

## Social Security Act 1989

### North East Veterans Advisory and Pensions Committee

**Minutes of meeting held on 16 January 2012  
at 101 (Northumbrian) Regiment Royal Artillery  
Kingston Park TA Centre, Newcastle upon Tyne.**

<b>Present:</b>	Mr P E Kingham ( <i>Chairman</i> )	(PK)
	Lt Col J Heron TD ( <i>Vice Chairman</i> )	(JH)
	Mrs J V Gibson CBE	(VG)
	Lt Col B G de la Haye OBE	(BH)
	Mr P Murnane	(PM)
	Maj A J P Watson TD ( <i>Secretary</i> )	(AW)
<b>In Attendance :</b>	Mr A Heron ( <i>SPVA Welfare Manager</i> )	(AH)
	Mr R Egan ( <i>SPVA Manager for VWS</i> )	(RE)
<b>Apologies:</b>	Mr P G C Sinclair	
	Mrs S C Crosby	

#### **Welcome and Introduction.**

The Chairman welcomed everyone to a briefing session which commenced at 1100. The Chairman invited Mr Egan & Mr A Heron to provide an update on current issues from the perspective of SPVA. This was followed by a discussion to ensure a common level of understanding of Community Covenant work and the MODs 'Firm Base' operation within the region. This was followed by an update on the AFCS.

Following a break the meeting recommenced at 1315 hrs 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.

<b>Item</b>		<b>Action</b>
<b>37</b>	<b>Declarations of Interest</b>	
<b>37.1</b>	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.	
<b>37.2</b>	There were no Declarations of Financial or Pecuniary Interest	
<b>37.3</b>	The Secretary reported the death of Major G C Rossman MBE TD on 23 <sup>rd</sup> December 2010. A eulogy set out his life long contribution and devotion to Veterans affairs (attached to the minutes).	
<b>38</b>	<b>Confirmation of minutes</b>	
<b>38.1</b>	The members confirmed the minutes of the meeting of 16 <sup>th</sup> May, previously circulated were a true record and they were then signed by PK.	Focal Point to note

<b>39</b>	<b>Matters Arising</b>	
<b>39.1</b>	PK - 28.7 - Members handbook is now available on SPVA website	
<b>39.2</b>	PK - 33.6 - Still an issue – especially for community covenant work. Being carried forward by MOD in forces footprint, but still a big issue for most agencies.	
<b>39.3</b>	VG - 33.2 – each Job Centre Plus has a champion and each has a webpage through their intranet. Web master will put info about VAPC’s on intranet. If we want feedback from them about issues being found within JCP they will look to pass on the info.	
<b>40</b>	<b>Chairman’s report</b>	
<b>40.1</b>	Circulated in advance of the meeting. No member raised any questions.	
<b>40.2</b>	PK explained still waiting for SI and explained the aspiration that Committees would now be able to get on with core business until next quinquennial review.	
<b>40.3</b>	Redundancy amongst troops will be affected by medical discharge which will be more rigorously enforced. This may bring a greater number of claims.	
<b>40.4</b>	SPVA Director of Veterans Services has strategically secured the staff position for VWS.	
<b>40.5</b>	NE VA & PC will implement accompanied VWS visits concentrating effort on visits where members can add value.	
<b>40.6</b>	Indications that a Veterans discount card may now come to fruition	
<b>40.7</b>	Notwithstanding previous correspondence, the treatment of War Pension and GIP payments under new Universal Credit Policy is yet to be determined. Level of disregard ought not to be a local decision, but national.	
<b>40.8</b>	SE VA & PC has written a comprehensive paper on supporting reserves, for comments to Chair by 30 Jan in order to meet 6 Feb cut off for Committee input.	All
<b>40.9</b>	There are a number of podcasts (videos) on SPVA web site worth examining.	
<b>40.10</b>	Commercial sponsorship of VAPC’s has been further discussed.	
<b>41</b>	<b>Welfare Services Report</b>	
<b>41.1</b>	AH explained that in the period Feb to May 2011 LH made 25 visits, JF55, AH 33; in period from May 2011 to last Friday (13/01/2012) LH 96, JF 151 and AH 173.	

