

**MINUTES OF THE 24<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 13 March 2017 AT 11am**

Present.

Lt. Col. Peter POOLE (PP) Chair.  
Larry HENSON (LH) Meetings Secretary.  
Terl BRYANT (TB)  
Barry SMITH (BS)  
Michael WHITEHEAD (MW)  
Charlie STREATHER (CS)  
Paul DAVIES (PD)  
Bill DIXON-DODDS (BDD)  
Patrick RENDALL (PR) (Deputy Chair)  
Jim WRIGHT (JW)  
Dick HARWOOD (DH)  
Stav MELIDES (SM)  
David TAYLOR (DT)  
Co-opted Members  
Ron GATEPAIN (RG)  
Ben HODGES (BH)

Apologies:

John BERRY (JB)  
David WILSON (DW)  
David LOMAS (DL)

**ITEM 1. Welcome/Opening Remarks.**

**ITEM 5. Introduction new/existing Members**

1. The Chair (PP) welcomed all present and thanked them for attending. He said that he would deal items 1 and 5 together. He particularly welcomed 6 new members and hoped that they would, from the start, feel confident to provide input. PP proposed that the two applicants who had been unable to attend the interviews - Ron Gatepain and Ben Hodges - be co opted to the Committee pending full membership at the next recruitment round later this year. This was unanimously agreed by current Members.
2. To facilitate an understanding of members interests all were asked to give a brief resume of their career and reasons for joining the Committee.

**ITEM 2. Declarations of Interest.**

3. There were no declarations of interests that would conflict with the work of the Committee.

**ITEM 3. Apologies for Absence.**

4. Apologies for absence had been received from:

John BERRY (JB)  
David WILSON (DW)  
David LOMAS (DL)

#### **ITEM 4. Minutes of the Meeting held on 16<sup>th</sup> January 2017**

4. PP thanked LH for the minutes – there was one matter of accuracy to be addressed in that Barry Smith (BS) was recorded as BW.

#### **5. Matters Arising.**

- Strategic Plan - See Item 6.
- Functions – See Item 9.
- Combat Injuries Compensation. The Chair emphasised the importance of responding to consultation documents. He hoped that members would in future take the time to read and understand the material – and at the very least provide a “no comment” response.
- Independent Complaints Panels (ICP) PP and BS had both been members of an ICP that had considered three cases – one of which was four years old. Members should be aware that new ToRs have now been produced and this situation will not reoccur.
- Leadership of Veterans UK. Jon Parkin has been extended in his interim role leading the Defence Vetting Agency, Rob Rowntree will continue in this post.
- Member Training. Veterans UK is in the process of setting up training for all members and particularly those who have joined more recently. Dates are being firmed up.
- MW noted that “electronic” training courses could provide a good alternative where attendance at Norcross was difficult.

#### **ITEM 6. Strategic Plan.**

6. There was some debate about the current draft of the Strategic Plan. PP pointed out that this is an important document that is at the root of why we exist, in that vein he was disappointed that he had received so few responses concerning a document that all should own. Comments that had been received concerned

- RH made the following points:
  - Summary of aims and mission would read well at the start of the plan.
  - Are we here to "challenge" the system or be a "critical friend", both are stronger than para 3 (c) which is perhaps more diplomatic, and at variance with para 9b(3) where we state that we support MoD.
  - Para 9 (b) states that we are not expected to be case workers, but I was aware that the strongest points people made were those where an individual case was used as an example, and in other parts of the document (para 15c) we mention using individual cases as examples.
  - Para 2: Add names of Councils?
  - Para 6: Equity rather than equality?
  - Para 67: Why 1990?

- Para 8: Name the industry signatories? (Naming signatories will allow us to know whom to target, measurable achievements.)

