



MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

Veterans Advisory & Pensions
Committees (VA&PC)



**WEST OF SCOTLAND
VETERANS ADVISORY AND PENSIONS COMMITTEE
MEETING RECORD**

DATE OF MEETING: - Thursday 21 May 2015

**ADDRESS: - Lowland Reserve Forces and Cadets Association,
Lowland House, 60 Avenuepark Street, Glasgow, Lanarkshire, Scotland, G20 8LW.**

Present:

Mr Ed McGrachan (EM)	Chairperson
Miss Elizabeth-Anne Handibode (LAH)	Vice Chairperson
Mr Jim Allan (JA)	Secretary
Mr Tony Freeman (TF)	Advocacy Lead
Mr Alan Murray (AM)	Awareness Lead
Miss Audrey Cuthbertson (AC)	
Mr George Macdonald (GM)	
Mr Mike Richardson (MR)	
Mr Barry Henderson (BH)	
Mr Joe Stanfield (JS)	
Miss Emma Forbes (EF)	

In Attendance:

Mrs Sandra Maxwell (SM) **Centre Manager (Glasgow); Veterans Welfare Service**

Apologies:

Mr Neil Robinson (NR)
Surgeon Lieutenant Laura Morrow, Royal Navy (LM)
Mr David Anderson (DA)
Mr David McAllister (DMcA)
Mr Dudley Walker (DW)

1. Welcome / Introduction

1.1 EM welcomed everyone to the meeting, and introduced Sandra Maxwell, the Centre Manager (Glasgow), Veterans Welfare Service

1.2 There were apologies as listed above

- 1.3 Recruitment – Mike Richardson (Co-opted Member) is now a full VAPC member. We have a new Member Surgeon Lieutenant Laura Morrow, Royal Navy. Laura is currently posted as the medical officer on HMS Duncan. She will be attending committee meeting when deployments allow, but can be contacted by e.mail if required.

Robert Lappin – Robert has decided to step down from the VAPC as his work with Combat Stress is taking up most of his time. EM is going to enquire if he wishes to become a co-opted member of the committee, as he is still keen to assist the committee were he can. JA is going to ask Robert if he would be willing to provide an update report on the work of Combat Stress, for future meeting as the charities work is of interest to the committee.

ACTION: EM / JA

SEC NOTE: The next recruitment drive nationally will be in September 2015

2. Minutes of Last Meeting and Matters Arising

- 2.1 Item 2.1 (From November 2014) – Committee Structure. EF said she would like to join the consultation sub group, so that it does not cause conflicts with her day job. JA is to send the other member who have not been allocated to a sub group, a description of the role of each group for them to decide which on they would like to join.
ACTION: JA
- 2.2 Item 2.8 (From November 2014) – Familiarization Courses. EM updated the meeting that there is a plan to hold a Scottish training day if there is enough uptake from the both the East and West committees. The planned date for this was July. It was expressed by the committee that this would not be a goodtime to hold the training in Scotland due to the Scottish holidays. EM agreed as said he would take this up with Norcross for an update.
ACTION: EM
- 2.3 Item 9.1 (From November 2014) – Members Handbook / Governance Document. Both these item are currently under review and being rewritten by Norcross. There was not a time frame for this work to be finished. We will keep an eye out for this.
ACTION: ONGOING
- 2.4 Item 5 (From Joint Meeting – Feb 2015)
Statutory Instruments – It has been confirmed that by EM at the chairs conference that the VAPC`s are indeed still working to the old 2006 Instruments, as these have been automatically passed over to the VAPC from the old War Pensions Committees, until such a time that new instruments and guidelines have been written. We will keep an eye on this.
ACTION: ONGOING
- 2.5 Item 5 (From Joint Meeting – Feb 2015)
VAPC Flyers and Awareness materials – This is been an ongoing headache for the committee. Norcross have been saying that the delay is due to the National VAPC Chair not signing the new items off. At the Chairs Meeting, EM spoke with the National chair on behalf of the committee, who said the items had been signed of and passed back to Norcross. In order to resolve this, the Business Development Manager at VWS (Based in Glasgow) has taken on the role to sort this problem once and for all. We will wait and see the outcome.
ACTION: ONGOING

