



## VETERANS ADVISORY AND PENSIONS COMMITTEE

### EASTERN ENGLAND VETERANS ADVISORY & PENSIONS COMMITTEE (EVAPC)

#### MINUTES OF A MEETING HELD ON 9 November 2017 @ the Army Cadet Headquarters, Waterbeach, Cambridgeshire

Present: Mr JL Jelley (JJ) – Chairman  
Mr J Barnard (JB)  
Mr MR Berry (MB)  
Mr R Catton (RC)  
Mr E Connolly (EC)  
Gp Capt B Griffiths (BG)  
Lt Cdr D Mincher (DM) - Vice Chairman  
Maj T Ormiston (TO)  
Mr I Stewart (IS)  
Mr C Titmuss (CT)  
Mr S Burgess (SB) Veterans Welfare Service  
Mr A Shenston (AS) Veterans Welfare Service

Apologies: Dr M Almond  
Ms S Brenchley  
Ms P Kingham  
Mrs D Preston

Action

#### **ITEM 1 – Welcome, apologies for absence and Declarations of Interest.**

1. The meeting commenced at 1030. The Chairman welcomed all members and our visitors, Stuart Burgess and Andrew Shenston of the Veterans Welfare Service. Andrew has recently taken up his post as Welfare Manager at RAF Wyton.
2. Apologies from Committee Members were noted.
3. There were no declarations of interest.

#### **ITEM 2 – Minutes of the Meeting Held 21 September 2017.**

4. Approval of Minutes. The Minutes, circulated to members prior to the meeting, were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.
5. There were no Matters Arising.

#### **ITEM 3 – Review of outstanding actions.**

6. Cambridge Community Safety Partnership Panel (CCSPP): As discussed at the last meeting, JPs are barred from sitting on the Committee and we had sought other volunteers. **RC** has kindly offered to support this from January 2018 and will liaise with Penny and Sue.
7. **CT** asked whether the issue of homelessness in Luton could be a focus for us. It was agreed that, in the absence of a permanent member for Bedfordshire, we should first concentrate on the Cambridge project as this can then be a

blueprint for future interventions.

8. The matrix of Lead and Supporting Committee members for our area County Covenant Boards (CCBs) was completed with leads volunteering for all 6 Counties. Support Members are still sought.
9. In order to further integrate with CCBs, an action was taken to write to each CCB, introducing the VAPC Lead Member. This is also an opportunity to collate 2018 CCB meeting dates. Target completion date: 20 November.
10. Following last month's presentation by Alex Cooper on the Veterans and Families Research Hub, we were sent publicity links for the launch of the Hub.
11. At the last meeting **CT** discussed the lack of response he'd had from a Freedom of Information Request. Following an intervention by the Chairman, this information has now been received and **CT** is following this up.

**DM**

#### **ITEM 4 – Chairman's Update**

12. Progress has been made in engaging Cambridgeshire CC and the Chairman has been invited to an inaugural AF Covenant event on the 7<sup>th</sup> December. He will take this opportunity to pitch the VAPC and to request membership of the CC Board. This represents excellent progress in an area which has stalled for some time.
13. The Chairman also reported that, whilst at a recent SSAFA meeting at MoD, he had the opportunity to engage with the Armed Forces Minister, Mark Lancaster, and gave the Minister an update of our Committee's progress in the Region.
14. Following their presentation to the Committee at our September 2017 meeting, we were pleased to receive an invitation from the NHS Veterans' Mental Health Transition Service (Diane Palmer) to join their "Veterans' Health & Welfare Network". The first meeting is due to take place 7/12/17 with **MA** and **BG** attending.
15. **BG** gave an update of his attendance at the Chairs' Conference in October, which he attended vice **JJ** who was unable to attend. Detailed minutes of the meeting were distributed to all EVAPC Members in advance of our meeting. Key points:
  - a. The proposed Statutory Instrument for VAPCs is felt to be too historical without sufficient forward focus. The Head of Veterans UK has taken actions to review the SI to ensure it meets our needs. Following its introduction (January 2018?) the VAPC Handbook will be re-written which can then include required training for Committees and Members. *Although the Handbook could be updated prior to the issue of the SI as it will only affect one Chapter.*
  - b. Recruitment and succession planning is an issue across all VAPCs. *It was agreed that we are progressing well in this area.*
  - c. There will be a training event in March 2018.
  - d. VAPCs should consider sharing "Good Practice" across all 13 Regions.
  - e. VAPCs are generally building stronger relationships with the Veterans Welfare Service and Vets UK.
16. The Chairman thanked **BG** for representing us at the meeting and for his comprehensive report and invited all members to consider attending future

**Chairman**

**ALL**

Conferences.

