

31 Jul 13

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**MINUTES OF THE 156<sup>th</sup> MEETING OF THE CENTRAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON PENSIONS AND COMPENSATION (CAC) HELD ON 1 MAY**

Present	Rt Hon Mark Francois MP	Minister (DPWV)	Chair
	Lt Col Jerome Church (Retd)	BLESMA	
	AVM Tony Stables (Retd)	COBSEO	
	Sue Freeth	RBL	
	Lt Col Peter Poole (Retd)	Combat Stress	
	Ros Campbell	WWA	
	Maj Gen John Moore-Bick (Retd)	FPS	
	Lt Cdr David Marsh (Retd)	FPS	
	Cathy Walker	SSAFA	
	Col Tony Phillips (Retd)	VA&PC	
	Kim Richardson	NFF	
	Prof Sir Anthony Newman Taylor	IMEG	
	Brig Chris Tickell	CDP Hd Rem	
	Dr Anne Braidwood	CDP Snr Medical Adviser	
	Jon Parkin	SPVA DVS	
	Richard Thompson	CDP Rem AFC	
	Duncan Haigh	CDP Rem AFPS	
	Gp Capt Ian Pollitt	CDP Rem FAFPS	
	Col Fiona Gardner	AD PS10(A) – LF	
	Capt Kevin Hood	DNPS PPA DACOS –Fleet	
David Stevenson	Min (DPWV) Private Office		
Philip Gould	CDP Rem AFC	Sec	
Apologies	Maj Paul Kingham (Retd)	VA&PC	
	Cdre Andrew Cameron (Retd)	Combat Stress	
	Gp Capt Richard Paul	Air COSPers Pol Pay Allces DACOS	

Ser	Decisions	Action
1.	<p><b>Item 1 – Chairman’s Opening Comments:</b></p> <p>a. Min (DPWV) welcomed members and in particular Tony Phillips, Chairman of the Yorkshire and Humberside Veterans Advisory and Pension Committee (VA&amp;PC) attending his first meeting of the CAC.</p> <p>b. Min (DPWV) stated that since chairing his first CAC last October he had met most members, which had greatly helped his understanding of the concerns they had about the MOD’s pension and compensation schemes. Min (DPWV) stated that engaging cooperatively and collectively through the CAC was the best way to ensure that the needs of those who have served the country are met.</p>	
2.	<p><b>Item 2 – Minutes of the 155<sup>th</sup> Meeting:</b></p> <p>a. The minutes of the last meeting were approved by the Committee.</p>	

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3.	<p><b>Item 3 – Matters Arising from Previous Minutes:</b></p> <p>a. The following action from the last meeting on 17 Oct 12 was noted:</p> <p><b>Pensions for Life under the Armed Forces Pension Scheme 1975 (AFPS 75).</b> CDP Hd Rem had circulated an initial position paper which had been expanded to cover the issues of Pensions for Life raised under the War Pensions Scheme (WPS). Details covered at Item 4.</p>	
4.	<p><b>Item 4 – Pensions for Life:</b></p> <p>a. Ros Campbell and John Moore-Bick introduced the Pensions for Life paper, a proposal which was supported by the service families' federations. Min (DPWV) thanked them for their presentations and for working with officials on producing the paper. He stated that whilst much good progress had been made, including agreement as to the likely cost and numbers affected by any change in policy there remained work to be done. While giving no guarantees, the Minister noted that the MOD would need to consult other Government Departments to assess the knock on effect of any change to other public sector schemes, prior to any engagement with HM Treasury.</p>	CDP Rem AFPS to liaise with OGD's.
5.	<p><b>Item 5 – Independent Medical Expert Group (IMEG):</b></p> <p>a. Prof Sir Anthony Newman Taylor updated the Committee on the IMEG's work during the past year on mental health, hearing loss, facial disfigurement and recognised diseases. A copy of his speaking note is attached to these minutes. The second IMEG report would recommend:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- guidance for AFCS medical advisers and claims decision makers on the difference between mental and physical disorders, although IMEG would not recommend adopting a separate approach between the two or a tailored interim award for mental health disorders;</li> <li>- that IMEG maintain an active interest in UK and US research into mild traumatic brain injury;</li> <li>- a further study on hearing loss building on the IMEG's work of acute acoustic trauma and blast injury. The IMEG would not be recommending an adjustment to the current threshold for compensation for hearing loss at this time;</li> <li>- changes in the descriptors and tariffs for facial disfigurement;</li> <li>- guidance for decision makers where epilepsy, bacterial meningitis and asthma occur during Service life.</li> </ul> <p>b. Sue Freeth welcomed the recommendations on hearing loss and recognised diseases but was disappointed that there was to be no recommendation on a separate approach or tailored interim award for mental health claims.</p> <p>c. Tony Stables stated that on hearing loss, in addition to thresholds, the issue of higher frequencies should be examined. He added that in recognition of current financial pressures, Forces in Mind could develop a partnership with IMEG to fund future research. Min (DPWV) welcomed this offer.</p> <p>d. In answering a question from Sue Freeth Prof Newman Taylor stated that the IMEG would next be addressing chronic fatigue and non-freezing cold injuries.</p>	

