



VETERANS ADVISORY AND PENSIONS COMMITTEE

EAST OF ENGLAND VETERANS ADVISORY AND PENSIONS COMMITTEE
(EVAPC)
MINUTES OF A MEETING HELD ON 6 APRIL 2017 AT THE ARMY CADET
HEADQUARTERS, WATERBEACH, CAMBRIDGESHIRE

Present: Mr JL Jelley – Chairman
Dr M Almond
Mr MR Berry
Ms S Brenchley
Dr I Calder
Mr E Connolly
Gp Capt B Griffiths
Mr T Heslin
Ms P Kingham
Lt Cdr D Mincher
Maj T Ormiston
Mrs D Preston
Lt Col PK Robinson
Mr I Stewart
Lt Col R E Toland (Secretary)

Apologies: Mr J Barnard
Mr R Catton
Mr C Titmuss

In attendance: Mr S Burgess VWS

ITEM 1 - Welcome and Declarations of Interest

1. The meeting commenced at 1030. The Chairman welcomed the committee's new members; Dr Almond, Mr Connolly and Gp Capt Griffiths. A further two new members, Mr Catton and Mr Titmuss were unable to attend the meeting. The Chairman also welcomed the previously co-opted members, Ms Brenchley and Ms Kingham as full members. Mrs Kate Green had submitted her resignation from the committee due to work pressures. The Chairman expressed his and the committee's gratitude to Mrs Green for her contribution since the establishment of the Eastern VAPS. The new members present gave the committee short descriptions of their respective backgrounds.

2. There were no declarations of interest.

ITEM 2 – Minutes of the Meeting Held on 5 January 2017

3. Approval of Minutes. The Minutes, circulated to members prior to the meeting, were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

4. Matters Arising. There were no matters arising.

Action

ITEM 3 – Chairman’s Update

5. The Chairman would be attending the next VAPC Chairs’ meeting on 19 and 20 Apr at Norcross and would report at the next meeting.

Chairman

6. The Eastern VAPC’s effort to develop a strategy and recruit new members, was viewed favourably by the MOD and the Chairman had briefed the last Chairs’ meeting on EVAPC’s progress.

7. The Chairman reported on the successful intervention by Ms Kingham to assist a veteran overcome difficulties being encountered when trying to register with a GP on leaving the Service; an excellent example of making the provisions of the Military Covenant work for the benefit of a veteran.

8. Mr Barnard had raised the problems encountered by members with hearing difficulties at Covenant meetings where a hearing loop was not provided. The Chairman had therefore asked Mr Barnard to do some background research into the availability of loop systems at Covenant venues and report back in due course.

Mr Barnard

9. The Chairman said that he had received information that an appeal may arise which would require the EVAPC have to convene a panel of 3 members to consider the appeal. Further details will be provided when available.

Chairman

10. MOD Norcross was looking to hold two sessions of training for members, and again, further details will be forwarded when available.

Chairman

11. EVAPC had been invited to become members of the Essex covenant board - the Civil Military Partnership.

12. It was noted by Mr Stewart that a previous effort to gain an entrée to Cambridgeshire Covenant Board had been unsuccessful, but that the coming mayoral elections offered a good opportunity to remedy this situation.

ITEM 4 – Homelessness in Cambridge

13. Ms Brenchley reported on her contract with the Cambridge Rotary Club project looking at homelessness across the city. Ms Brenchley is now a member of the project team and has made it clear that her focus will be on the needs of homeless veterans. The project hoped to have a report on the homelessness situation by June or July. Lt Col Robinson observed that within Norfolk the critical issue was homelessness amongst single male veterans as District Councils had a statutory duty to house families with children. He also noted that it was at District level, not County, where decisions on housing were

made. The Chairman commented that Districts were represented at County Covenant Boards. Much discussion ensued on veterans' homelessness issues, concerning inter alia; the need to identify the size of the problem and where and what the needs are; deciding what the EVAPC will do once data is obtained; the difficulties in obtaining personal information because of data protection issues.

ITEM 5 – Covenant Meetings

14. Introducing this item, the Chairman noted that the EVAPC was now engaged with four County Covenant Boards, with Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire still to be addressed. A question arose as to whether members were adequately equipped to enable them to contribute meaningfully at Board meetings. The Chairman commented that Local Authorities had very wide ranging responsibilities, many of them with the potential to impact on veterans and offered to forward to members a copy of a matrix produced by Yorks and Humberside VAPC listing those areas, which in their case they used to attribute scores using a traffic light system to the various areas of activity. Lt Cdr Mincher observed that there needed to be an agreed and uniform approach by VAPC members when attending boards and a mechanism to aid this could be for those members to produce post-meeting notes for distribution to the committee.

Chairman

Member
reps at
Covenant
Boards

Item 6 – Strategic Plan

15. The Chairman noted that at present, only limited progress against the two year plan had been achieved, but that the committee was moving in the right direction. It was suggested that a short summary of the role and functions of the EVAPC could be a useful aide memoire or hand-out for members when approaching other organisations. The Chairman agreed to prepare and issue a summary to members.

Chairman

Item 7 – Membership/Recruitment

16. The latest National recruitment campaign had, from an EVAPC point of view been very successful. We received 10 applications, of which eight were interviewed with seven selected. Lt Cdr Mincher commented that this success owed much to the Chairman's efforts.

Item 8 – EVAPC Meetings – Forward Planning

17. It was agreed that whilst it may become necessary in the future for the frequency of meetings to be increased for the present the Chairman proposed to leave them as at present i.e. once a Quarter. It was agreed that it would be useful for dates for future meetings to be set well in advance and to that end the following dates have been provisionally reserved with Cadet HQ 22 June, 7 September and 9 November.

Item 9 - VWS Activity Report

18. Mr Burgess updated the committee on the recruitment issues currently being experienced by the VWS. It was hoped to fill two of the five vacancies very soon and pursue across the broader Civil Service for potential recruits. Mr Burgess reported that activity across the Region remained very high in comparison to other parts of the VWS.

Item 10 – Any Other Business

20. Lt Cdr Mincher suggested that it might be useful for all members' details together with a photograph to be placed on the EVAPC section of the VAPC web site. The Chairman agreed to check the feasibility of this with MOD Norcross.

21. Lt Col Toland announced his intention to resign from the committee with immediate effect because of family commitments. The Chairman offered his thanks and those of the committee to for the contribution of Lt Col Toland and announced the appointment of Lt Cdr Mincher as Vice Chairman.

Item 11- Date of Next Meeting

22. Thursday 22 June 2017.

Signed:

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

Chairman