<b>41.2</b>	He explained VWS staff attend the Personnel Recovery Assessment Centre (PRAC) at Catterick and Personnel Recovery Unit (PRU) as required and work with the staff.	
<b>41.3</b>	LH is going to Easingwold to present to the Unit Welfare Officers course about VWS	
<b>41.4</b>	He had attended a 15 X management meeting	
<b>41.5</b>	There is to be another vulnerable service leaver exercise, similar to the one in which he previously took part (no feedback from the earlier one yet given to him).	
<b>41.6</b>	The IT system in the Blyth office was described as steady.	
<b>42</b>	<b>Panel Case sub committee</b>	
<b>42.1</b>	AW confirmed the veteran had contacted AH, taken the matter forward as advised, been refused again by SPVA (after a new medical) and was considering his position. The panel case has now been closed as there is nothing further which can be done.	
<b>43</b>	<b>Business Plan</b>	
<b>43.1</b>	The Committee discussed arrangements for an auditable, achievable set of targets. PK & BH will work to firm up (with anyone else interested). PK will e-mail to JH current material from Norcross for JH to incorporate into previous postcard etc material. PM will liaise with JH about publicity going forward.	PK & BH PK & JH PM & JH
<b>44</b>	<b>Firm Base</b>	
<b>44.1</b>	PK explained how the work being undertaken by Commander 15 (North-East) Brigade and the some of the objectives of the Community Covenant and its Grant scheme.	
<b>45</b>	<b>Community Covenants</b>	
<b>45.1</b>	BH discussed the meeting originally organised by local health authorities, which had been widened. He dealt with the Finchale College initiative. He reported on the signing of the South Tyneside Community Covenant and how VAPC should continue to be engaged.	
<b>46</b>	<b>Recruitment</b>	
<b>46.1</b>	Current plan is to recruit 5 new members. There was discussion about trying to get authority for 7. Need for a Doctor, someone who works for a local authority and possibly having a member from North Northumberland,	PK
<b>47</b>	<b>Any other business</b>	
<b>47.1</b>	Forces Pension schemes identified as an area where the committee need to develop knowledge and expertise.	All

<b>47.2</b>	Chair will be carrying out appraisals shortly.	PK
<b>47.3</b>	There is currently a Judicial Appointments Commission exercise for a service member of the 1 <sup>st</sup> tier tribunal. JAC have confirmed there is no conflict of interest, so members can be both a Tribunal member and also a Committee member.	All
<b>48</b>	<b>2012 Meetings</b>	
<b>48.1</b>	It was agreed the meetings for 2012 would be on Monday 21 May, Friday 31 August and Monday 10 December. The locations will be notified in due course	
<b>48.2</b>	There being no further business, the Chairman closed the meeting at 1510	

### Geoffrey Rossman MBE Eulogy

Major Geoffrey Rossman MBE TD died on 23<sup>rd</sup> December 2011 and was buried promptly, in accordance with Jewish custom, on 25<sup>th</sup> December, when our Chairman and Vice-Chairman were able to be present to represent the Committee.

Geoffrey Chaim Rossman was born on 2<sup>nd</sup> January 1923 (he would have been 89 two weeks ago today) and upon the outbreak of war tried to join up, lying about his age. Although then unsuccessful, when called up he went into the RAOC and then the East Lancashire Regiment, serving in North Africa and Europe. After War Service he went into the RAEC and in due time served with the Royal Engineers TA in Heaton, Newcastle upon Tyne, where he knew, amongst others Colonel Alex Johnson MBE TD DL.

He has been a member of this Committee since its inception and prior to that was a member of the War Pensions Committee for many years. Indeed he was primarily responsible for a successful campaign to ensure veterans did not have their war pensions taken into account by local councils when calculating any benefits due to them.

He was Honorary Life President of the Newcastle branch of the Association of Jewish Ex-Servicemen & Women, regularly appearing at Ajex Remembrance ceremonies in both Newcastle and London. He carried out almost every duty during 65 years in which he only missed 2 parades. He was devastated that he was too unwell to attend the 2011 parade. It is said he was on personal speaking terms with the Duke of Edinburgh.

He was awarded an MBE in 1998 for services to the Community in Newcastle upon Tyne.

Please stand for a moment to pay a last sad office of respect for departed merit.