



VETERANS ADVISORY AND PENSIONS COMMITTEE

EASTERN ENGLAND VETERANS ADVISORY & PENSIONS COMMITTEE (EVAPC)

MINUTES OF A MEETING HELD ON 25 January 2018 @ the Army Cadet Headquarters, Waterbeach, Cambridgeshire

Present: Lt Cdr D Mincher (DM) - Vice Chairman
Ms S Brenchley
Dr I Calder
Mr R Catton (RC)
Gp Capt B Griffiths (BG)
Ms P Kingham
Maj T Ormiston (TO)
Mrs D Preston
Mr C Titmuss (CT)
Mr A Shenston (AS) Veterans Welfare Service
Carole Woods (CW) Veterans Welfare Service

Apologies: Mr JL Jelley (JLJ)
Dr M Almond
Mr J Barnard (JB)
Mr E Connolly (EC)
Mr I Stewart (IS)

Action

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

1. The meeting commenced at 1030. The Vice Chairman welcomed all members including our newest visitor from VWS, Carole Woods. He also apologised on behalf of the Chairman, that the latter had been unexpectedly called out of area and so could not attend the meeting.
2. Apologies from Committee Members were noted and there were no declarations of interest.

ITEM 2 – Minutes of the Meeting Held 9 November 2017.

3. Approval of Minutes. The Minutes, circulated to members prior to the meeting, were agreed as a true record. They will be signed by the Chairman at the next meeting.
4. There were no Matters Arising.

DM

ITEM 3 – Review of outstanding actions.

5. All County Covenant Boards have now been contacted introducing the VAPC lead representative.
6. Dropbox: Thanks are due to **RC** for setting up the Committee's Dropbox account. There was some discussion regarding the security of the account, particularly the threat of unauthorised access (hacking) of sensitive details. To that end the following was agreed:

- a. Nothing of a personal or sensitive nature is to be submitted to the Dropbox account. Only items which are of a general nature, or available in the public domain should be uploaded (such as minutes of Committee meetings).
- b. All uploads must first be approved by the Chairman (or Vice-Chair in his absence). **JLJ** has also requested clarification on this issue from Veterans UK to ensure our arrangements are adequate.

ITEM 4 – Choice Based Letting (CBL) Schemes – Mr C Titmuss

7. **CT** introduced Choice Based Letting schemes to the Committee and discussed where these affect Veterans. In many cases the application forms omit any specific reference to Veterans (although a check of the West Suffolk and Cambridgeshire Homelink site shows that members of the Armed Forces, Veterans within 5 years of discharge and Reserve Forces personnel injured in service are specifically catered for). This may be an area where the VAPC can specifically question Counties' provision for Veterans at CCB meetings.

ITEM 5 – Strategic Plan Review - ALL

8. Much of the meeting was given to discussion of the Committee's Strategic Plan which is due for review in May 2018. A draft of the plan is on review and will be finalised at a future meeting however there were two specific additions to the former Plan:
 - a. We need evidence on what we've achieved and how we've achieved it. Examples include: attendance at meetings and audits of Covenant Boards. *The precise detail of the audit is yet to be defined, but the use of the "Areas of Interest" document is a basis for this.* A standing agenda item will be added to future meetings to record achievements in the preceding period.
 - b. It is felt that the 13 members of the VAPC "family" are fragmented and so we will help influence them and share best practice across all VAPCs.
9. Discussion then centred on the remit of the VAPC. Should our boundary be limited to Veterans, families or Serving Personnel too? It was clear that there was no consensus and a useful email discussion ensued. Clarification was sought from Veterans UK and our remit (as kindly précised by **SB** and approved by Veterans UK) is:

Veterans Advisory & Pensions Committees are Non-Departmental Public Bodies whose main functions are to:

- act as advocates for implementing the Armed Forces Covenant and associated measures at a local level
 - raise awareness, within their region, of the Armed Forces Covenant and associated measures, the War Pension Scheme, Armed Forces Compensation Scheme and the Veterans Welfare Service.
 - assist serving personnel, veterans and their families in accessing local support services e.g. housing, provide assistance and guidance on the War Pension Scheme and Armed Forces Compensation Scheme and to provide an independent element to the Veterans UK complaints process relating to those schemes.
10. In no way do our activities impede the standing welfare provisions for serving personnel and we should not be seen as challengers to those provisions but provide constructive support where required.
 11. The draft Strategic Plan is to be sent to all members for review and comment. It will be discussed at the April meeting.

ITEM 6 – Chairman's Update

12. **JLJ** will be chairing the Conference of VAPC Chairs in London 14th March. Update expected at the April meeting.
13. **JLJ** will also represent the Committee at meetings in Peterborough and at the Cambridgeshire County Forum Business Meeting on 1st March. This is a networking opportunity for meeting many groups interested in supporting the Armed Forces in Cambridgeshire.

ITEM 7 – VWS Activity – Mr A Shenston & Ms. C Woods

14. **AS** introduced **CW** who is the newest member of the VWS, based at Merville barracks Colchester . **AS** then provided a written update on VWS activities which is attached.

ITEM 8 – Any Other Business.

15. Homelessness in Cambridge: **SB** and **PK** provided an update on the long-standing project they have been conducting into the homelessness in Cambridge, with particular emphasis on the number of Veterans affected. Their investigations have identified that Veterans comprise approximately <10% of overall homeless in the area, much lower than the suggested 30% figure which initially prompted the project. Given this number it is felt that no further action is required on this issue. The Committee expressed their thanks to both for their attention to this project over such a long period.
16. **TO** reminded members that his BLESMA email address is no longer active and he should now be contacted at his home email address (as provided to Committee members).

Date of next Meeting.

17. The next meeting will be at 10:30, 19th April 20178 at the Cadet HQ, Waterbeach.

Signed:

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