	
86.1	The members confirmed the minutes of the meeting of 10 th December 2012, previously circulated, were a true record and they were then signed by PK.	Focal Point to note & place minutes on web site
87	Matters Arising	
87.1	None.	
88	Chairman's report	
88.1	Certain papers had been circulated in advance of the meeting.	

<p>88.2</p> <p>88.3</p> <p>88.4</p> <p>88.5</p> <p>88.6</p> <p>88.7</p> <p>88.8</p>	<p>PK explained that there was little being circulated to committees from SPVA or the MOD. It was becoming more difficult to get information from either organisation; in fact the VAPC was finding out information from its' own sources and then advising SPVA of matters of which it was unaware, but which it ought to have known about.</p> <p>There was concern that locally the Community Covenant groups were marginalising some of the 47 recommendations agreed by all LA in the North East in Jan 11 and published in the Final report of the Regional Review of the Health Needs of the Ex Service Community in the covenant, especially so far as Veterans matters were concerned. Too often the meetings were concentrating on Regular & Reservist issues, to the exclusion of Veterans matters.</p> <p>Information – there is a paucity of information coming out from SPVA at least in part this is believed to be linked to short staffing however, it is impacting on the effectiveness of Committees. SPVA has a remit to measure Customer Satisfaction on an annual basis, reporting the results to DCDS(Pers&Trg). PK is scheduled to be interviewed by Brigadier Geoff Nield as part of the programme of capturing Corporate Customers views and will ensure that these concerns are captured.</p> <p>CAC meeting 1st May.</p> <p>Chairs meeting 23/24 May.</p> <p>The recent basing announcement has little impact in our area whilst the unit occupying Albemarle Barracks will change the announced move does not significantly change the number of service personnel being based there.</p> <p>Reserve Basing announcement will be made in due course (possibly during May).</p>	<p></p> <p>PK</p> <p>PK</p> <p>PK</p>
<p>89</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Welfare Services Report</p>	<p></p>
<p>89.1</p> <p>89.2</p> <p>89.3</p> <p>89.4</p>	<p>There being no representation at the meeting from VWS (AH being on leave and JF carrying out a visit) there was no report.</p> <p>The meeting expressed serious concern that this was the first meeting of the Committee for at least 13 years where there had been no VWS attendance.</p> <p>In addition this meant the committee was totally unaware what action had been taken by BF about point 79.3 of the minutes, which was unsatisfactory.</p> <p>As the regional welfare manager had attended the previous meeting, received the minutes etc it was agreed that the Secretary would write to him asking that meetings be supported or at least he</p>	<p></p> <p>AH</p> <p>AW</p>

	provide a report of activity in our area in advance of the meeting.	
90	Draft VAPC-WVS Partnership Agreement	
90.1	The draft of this had been circulated in advance of the meeting.	
90.2	The Committee noted that the close relationship between the NE VAPC and the local VWS had not required such an agreement, but the loss of back office function had caused problems on both sides.	
91	Armed Forces PIP & Welfare Reform	
91.1	Papers in relation to this had been circulated in advance of the meeting.	ALL
91.2	PK set out that APIP is due to begin on 8 th April. There is concern DWP/SPVA may not yet be fully prepared to implement it. This should not cause a problem because the disability benefit currently paid should continue until APIP kicks in.	
91.3	It was noted that the concerns raised by chairmen of VA&PCs and other organisations in response to the Governments consultation may have been disregarded. This may mean that some veterans are treated MORE favourably than a civilian would have been.	
91.4	Recipients of War Pension payments are still able to claim supplementary allowances under that scheme – i.e. if a pensioner is claiming DLA mobility component and their condition is accepted as due to service they should be advised that it would be more appropriate to claim Mobility Supplement under WP scheme rather than PIP. Any one in any doubt should be referred to the VWS in the first instance.	
91.5	WP scheme appears sanctionable, whereas AFCS is not. There should be parity.	
91.6	There appears to be a lack of understanding in MOD that WP scheme claimants are still likely to come forward.	
91.7	Concern was expressed about the substitution of charitable funding for the supply of prosthetics by the State. The recent announcement of improved prosthetics appeared, on reading the small print, to be restricted to Iran & Afghanistan veterans.	
92	SPVA & VAPC Web sites	
92.1	Members had been asked to look at the new web pages on the site before the meeting.	
92.2	AW raised the difficulty of the web site not being as user friendly as it ought to be and pointed out broken links.	

92.3	Jon Parkin had been made aware of the fact on 8 th Feb the minutes of our December meeting had not been posted.	
92.4	PK asked members to detail Community Covenant information; photos of members to be sent showing as a background something to show the area for which they are responsible in CC work.	ALL
92.5	JH will draft an item about the Regional Covenant & local delivery of veterans' points.	JH
92.6	The local directory could be put up as a link.	
93	Recruitment	
93.1	Paperwork for recruiting new chairs and members is still with the Minister. This is of concern as the intended training date for Chairmen was intended as 22 May.	
93.2	Recruiting is to be done by DBS. It is thought that existing members whose tenure is due to expire on 31 August can ask to be reappointed.	
93.3	Our intent is to recruit 5 new members and to attract, another currently practising doctor; someone from the north of the area; a CPN; and to balance the equality ratio within the committee.	
93.4	Members are asked to consider their contacts with a view to encouraging suitable candidates to apply.	ALL
94	Any other business	
94.1	SC advised that hearing aid users can make application for a disabled railcard. This has extra benefits compared with the usual railcard.	ALL
94.2	AF day in Alnwick will on 30 th June and will be large – band & flypast. Can we be present? Organised by county vice chair RBL, so AWC will get info and arrange for PK to be informed so as to be present.	AWC/PK
94.3	There will be an event at Durham on 30 th June as well.	AW/JH
94.4	Can members advise what activities are going to occur in there are for AF day so we can look at potential attendance to raise awareness.	ALL
94.5	AW raised the 15X meeting at Leeds on 29 April, gave details and asked which members want to attend – advice by 5 April please.	ALL
94.6	AW & PK will liaise about writing to local authorities/CO's.	AW/PK
94.7	AW to investigate with PS Sunderland Airshow	AW

95	2013 Meetings	
95.1	The remaining meetings for this year will be held on the following dates - 21 June; 16 September; 06 December, with timings and locations tbc.	ALL
95.2	There being no further business, the Chairman closed the meeting at 1300	