SEC NOTE: - It has been revealed that the minutes should be signed off by the chair at the next meeting, to show these are a true record of the last meeting. This practice has now been put in place. Should any member wish a copy of the signed minutes, in addition to the electronic copy you all get, please ask JA

3. Advocacy (TF) (No Report This Period)

3.1 It was expressed that Advocacy has not seen any new cases in the last two years coming in, so what is happening? Are there no cases? Are cases not getting passed to VAPC? – Research is to be taken, as this is reported to be a national issue, to see the number of incoming cases, appeals, successful appeals, unsuccessful appeals, to try and see where the blocks in VAPC not getting the cases.

ACTION: JA

3.2 However, a case has been passed to the committee by Norcross. As the person lives nearby EM agreed to make initial contact with the client and report back to TF.

ACTION: EM

4. Assistance (DMcA) (No Report This Period)

4.1 As per Advocacy, no cases coming through.

5. Awareness (AM) (No Report This Period)

5.1 Without the flyers and materials need nothing could be done. Hopefully this will be addressed soon, as above.

6. Consultation (DA) (No Report This Period)

6.1 No cases for consultation coming through. In the past these came from the chair, via Norcross.

6.2 A joint Consultation taskforce was suggested between the East and West committee's to see what item the VAPC could consult on. JA to sound out the East committee

ACTION: JA

7. Veterans Welfare Service

7.1 In the absence of BF, the meeting was attended by SM. She explained to the members that her staff are fully aware of the VAPC, and they have no problems passing cases onto the committee. It was noted that SM liked in the past how the committee has helped VWS, by confirming decisions, and setting a client's mind at rest.

7.2 It was agreed that SM and JA would work on a briefing document on the VWS, showing how the service works, how cases are handled, where cases could be passed to the committee and an update on the current schemes managed by VWS.

ACTION SM / JA

- 7.3 In May 2015, EM & JA had a meeting with BF @ Kentigern House, to see how the VAPC and VWS can work together. It was agreed that we should be working together and not against one another, as seems to be the case at times. If a VAPC member has a concern about the VWS, please express it, so it can be acted on or a reason for that issue to be given. This goes vice versa with the VWS team.

We are supposed to be working together in the interest of the Veterans after all.

ACTION: ALL

8. Firmbase

- 8.1 Good work in Ayrshire and Dumfries.

- 8.2 It was table could we get hold of the current complete list of all Firmbase locations and match them up with the VAPC's in that area, as these can good working groups.

ACTION: JA

9. Chairman`s Report (EM)

- 9.1 The last chairs cons was held in Nottingham on the 12 March 2015. The then Veterans Minister attended the meeting for a while as this was within her constituency. It was reported that this was the first time that any of the Ministers have attended a chairs meeting – Progress! However it was reported that the Minister said, “That the VAPC does not need a Statutory Instrument, to operate, just get on with it” when questioned on the subject.

- 9.2 The possibility of a National Conference for members was suggested, as it has been reported that Members are feeling excluded from the chairs conference. The idea is still in on the drawing board, so the plan is to have selected members form each of the VAPC's attend and change these people around at each conference. EM will keep us updated with this.

ACTION: EM

- 9.3 The possibility of “Distance Learning Courses” was introduced for members, but did not seem popular with the committee, as if you have had no training at all, this would be pointless.

- 9.4 E.mails from Norcross – A number of members from all the regions have been questioning e.mails from Norcross asking for NI numbers and other personal information. EM confirmed that these are genuine. The reason for these are a change to the payment system for expenses, where VAPC members are not MOD staff, our information needs to be put onto the system so that expenses can be paid, hence the requested information is needed to do this. Members are asked to respond to these e.mails where they arrive.

