

MINUTES OF THE 9<sup>th</sup> MEETING OF THE EAST MIDLANDS VETERANS AND PENSIONS ADVISORY COMMITTEE HELD AT THE OFFICERS MESS, PRINCE WILLIAM OF GLOUCESTER BARRACKS, GRANTHAM ON MONDAY 14<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2013 AT 10.50am

Present.

Lt. Col. Peter POOLE (PP) Chair.  
David DONOVAN (DD) Vice Chair  
Larry HENSON (LH) Meetings Secretary  
John BERRY (JB)  
David HARDING (DH)  
Mark CROSSLEY (MC) General Secretary  
David WILSON (DW)  
Keith MEAKIN (KM)  
Ray BOYFIELD (RB)  
Debbie BOWLES (DB)

Not present.

Terl BRYANT (TB)  
Bill DIXON-DODDS (BDD)  
Paul DAVIES (PD)  
Charlie STREATHER (CS)

ITEM 1. CHAIRMANS WELCOME.

The Chair welcomed all present and said that we would have a guest speaker – Major Bruce SPENCE and possibly a Sarah DILLEY who were both keen to be members.

ITEM 2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

There were no declarations of interest.

ITEM 3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.

Bill Dixon-Dodds  
Charlie Streather  
Terl Bryant  
Paul Davies.

The chairman explained that BDD could not attend due to inclement weather, CS because he was bed bound, TB because of a council meeting and PD because he could not properly attend prior to April.

ITEM 4 MINUTES.

The minutes of the previous meeting on Tuesday 4th December 2012 had been circulated and were accepted as a true record.

ITEM5 MATTERS ARISING.

PP drew attention to the fact there was now an Air Vice Marshall as the new chairman of Forces in Mind. A note had been received from SVPA that the Focal Point was overwhelmed and the first line of contact must now be with the Welfare Service. PP will meet with Sarah Price in Kidderminster and MC said he was to visit on 18<sup>th</sup> February 2013.

PP mentioned that several regional chairs are going one of whom was Steve Coleman who had not long been in post.

PP said the water rates issue had not been taken forward.

PP said there needed a more structured approach to visits. The Covenant report has changed twice mainly due to Combat Stress and SAFA not agreeing with the contents.

DD mentioned the POPPY BREAK held at Mablethorpe.

LH said he had invited Jon PARKIN to our March meeting and read out the letter of invite from early December 2012 but added no reply had been received. PP to follow up. PP mentioned how well the December lunch went at Leicester and DD added he had received a letter of thanks from the venue saying how well behaved everyone was!

DD mentioned the Veterans Card and lapel badges and how they could be obtained.

PP complimented LH on the standard of the minutes.

PP mentioned that Charlotte Helmbly was being posted to the Falklands.

MC said there had been no progress on Identification Cards and he would follow this up.

RM to forward Website details re pensions to MC.

#### ITEM 6. CHAIRMANS REPORT.

PP said he will forward John Parkin's report to staff weekly.

PP said we need to find a number of new people to fill the Committee and KM was to retire now leaving 13. The number that we can have is up to 19. LH mentioned that even with this number we would only achieve attendance of about 12 from past history.

RB mentioned we need to retain expertise and PP said the consensus appeared to be to get as many members as possible.

PP mentioned that the work done running up to Christmas by various agencies was negligible except for work being done on the Covenant.

PP mentioned the LIBOR scandal and from the fines some £35M had gone to the MOD. Combat Stress had bid for three sums and two looked promising and the results will be out on 18<sup>th</sup> January 2013. SAFA was seeking funding for 200 trainers, and Combat Stress for a 24 hour helpline and substance abuse.

PP mentioned work being done on reservists and the need to help on their return from service and we could become involved in this. A number of meetings were being held and a conference was being held on this on Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> January 2013 with Mark

Francoise MP and Dan Poulter MP attending. PP added this was a new system being brought in and we have until 2020 to get it right.

KM mentioned a case when a soldier was injured in the UK and not abroad and highlighted that 'On Duty' was the relevant point to be established. PP asked if anyone wished to attend the Nottingham Conference Centre then to contact him.