#### Annex C

- "18,000 veterans retire from the services each year, 2000 of these on medical grounds" (Source: GP e-learning module on veterans' health)
  - No mention of liaison with secondary care trusts (hospitals) or community trusts (mental health, district nurses)
  - Para 2 b. Critical mass necessary to get veterans appropriate health care?
  - Para 2d. "relevant" medical personnel.
  - Para 3 c. Liaise rather than adjudicate?
  - Para 5. Names of the NHS organisations who have engaged positively?\*
  - Target EMAS (Ambulance Service)?
- Other Points.
    - PR likened the role of VAPC as similar to his role as a school governor.
    - TB said that Para 9.b.4 is opposite to 9.1.
    - PD believed that the document should clarify the difference in clients needs to their expectations.
    - BS believed that the basics should be common among all VAPCs with regional differences only.
    - BS pointed out we need to work with the MOD to help us deal with our stakeholders.
  - Actions.
    - **PP asked for any further Strategic Plan comments by the end of the month. Nil returns are required.**

#### **ITEM 7. Presentation on AFCS and WP Scheme. C Streater**

7. The EM VAPC is agreed that at each meeting there should be an agenda item for the professional development of members. The first in what will become a regular feature of these meetings was a talk on each of these schemes, highlighting the differences between them and the issues faced by those veterans who apply. At this meeting Mr Charlie Streater, a member of the Welfare Team of Blesma explained the two systems after which he took questions. Concluding the talk PP thanked CS and said we were fortunate to have such expertise on the committee and hoped that both long standing and new attendees found it as interesting and enlightening as he had.

#### **ITEM 8. Sub Committee Reports.**

8. Communications – Mr Michael Whitehead (Lead). MW advised the Committee that he was making good progress with getting all members onto the MoD website. He also mentioned that the Libor funded “Veterans Gateway” project – a joint enterprise between TRBL, Poppy Scotland, Combat Stress, SSAFA and Connect Assist – was now open for business. The grant was a single £2m, future expenditure had been guaranteed by the joint providers. of gaining access to a moved site but felt that we were nearly there in achieving this.

9. MW went on to explain that there is an “on line platform” on the VAPC site on which members could find our minutes and those of other VAPCs. These are forwarded by the Secretary once they have been agreed as an accurate record of what has gone on. There

was quite some discussion on whether Facebook and Twitter were suitable for our purposes and it was agreed that BH would look into their use and report back through the Lead.

10. Health – Peter Poole (Lead). The Lead asked BDD to update the Committee on his work with the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), both the one that he is a member of and any read across to other CCGs. BDD reported good progress in the setting up of ToRs for his CCG and that others were following their lead. The Lead said that he would make every effort to contact as many of the CCGs in the Region over the coming months.

11. Policy – Mr Barry Smith (Lead). BS noted that the EM VAPC Strategic plan is nearing completion and emphasised that this is a document that should be shared across all VAPCs but particularly owned by the members of this committee. There was a need to provide an “elevator” pitch to explain briefly our purpose and what we could do to support other organisations. In coming months the sub-committee will be seeking to achieve the aims laid out in the plan with particular reference to the Covenant and how its aims were being achieved in the EM Region. He has been in contact with the Veterans Lead in Leicestershire and will be attending future meetings of this group. He will be advocating a joined up approach to serving veterans and their families, resisting duplication and a wastage of resources.

12. Welfare - Mr David Wilson (Lead). Mr Wilson was not able to attend and his report was held over to the next meeting. Instead PP talked of Panel Cases and Independent Complaints Panels and mentioned that we do not see too many in our Region. CS asked how we can engage as there must be people who need our help. BS pointed out we have no idea of statistics. Perhaps when we have done more to improve “awareness” more veterans will approach us if they are having difficulties. TB mentioned a starting point may be 140 veterans that meet in Bourne Lincolnshire every Saturday morning. PP asked for a list of agencies engaged.

### **ITEM 9. Functions**

13. PP thanked those who had commented on future arrangements for functions. There was much discussion on this and a decision was delayed until more thought had been put into location and part of the year for events to take place. PD cautioned that geographically it would be difficult for him to access funds if outside of his area.

### **ITEM 10. Any Other Business**

14. LH mentioned he was shortly to have an operation and fight a County Council Election but would hopefully carry on as usual with arrangements for meetings. The Committee wished him well on both counts.

### **ITEM 11. Date of Next Meeting**

15. Monday 3 July 2017 at PWOG Barracks, Grantham. Time: 10.30am for 11am

The meeting closed at 1.40pm