17. Regarding the spread of Good Practice across Regions it was agreed that we should lead the way by inviting other Committees to our future meetings. The Chairman agreed to consider this and contact the other 12 Regions.

**Chairman**

#### **ITEM 5 – Review of Covenant Board Meetings.**

18. BG gave an update from the Hertfordshire meeting 26/7/17. This was the first meeting for a new Chairman who appeared enthusiastic and engaged with the role. While historically the Board may have concentrated too much on ceremonial aspects, the Chairman is open to suggestions on the future. To that end we discussed whether our “Areas of Interest” document (circulated in May) could provide a template to support the Chair in defining his expectations. It was agreed that we should first revise our document using BG’s feedback, seek approval from our Chair and then send it to all CCBs to provide transparency on our role. We would then monitor the CCBs’ actions in relation to that document (and in future perhaps provide them feedback on progress).

**DM, BG,  
Chairman**

19. There appears to be a lack of clarity on the role of the Armed Forces Champion. When questioned at the Herts CCB Meeting, there was no clear mission or understanding of their duties. This is an area all members are asked to monitor at future CCB meetings and to “pull the thread” to determine the understanding. This may be an area where we can influence good practice across the various CCBs.

**ALL**

20. DM gave an update from the Suffolk Board meeting 12/10/17. Much of the meeting was devoted to the issue of the retiring Chairman who had done much to introduce the AF Covenant. A new Chair is expected to be in post by Christmas. DM reported he felt the VPAC had been fully accepted onto the Board and he had been approached on a number of issues out of Committee and shows that the VAPC influence is becoming more ingrained.

#### **ITEM 6 – Strategic Plan Update.**

21. Our Strategic Plan expires in May 2018 and requires a full review. Much has changed since the Plan was first introduced, not least the integration with CCBs. This review requires everyone’s input and all Members are requested to examine the Strategic Plans or Governance documents of other VAPCs on the website, together with our own, and submit suggestions. This will be a significant agenda item for the January meeting following which it will be refined and approved at the April meeting.

**ALL**

#### **ITEM 7 – Membership/Recruitment**

22. No significant input at this meeting however **RC** may have identified a potential member. He will follow-up.

#### **ITEM 8 – VWS Activity Report – Mr S Burgess & Mr A Shenston.**

23. **SB** presented statistics from the past month: 31 visits, 34 claims and 77 calls. It is anticipated that **AS** will attend future meetings.

#### **ITEM 9 – Any Other Business.**

24. Sharepoint: **RC** suggested we use an e-Repository for information (ideally Dropbox) such that all Committee Members can access it. **RC** agreed to set up an account and to provide help to members in accessing it.

**RC**

25. TO informed us that he will be retiring from BLESMA in December and that his

relief in the role is Kevin Long, currently Personnel Resettlement Officer in Colchester.

DM

26. EC requested he be allowed to attend a Suffolk CCB Meeting as he will be the lead for Norfolk (and hasn't yet attended a meeting). DM agreed to arrange this.
27. CT asked whether we ought to develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the VAPC and the CCBs. This promoted much discussion which concluded that we ought to retain our full independence from the CCB, but remain there as the "conscience". However, in supporting transparency of purpose, our "areas of Interest" document should be more widely disseminated. See previous comment.
28. IS stated he had attended the unveiling of a Commemorative VC Paving Stone, an event which was attended by ~200 people. He also identified that his local Citizens' Advice Bureau had no remit to ask whether a client was a Veteran. It was agreed that this was a shortfall in their arrangements (particularly since such questions are now common with the police and prison services), and merits further investigation.

**Item 10 - Dates of 2018 Meetings.**

29. These have been agreed as:
  - a. 25<sup>th</sup> January
  - b. 19<sup>th</sup> April
  - c. 12<sup>th</sup> July
  - d. 4<sup>th</sup> October

All will be at the Cadet HQ, Waterbeach, and all will start at 10:30.

Signed:

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