#### ITEM 7. THE COVENANT.

JB said we should embarrass Counties to sign up. It was agreed that JB would monitor Leicestershire, LH Northamptonshire, DW Derbyshire with a vacancy for Nottinghamshire. Lincolnshire was virtually signed up to the Covenant.

DD floated the idea that we should get on to Covenant committees but it was pointed out they wanted low numbers on the committees.

DB highlighted what was being done in Norfolk in identifying the veteran's community. KM highlighted the fact that networking organisations had disappeared in particular the Armed Forces NHS Network. PP said that was set up with £45K and the money ran out. Under the NHS Commissioning Board there was soon to be received a further £10K under Richard Swarbrick and Alison Treadgold. It was pointed out the £6M was given as a result of the Murrison proposal.

PP said Swarbrick and Sanderson should be invited to the meeting after next.

KM supplied details of the Armed Forces Day to DD and it was agreed to pass these to BDD to lead on this and report to the March meeting.

#### ITEM 8. INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY.

PP said there was a need for people to get in touch with us. MC said he had already had reports put on. It was suggested 'why reinvent the wheel' as there was access to the Members area.

PP's name and E mail were shown on the Norcross web site.

DD said we need to comply with legality and this could be achieved via the member's area. MC said he had been told by Tony Philips we cannot put things in the Members area. DB said an IT criterion does not help this as not forward thinking. The system does not have capacity in a list of pensioners in an area.

JB said chairs need to speak to SVPA to find out how we can best use the web site.

JB said Tony Philips needs to be spoken to by PP and to put him in touch with DD and MC.

JB said we need to be clear what we need to achieve and MC agreed to meet Tony Philips.

#### ITEM 9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS.

DD mentioned the meal in Leicester on 4<sup>th</sup> December 2012. The establishment were happy to receive us and prepared a great meal. RB said we have £1400 in the bank as the cheque for the meal for £902.46 had not been presented. This in essence means within a £100 or so we still have £500 in the bank. PP says he will need to raise some

more. It was agreed to do the same again next year. DB said we needed to raise press awareness on this. CS had taken photos. Everyone agreed with DB.

#### GUEST SPEAKER/VISITOR.

PP introduced Major Bruce SPENCE (BS) of Chillwell.

BS said he was present to talk of the work that 49 Brigade were doing.

BS explained that army personnel were leeching away. He explained that the total strength was 140K but regulars would only amount to 82K. Phase 1 had been completed and they were now on phase 2 and Phase 3 will be published soon. The service is losing 5K in each tranche. At regional level the reserve is being expanded and it was necessary to keep a seat at the table and it is necessary for 49 Brigade to merge and become adaptable. On a tactical level there was to be a greater emphasis on reserves and at the sharp end will be three brigades of regulars.

BS said the army had a poor record of tracking personnel when leaving and the army had a transition policy into civilian life entitled 'E2H2W' meaning Education, Housing, employment and Welfare.

In Germany there were 55K servicemen which will be down to zero in two years.

BS said it was essential that when people are going they are logged on to JPA and then to iron this out if they want a change of direction.

BS mentioned and highlighted instances where to receive pensions and they had to leave a few days early and short of the date and this meant a huge cost to their pensions.

BS said 10K were leaving but 6K were being discharged by PAK10 rules and this caused issues as some were not receiving pensions.

BS mentioned redundancy and receiving three months pay and was no longer one year and in cases 24 months pay was now down to the three months. Come 2015 there will be a new employment and pension model. NEMS 20 will say 20 years or 40 years.

BS then took questions.

Question. KM asked how many medical discharges?

Answer – It had already started and he had no idea of the number.

Question. KM mentioned cases where they were reviewed on a six month period?

Answer. BS was not aware of this.

Question. DB mentioned a range of criteria used to discharge?

Answer. BS was interested to learn of cases that fly under the radar.

KM then gave a short talk on the tariff system operating and that will come in shortly.

At the conclusion PP thank Major Spence for his interesting talk.

PP then thanked KM for his valuable service to the Committee and wished him well in his retirement both from the Committee and his work with Blesma and hoped he would keep in touch.

DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING.

Monday 14<sup>th</sup> March 2013 at Grantham.

The meeting formally closed at 1pm.