It was asked by members, why a simple warning e.mail, was not sent to the committee secretaries to let the members know that these e.mail where real, as some members treated them as spam. EM agreed to feed this back to Norcross, as it is a fair point.

ACTION: EM

- 9.5 It was asked if the committee meeting dates could be adjusted to near the chairs meeting, so that the membership can get the updates sooner. To allow this the committee meetings as of 2016 would be January, April, July & October, if all members agree. This would also mean that after our booked meeting in November 2015 would be slightly closer to January 2016, not the full quarter. Please let JA know if you are all happy with this change.
ACTION: ALL

SEC NOTE: Other items from the chairs meeting have been answered in points covered above, no need to report the same information.

10. Annual Joint Meeting

- 10.1 It was agreed that the joint annual meeting should carry on. As a result of the item above the next planned meeting would be January 2016. This meeting will be held in the West's region, so we are looking for a venue to hold at least forty persons, with IT support and catering facilities
ACTION: ALL

- 10.2 In addition to a venue, both East and West members need to agree an agenda for the day, what speakers would you like? What items do you want to cover?

We currently have suggestions, to invite the New Deputy Head of VeteransUK "Alan Mayers" A member of staff from ASAP to talk about their work and re invite the Scottish Veterans Commissioner, as it was table he should be invited to all our joint meeting. Please send you suggestions to JA.

ACTION: ALL

11. AOB

- 11.1 **GENERAL REMINDER (1):** - Please remember to inform group leads of awareness activity and consultation opportunities in your area. **ACTION: ALL**
- 11.2 **GENERAL REMINDER (2):** - Would any member that carries out any Awareness activity, please inform AM so it can be reported. There have been occasions where Awareness activities have been carried out and not reported as AM does not know about it. **ACTION: ALL**
- 11.3 **GENERAL REMINDER (3):** - All members need to communicate with each other, as to what they are doing and pass on any information that may be of benefit to someone else.
ACTION: ALL
- 11.4 **GENERAL REMINDER (4):** - It has been noted that discussion documents etc that have been sent out in the past for input, have resulted in no responses from members of the committee. Could all members please take the time to read these future documents and requests, and please respond. Even if it is to say that you have no feedback. This will allow the person(s) asking for feedback to know that the members are reviewing the material and it is not just being ignored. **ACTION: ALL**

11.5 **GENERAL REMINDER (5): - REQUESTS TO NORCROSS.** It was tabled by AM to have a sole point of contact for requests to Norcross. Committee agreed that all contact requests to go through JA, so these can be logged and tracked, rather than everyone making requests.
ACTION: ALL

11.6 **GENERAL REMINDER (6): - SCOTTISH VAPC FACEBOOK PAGE.** Please remember that we have a joint East and West of Scotland Facebook page. Input is required from all members so that we can reach as many Veterans as possible, please send your submissions to JA and pass out the link to you contacts: - <http://www.facebook.com/vapcsscotland>
ACTION: ALL

12. **DONM**

The Next Meeting has been scheduled to take place on: - **THURSDAY 27 AUGUST 2015**
At: - **Lowland Reserve Forces and Cadets Association, Lowland House,
60 Avenuepark Street, Glasgow, Lanarkshire, Scotland, G20 8LW.**

Times are Lunch 13:00hrs, Meeting start 13:30hrs, we will aim to finish for 15:30, Latest 16:00

Future Dates Are: - **THURSDAY 26 NOVEMBER 2015**

Sec Note: The agenda for the day will be sent out, nearer to the date of the meeting. Should any member wish items to be included in the day's agenda, please send full details to JA
ACTION: ALL

Minutes prepared by: -
Jim R. J. Allan
Secretary, WS VAPC
24 May 2015

Countersigned: -



Date:-

27th August 2015

Ed McGrachan, Chair – WS VAPC