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	<p>e. Min (DPWV) thanking Prof Newman Taylor, stated that the work of the IMEG was extremely valuable and important in ensuring fair play within the AFCS. He added that he would take advice on how to respond to the recommendations in due course.</p>	<p>CDP Rem AFCS to advise Min(DPWV) on IMEG recommendations</p>
6.	<p><b>Item 6 – CAC Review:</b></p> <p>a. CDP Hd Rem reminded Committee members that since the last CAC meeting a paper had been circulated explaining that the cross Government review of Non-Departmental Public Bodies (NDPB) had concluded that NDPB status was no longer appropriate and that a Stakeholder Advisory Group was the preferred option. CDP Hd Rem stated that prior to putting that recommendation to Min (DPWV) officials would liaise with Cabinet Office to ascertain whether there would be a need to amend legislation for this change in status to take effect. Min (DPWV) stressed that whatever the outcome with regard to the Committee’s status he would continue to chair meetings.</p>	<p>CDP Rem AFCS to continue to liaise with Cabinet Office regarding legislative change.</p>
7.	<p><b>Item 7 – Service Personnel and Veterans Agency Update:</b></p> <p>a. SPVA DVS provided the following update for 2012/13:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 11,029 claims were received under AFCS</li> <li>- 22,436 claims were received under WPS</li> <li>- 28 weeks average clearance time for AFCS</li> <li>- 16 weeks average clearance time for WPS</li> </ul> <p>b. SPVA DVS stated that first claims to pension had increased under the WPS which he thought was as a result of recent redundancies. He added that there had been a very small increase in PTSD claims under both schemes</p> <p>c. SPVA DVS stated that minor claims (mainly concerning sporting or training activity) under the AFCS were increasing although many were rejected. He added that SPVA expected the number of AFCS claims to increase as the scheme matured and that additional resource would follow. SPVA were developing a more streamlined method to deal with complex cases.</p> <p>d. David Marsh (FPS) requested an update on the Life Certificate Exercise (LCE). SPVA DVS reported that of the 70,000 individuals contacted, 4000 were yet to reply. SPVA DVS stressed that all cases would be treated sensitively and carefully, confirming that for entitled individuals a payment could be reinstated within 24 hours. SPVA DVS estimated that the LCE will save the Department around £10m.</p>	
8.	<p><b>Item 8 – Future Armed Forces Pension Scheme Update:</b></p> <p>a. CDP Rem FAFPS updated the committee on developments to the new occupational pension scheme. His presentation covered progress on scheme design, including ill-health, additional pension and accrued rights. He also reported that discussions continue with HM Treasury, on all aspects of the scheme. A copy of the presentation is attached to these minutes.</p> <p>b. CDP Rem FAFPS stated that the pension calculator is expected to be ready by the first week of June, adding that a DVD would be</p>	

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	<p>produced to promote it. He went on to remind the Committee that one of the recommendations of the Hutton Review of public sector pension schemes was the creation of a Pension Board and Scheme Advisory Group. He stated that the aim was to introduce this by Oct 14.</p> <p>c. David Marsh questioned how the vesting period will work in the new scheme, compared to AFPS 05 where an individual is required to serve a minimum of 2 years. CDP Rem FAFPS confirmed that the vesting period would roll over into the new scheme.</p>	
9.	<p><b>Item 9 – Any Other Business:</b></p> <p>a. Min (DPWV) informed the Committee that he had met with his opposite number at a Department of Health conference on veterans healthcare. He reported that the positive relationship between the two Departments, which has already resulted in improvements in prosthetic care for veterans, continues. Min (DPWV) stated that dialogue had begun on the treatment of mental health, particularly that which presents many years after leaving service.</p> <p>b. Min (DPWV) reported that there is a work stream in hand to look at improving accommodation for Service personnel and their families.</p> <p>c. Min (DPWV) stated that he was pleased to report that some 290 local authority community covenants are now in place with a new cohort expected in the run up to June's Armed Forces Day. Min (DPWV) added that he expected the bulk of local authorities to have these covenants in place by the end of the year. Min (DPWV) stated that attention is also turning to how the business sector can make a bigger contribution.</p> <p>d. Min (DPWV) reported that he had recently visited the US Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) and noted that despite the marked difference in size there were still areas where the UK were leading the way on veterans issues. Although the Department of Defense was subject to similar financial constraints as UK Government departments they continued to have a better brand awareness among the general public than the SPVA did in the UK. Min (DPWV) suggested that the SPVA merger with Defence Business Services may provide an opportunity to address this issue.</p> <p>e. Min (DPWV) closed the meeting by paying tribute to the three Service personnel, Cpl William Thomas, Fus Samuel Flint and Pte Robert Hetherington, who had lost their lives in Afghanistan the day before. Speaking on behalf of the Committee he offered condolences to their friends and family.</p>	<p>Committee Members to consider publicising the services of the SPVA.</p>
10.	<p><b>Item 10 – Date of Next Meeting:</b></p> <p>a. The date of the next meeting will be circulated to members in due course.</p>	

Philip Gould  
Secretary to the CAC