

Social Security Act 1989

North East Veterans Advisory and Pensions Committee

Minutes of meeting held on 9 June 2017 at Finchale Training College Durham

Present:	Mr P E Kingham (<i>Chairman</i>)	(PK)
	Mrs S Crosby	(SC)
	Mr A deCourtney-Wellum	(ACW)
	Mr S Green	(SG)
	Mr P Murnane	(PM)
	Mr L O'Halleron	(LO'H)
	Mr M Potts	(MMP)
	Mr C Rushton	(CR)
	Mr P Sinclair	(PS)
	Mrs L Smith	(LS)
	Maj A J P Watson TD (<i>Secretary</i>)	(AW)
	Mr A Winnett	(TW)

Apologies:	Lt Col B G de la Haye OBE
	Mr B Halfpenny
	Dr D Mayes
	Mr M Pears
	Mr A Heron VWS

Welcome and Introduction.

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting (which commenced at 1054) It was 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 and the VAPC Members handbook.

Item		Action
218	Declarations of Interest	
218.1	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.	
218.2	There were no Declarations of Financial or Pecuniary Interest	
219	Confirmation of minutes	
219.1	The members confirmed the minutes of the meeting of 10 th March 2017, previously circulated, were a true record +& they were then signed by PK.	

220	Matters Arising	
220.1	<p>211.3 The request to review the difficulties experienced by those being discharged following a below tariff award under AFCS has made little headway due to difficulty in finding out how many veterans are affected. A FOI request to Vets UK by PS was unsuccessful as the information could only be obtained at disproportionate costs.</p> <p>AW agreed to write on behalf of the Committee explaining the reason the information was needed and that it relates to a piece of work which we are pursuing in partnership with VWS.</p> <p>215. Yorkshire & Humber committee have produced a library of information on a memory stick which they have offered to share. It is intended that we obtain a copy to adapt for use in our region.</p> <p>215.7 PK has now met Jim Kabata who has agreed to provide a brief about CCGs to the Committee. It is hoped that he will be able to attend in September and MP who has regular contact will extend an invitation. That meeting to be at 0930 to start at 1000</p>	<p>AW</p> <p>PK</p> <p>MP</p>
220.2	<p>MMP updated the committee about the progress of the KITE Hub project. PK believed that aspects of the Hub project would substantially enhance the potential of the Veterans Gateway and asked if this had been brought to the attention of the RBL at an appropriate level.</p> <p>AW suggested Maj Gen David Jolliffe CB FRCP may be able to help to introduce Prof Wilson to the appropriate contact in the Legion.</p>	<p>AW to contact MMP</p>
220.3	Accompanied visiting none since last meeting	
220.4	Recruiting. The next campaign is due to start in September when we will aim to recruit up to 4 members with an emphasis on North Northumberland and those with medical background.	
221	Chairman's report	
221.1	A written report was circulated to members in advance of the meeting recording a busy period in the Veterans area the Chair took the opportunity to highlight the following points:	
221.2	SI update given by AW. PK confirmed that Veterans UK	

