

**MINUTES OF THE 25<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 3<sup>rd</sup> JULY 2017**

Present.

Lt. Col. Peter POOLE (PP) Chair.  
Larry HENSON (LH) Meetings Secretary.  
John BERRY (JB)  
Terl BRYANT (TB)  
Barry SMITH (BS)  
Michael WHITEHEAD (MW)  
Paul DAVIES (PD)  
Patrick RENDALL (PR) (Deputy Chair)  
Jim WRIGHT (JW)  
Dick HURWOOD (DH).  
Stav MELIDES (SM)  
David LOMAS (DL)  
Co-opted Members  
Ben HODGES (BH)

Apologies:

Terl BRYANT (TB)  
Ron GAITPAIN (RG) (coopted Member).  
David WILSON (DW)  
David TAYLOR (DT)  
Charley STREATHER (CS)  
Bill DIXON-DODDS (BDD)

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

1. The Chair (PP) welcomed all present and thanked them for attending.
2. He asked those Members who had attended training on their views on how it went and said he was sending out the training slides to all. LH said Glasgow training had been beneficial and SM and JW agreed this despite the distance involved and airline woes. The Norcross training was also good.

**Action: Chairman**

**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:

Terl BRYANT (TB)

David WILSON (DW)  
David LOMAS (DL)  
David TAYLOR (DT)  
Charley STREATHER (CS)  
Bill DIXON-DODDS (BDD).

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

5. PP thanked LH for the minutes – there was one matter of accuracy to be addressed in that Dick Hurwood (DH) was recorded as Harwood. LH apologised and it would be corrected.

#### **Matters Arising**

6. Strategic Plan. There was nothing further to add and this was held as a good report. PR said that it was a living document, which could be updated when required.

7. PP said that although CS had retired from work through ill health, his range of knowledge and committee work was an asset and it was hoped he will remain on this committee.

8. All sub committees had been written to and had agreed progress to date. DH asked if the letter could be sent again.

#### **Action: Secretary**

9. PP said strategic plan had been re-launched and there was now a renewed need for an Annual Report. He had produced a timetable from April 2017 to April 2018 and will send a copy of the draft report to all members. This will show engagements and the many and various activities, and will reflect and refer to our hope and plans for next year. PP added that it was important to let him know of our individual activities.

#### **Action: Chairman**

10. PP spoke of a Nimrod pilot and another case where there had been War Pension referrals. Where appropriate he would copy the cases to committee members for their views. Finally he added that as ever, all referrals were to be treated with deference and civility.

#### **Action: Chairman** **Information: All**

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

11. PP said we should accept this as a basis upon which we all should work. He said that the document needed to be persuasive. It was a lengthy involving a lot of hard work by BS who was its chief architect. This document built upon previous strategies and is a gradual step forward based upon what we all think. The committee were grateful to BS.

## **ITEM 7. Feedback from Chairs meeting**

12. PP gave a report from the Chairs meeting and said that he had been put in contact with Janine Burnett. He said there was a new Independent Complaints Panel Process and he would send this out to all members. A request for a national conference for all was made but this would be impossible as it could not be funded. There was only an annual budget £35,000 for all the VAPCs. This resulted in some discussion about visibility of the budget and expenditure, but the bottom line was there is little funding for the 13 VAPCs.

### **Action: Chairman**

13. PP raised the question of 30p a mile that was in force, when the taxable allowance was 45p a mile. The process was that individuals should claim against tax for the remaining 15p, but apparently it was not easy to obtain the form from HMRC. MW added from his accountancy experience it was too much effort and becomes forgotten. JB and DL said they receive 58p and 60p respectively in their other business activities, although this was not the experience in the public sector.

14. PP explained that the new Veterans Gateway was funded by a £20M Libor initiative, which was taken up by a consortium of partners including the VWS. PP also mentioned a key facts booklet had been sent to all MPs but not to VAPCs.

15. Of other points PP said:

- a. The 'Help to buy scheme' was being remedied.
- b. The Covenant had been signed up by 1500 large businesses.
- c. There was little proof of positive occurrences with the Covenant other than the signing of papers.
- d. Armed Forces Day was a success.
- e. He had looked at War Pensions Schemes and the numbers of claimants were falling. Claims were now dealt with in 95 days average rather than the previous 112.
- f. There had been talk of the Ilford Park Nursing Home in Devon and its good work, with the ex-Service Polish community.

