



**EAST OF ENGLAND VETERANS ADVISORY AND PENSIONS COMMITTEE**  
**(EVAPC)**  
**MINUTES OF A MEETING HELD ON 10 DECEMBER 2015 AT THE ARMY CADET**  
**HEADQUARTERS, WATERBEACH, CAMBRIDGESHIRE**

Present: Mr JL Jelley – Chairman  
Mr AJ Barnard  
Mr MR Berry  
Mr T Heslin  
Mr D Mincher  
Maj T Ormiston  
Lt Col PK Robinson  
Lt Col R E Toland (Secretary)

Apologies: Mrs K Greene  
Mrs D Preston  
Mr I Stewart

Absent: Dr IM Calder

**ITEM 1 - Welcome and Declarations of Interest**

1. The meeting was opened at 10:30 by the Chairman. The Chairman welcomed our new member, Mr David Mincher, and at the request of the Chairman Mr Mincher gave a summary of his career as a serving Naval officer and latterly his work in the nuclear industry. There was unfortunately no representation from the VWS as Mr S Burgess had a previous engagement and a written report had not been received.
2. There were no declarations of interest.

**Action**

**ITEM 2 – Minutes of the Meeting Held on 15 September 2015**

3. **Approval of Minutes.** The Minutes, circulated prior to the meeting, were discussed and agreed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.
4. **Matters Arising.** The statistical information on Veterans UK promised by Mr Rowntree at the last meeting had been received and copies were handed to members.

**ITEM 3 – Chairman's Update**

5. The Chairman briefed the committee on a number of matters being taken forward which were expressly designed to raise the profile of the

EVAPC across the Eastern Region. The Chairman had written to all 52 Local Authorities (LAs) in the region setting out the role and purpose of the EVAPC and emphasising the point that VAPCs were independent of the MOD and, having been appointed by the Minister of State, were directly responsible to that Minister. The letter had elicited a very positive response from a majority of LAs and the Chairman had been invited to attend the Hertfordshire Covenant Board' next meeting and invitations to attend others were expected. The sheer number of LAs in the region dictated that the EVAPC's efforts be directed towards County Councils and Unitary Authorities. This still represented a significant liaison workload, as there are 11 Higher tier authorities in the region and the Chairman asked members to be prepared to represent the EVAPC at LA Covenant events and meetings. There was unanimous support from members, although it was observed that the Committee may need to increase its numbers from its present historically low level of membership. In the short term it was open to co-opt members but for the longer term the Secretary was asked to register with Veterans UK the need for the recruitment of up to 6 new members. It was felt strongly by the Chairman and supported by members, that the EVAPC could provide a real service to LAs on veterans' issues and Covenant matters by presenting "apolitical" and independent advice. At the same time there could be opportunities when appropriate for EVPAC to deliver "real views of the world" reports to Ministers.

Secretary

6. The Chairman stated that since the establishment of VAPCs in 2010 repeated attempts to "legitimise" the existence of the VAPCs through legislation had foundered. This was viewed as increasingly unacceptable and at the recent Chairs' conference the Minister heard the Chairs' collective concerns that the Armed Forces Bill, currently before Parliament, should be amended to reflect the demise of the War Pensions Committees and their replacement by VAPCs. A letter to this effect had been received subsequently from the Minister confirming this intention.

7. The Chairman observed that there was now a need to broaden the approach around the region and he intended to write to Chambers of Commerce and local MPs with information on the EVAPC and its role in supporting veterans and the Covenants through vigorous advocacy.

8. There was some discussion around views on the status of members; were they representing themselves or the organisations from which (some) were drawn? That is the various Service charities. The consensus was that members represented themselves with each bringing differing skills, knowledge and experience to the EVAPC.

9. In concluding his report, the Chairman committed to producing a draft strategic plan for the EVAPC and it was agreed that all members would be asked to contribute their thoughts to the Chairman on what needed to be included in such a plan

Chairman  
All

**ITEM 4 – Members Training Day**

10. This had taken place at Imjin Barracks, Gloucester on 26 Nov 15. Views were mixed on the usefulness of the training. For the more experienced members there was little of real value, but for the more recently appointed members there was some useful information. It was suggested that a better approach might be to deliver the training at two levels; an induction day for new members and more advanced and detailed training for the more experienced. In any event, there was general agreement that the networking opportunities offered by this type of event, was a very good thing. The Chairman agreed to write to Veterans UK suggesting a tiered approach to VAPC training.

Chairman

**ITEM 5 – Members’/ VWS Update**

11. As noted earlier there was no report from VWS. However, it was agreed that, in accordance with its remit to monitor the VWS, a visit by members to Kidderminster should be arranged. Ideally, this should coincide with dates when maximum numbers of VWS staff are available. The Secretary to liaise with VWS to arrange a date.

**Item 6 – Any Other Business**

Secretary

12. The Chairman queried how many members held official VAPC identity cards. Most members did hold identify cards, but they had all expired in 2013. The Chairman would contact Veterans UK over this matter.

Chairman

13. The Chairman asked for members’ views on the recently announced revision of expenses in particular the reduction in the mileage rate from 40p to 30p per mile from April 2016. Views were mixed; some saw it as a penny-pinching exercise which reflected ill on the MOD’s view of its volunteers. Others took a more stoical view that it reflected the reality of the MOD’s current financial state.

**Item 7 – Date of Next Meeting**

14. The Secretary to consult members and arrange a date in March 2016.

Signed:

Chairman.....Date.....