221.3	<p>have made representations about including reference to the TOR in the SI.</p> <p>A report about the Northumbria University symposium on access to services by veterans for substance abuse was given by PK. The date for the follow up report ought to be kept free (16 Nov 17) by members who may be invited to attend. There was a discussion about resettlement training and a proposal the SO2 Transitions from Headquarters 4 Brigade be invited to provide a brief on current provision.</p>	PK ACW SG																									
222	Regional Welfare Services Report																										
222.1	<p>AH provided a written report with the following information.</p> <p>Numbers of VWS visits since our last meeting reported as follows:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="316 819 1155 1003"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>New Widow/er</th> <th>Other Visit</th> <th>FPOC*</th> <th>Total</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Falcus, John</td> <td>1</td> <td>16</td> <td>3</td> <td>20</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Heron, Alan</td> <td>2</td> <td>76</td> <td>24</td> <td>102</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Highmoor, Elizabeth</td> <td>6</td> <td>27</td> <td>38</td> <td>71</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Totals</td> <td>9</td> <td>119</td> <td>65</td> <td>193</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>*First Point of Contact.</p> <p>222.2 John Falcus retired on 31 May 17 however, his last working day was 7 Apr 17. Whilst it had been hoped that his successor would be appointed and commence training this month; however, the post had to be re-advertised with a closing date for applications of 7 Jun 17.</p> <p>222.3 The Welfare Manager post at Catterick Personnel Recovery Centre has been interviewed for on 6 Jun 17 and it is hoped an appointment will be announced soon.</p> <p>222.4 The Edinburgh post which although outside of NE VAPC area is in the same region for VWS services and is proving difficult to fill. VWS staff from the NE are involved in managing workload for that area.</p> <p>222.5 The vacant post for Ayrshire has now been filled.</p> <p>222.7 There is no change in the IT connectivity at Pearl House and we continue to function as normal on 3G and mobile telephone. The use of interviewing facilities at 'The Pop In' is beneficial for those clients prepared and able to come into Newcastle. AH is able to book and coordinate several appointments on a specified day without the need to travel; therefore, saving time and costs. Veterans Welfare Centre (Glasgow) staff continue to support in difficult</p>			New Widow/er	Other Visit	FPOC*	Total	Falcus, John	1	16	3	20	Heron, Alan	2	76	24	102	Highmoor, Elizabeth	6	27	38	71	Totals	9	119	65	193
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	circumstances with staff changes, operational issues and long term sickness to cope with.	
222.8	Following a case being dealt with by AH there appeared to be some uncertainty around how Local Authorities were treating AFCS GIP payments in relation to disregards when assessing council tax. Whilst WPs are being subject to full disregard GIP payments may not be. Members are asked to establish the situation in their respective areas.	ALL
222.9	PS raised point that it was not just council tax relief and housing benefit that is involved and that as universal credit is rolling out some veterans are unsure of the status of GIP payments.	
223	Regional Activity	
223.1	Northumberland AFF next meeting is on 12 Jun 17, unfortunately no one is able to attend but the chair will circulate the minutes.	PK
223.2	The report for the March Durham AFF had been circulated	
223.3	AW to look for details of military points of contact for the various groups and circulate his findings.	AW
224	Delivery Committee Remit	
224.1	PK discussed the re-introduction of an annual reporting cycle for committees, which he viewed as a positive measure which will support future reviews and help articulate the work and achievements of VAPCs. In order to fully capture members engagement particularly with individual veterans, he asked that all members let him have a completed activity report by 31 July.	ALL
224.2	PK confirmed LS would work with him to refine the committee objectives which would be published on the web site and used as part of the reporting framework.	PK LS
224.3	MMP will act as focal point for input to the web site for the committee. It was agreed that members names would be listed together with the LA and other bodies they are engaged with on behalf of the Committee. Members were also asked to forward information and pictures to MMP for and information to him. (PK to obtain updated instructions)	ALL PK
224.4	Raising awareness – the literature relating to preserved pensions produced by the media team at Norcross has now been embedded in the website. Members should access it and remember to raise it at the AFF they attend	ALL

225	Training	
225.1	PK confirmed the position about training at Norcross and Glasgow	ALL
225.2	SG, PS MMP unable to attend training	
225.3	To ensure that Members are aware of the requirements of the Data Protection Act to protect personal information when dealing with veterans details they are asked to undertake some 'protecting information training' which is available on line. The link will be circulated under separate cover and members are asked to notify the Secretary once they have completed it.	ALL
226	Any other business	
226.1	MMP asked if VAPCs should be listed in the disability rights handbook. PK explained that as we were not intended as the first point of contact or a service delivery organisation it would be inappropriate however, it would appear that that Veterans UK or the VWS should be listed.	PK AW MMP
226.2	PS stated that following complaints from 2 disabled veterans it was confirmed that the regional transport company NEXUS, allowed those with an AFCS award to be 'pass ported' to receive a travel pass should they apply but that those veterans with a WP award including WPMS were required to undergo an assessment by social services. It was agreed to follow up to try to establish the same support for WPs as those with AFCS awards.	PS PK
226.3	PS identified inaccuracies in details relating to taxation of motor vehicles by those with WPMS on the DVLA content within the Government web site and in other published information. He will provide the chair with full information with a view to follow up action through Veterans UK to ensure that all content and published information is accurate.	PS
227	2017 Meetings	
227.1	Further meetings will be held during 2017 - 25 September (to start at 1000) and 8 December which will likely be from 1000 to 1500.	
227.2	The Committee formally requests the attendance of a local welfare manager from the VWS.	
227.3	There being no further business, the Chairman closed the meeting at 1257hrs.	