## **ITEM 8 Sub Committee Reports/Future Plans.**

### **16. Policy**

- a. BS made copies of the policy available and said Local Government and General Elections had meant there had been little engagement since the last meeting. He had attended one meeting where there had been a multiplicity of organisations. There was a COMVA conference of Naval organisations coming together to provide comradeship and friendship. He

had held follow up discussions. BS felt it would be useful to find out where other VAPCs had settled with their policies and also that help and guidance might be required from Vets UK. He felt it important to understand Vets UK strategic vision in order that VAPCs can tailor their plans accordingly.

b. BS said he had completed a draft business plan for last year for sub-committee needs and had a couple of meetings with SM. It was agreed Reserve Forces and Veterans were not seen as being in conflict.

c. BS wondered if we could organise a dinner with stakeholders in an Officers Mess and give a short presentation to improve their current lack of knowledge. PP said that we have little money for this but we could join in with events under the banner of the Community and Armed Forces Covenants but the first question asked is “what do you do?” SM pointed out that the best route of approach is via Human Resources Departments and not to Chief Executives.

d. JB mentioned about prisons being rebuilt or upgraded and in particular Glen Parva and Wellingborough and the need for us was to engage, as veterans do make up some of the prison population.

17. **Health** DH spoke about the Ambulance Service and said that many employ ex servicemen and these need to be identified. He mentioned the Web Site and in particular the refurbishing of Stanford Hall and he had secured an invitation to visit. He would circulate information in due course. The Health Service is involved in the venture and the facility will open at the end of 2018. JB said added that he had asked about Hedley Court and was told it was to be sold.

**Action: Dick Hurwood**

18. **Communications** MW said that BDD was in Canada hence the lack of anything specific. He said that the MOD Sharepoint website <https://sts.defencegateway.mod.uk/> was now operational and that all members could now sign up to it if they hadn't already. Although some documents had already been loaded onto the site, MW was unable to find out from the MOD how much space had been given to us so careful self monitoring was going to be required. It was also mentioned that the main VAPC website <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/vapc-east-midlands-committee-members> contained a list of members and members were asked if they thought that some mention should be made on this list as to what they currently did. It was agreed that the list would be updated accordingly and that MW would send an e-mail to all members asking them to provide the information that he needed. MW said a problem with the main MOD gateway was that there were too many further path ways to follow once you were in there and some of them lead you round in circles. MW was unable to find out how much space is available to us.

**Action: Michael Whitehead**

## **ITEM 9 Functions.**

19. PP said because of the requirement for a quick answer, he had made a decision without referring to the Committee. Despite MW hard work to obtain a quotation for the Christmas Function from Leicester Tigers, the club was considerably more expensive than Leicester County Cricket Club. His decision was that on this year's occasion the function should be held there on 4<sup>th</sup> December 2017.

### **Action: Patrick Rendall**

20. With regard to funding PR wondered about available funds for this year. He was surprised we had £2135.61. However, it was agreed there still needed to be fund raising and members were asked if they would assist. After some discussion, where we took into account that some of the funds had been raised from charities it was agreed that Members should pay for their own lunch but there was no need to ask a £5 payment from other attendees.

### **Action: All**

21. MW posed the question as to the Type of Veteran we intended to invite. There was a consensus they should be needy and deserving. This then centred on the groups we support. MW and PP said we should be looking to industry for funding support together with an invite to sponsors to attend also. Companies could be asked to send 2/3 veterans and partners. PD said he would provide further money if LH provided details of the Bank.

### **Action: Secretary**

## **ITEM 10 Any other Business**

22. DH said that on many occasions he had noticed that the Union Flag was raised and flown upside down and wondered what could be done to remedy this. After discussion, the consensus was that we should highlight this whenever seen.

23. The supply of business cards was raised. PP said that lanyards and business cards were in the process of production and would be available shortly.

24. PD gave his apologies for the next meeting.

25. PP said that there was a National Audit Report on prisoners with mental injuries which was critical of the gateway system and when available this would be circulated.

### **Action: Chairman**

26. The meeting was fairly lengthy and Members asked whether we could meet earlier than 11am. PP took soundings and agreed that 10.30am was perhaps a better time and we would trial this. LH agreed to inform the Mess and arrange earlier coffee.

### **Action: All**

ITEM 11\_\_Next Meeting

27. LH said this was booked for Monday 18<sup>th</sup> September 2017 at Grantham at the revised time of 10.30am.

Distribution:

Those listed