



VETERANS ADVISORY AND PENSIONS COMMITTEE

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

MINUTES OF A MEETING HELD ON 19 April 2018 **@ the Army Cadet Headquarters, Waterbeach, Cambridgeshire**

Present: Mr JL Jelley (JLJ) - Chairman
Dr M Almond (MA)
Miss Sarah Barker (SaB)
Ms S Brenchley (SuB)
Dr I Calder (IC)
Mr R Catton (RC)
Gp Capt B Griffiths (BG)
Ms P Kingham (PK)
Lt Cdr D Mincher (DM) - Vice Chairman
Mrs D Preston (DP)
Mr I Stewart (IS)
Mr C Titmuss (CT)
Mr John Phillips, Project Nova

Apologies: Mr J Barnard
Mr A Shenston, Veterans Welfare Service
Mr Rob Rowntree, Deputy Head Veterans UK

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

Action

1. The meeting commenced at 1030 when the Chairman welcomed all members including our newest co-opted member, Sarah Barker. The Chair also introduced our guest speaker, John Phillips, and apologised on behalf on Rob Rowntree who couldn't attend this meeting but will do so in the future.
2. Apologies were also received from Andrew Shenston who was out of area so there was no VWS representative at the meeting.
3. Apologies from Committee Members were noted and there were no declarations of interest.
4. The Chair then informed the Committee of two recent resignations, Major Tom Ormiston and Captain Edward Connolly have both left the Committee for personal reasons. The Chairman expressed his thanks for their positive contributions and good wishes for the future. As Edward was the representative for Norfolk a new rep will be required and RC kindly offered to support this in the interim.

ITEM 2 – Minutes of the Meeting Held 25 January 2018.

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

ITEM 3 – Review of outstanding actions.

7. There were no outstanding actions.

ITEM 4 – Chairman’s Update

8. JLJ reported that engagement in the Cambridge and Peterborough areas has begun to improve, having attended an initial meeting 31/1/18 he has been invited back to their next meeting 30/5/18 to give a presentation on the function of the EVAPC. This is very positive progress on one of the less-well engaged areas in our region. As part of this update, CT reported that specific Covenant Officer funding (~£90k) has been secured for the next 2 years, equal to similar funding already in place in Bedfordshire and Milton Keynes.
9. JLJ also reported an invitation has been received to a Community Covenant Board meeting in Cambridge city (25/5/18). CT offered to support this too and has agreed to be a deputy rep for Cambridgeshire.
10. Finally on regional meetings, JLJ reported his attendance at a recent meeting (12/4/18) for the Cambridgeshire ACF Business Forum spreading understanding of our remit and an excellent networking opportunity. Invitation to this forum clearly demonstrates our integration and acceptance on the AF and Veterans’ stage in the region.
11. JLJ attended the Conference of VAPC Chairs in London 13/14th March and gave an update. He co-presented to the Minister on behalf of national VAPC Chairs. It was reported that the tone of the conference (between Chairs and Veterans UK) was less “confrontational” than it had been previously which was broadly welcomed. The Terms of Reference were distributed to Committee Members and it was reported that these had been fully approved by all VAPC Chairs. BG questioned where these would be presented and it is hoped they will appear on the VAPC website. BG also asked about progress with the Handbook and JLJ reported this is now with Veterans UK, awaiting distribution.
12. Discussion then moved on to the impending GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) which comes into effect 25/5/18. DP gave a succinct brief on the Regulation and what effect it may have on our business. The data held in our Dropbox account was discussed, and it was reiterated that the material held therein should already be in the Public Domain and it is solely a convenient access point for Members. The list of Members’ individual contact details (which is marked “In Confidence”) was identified as the only data we currently hold which may be affected by the Regulation. All Committee members present agreed that their contact information could continue to be made available to the Committee for VAPC business. The absent Committee Members (Messrs Barnard and Berry) will be contacted to gain their consent. From the discussions which followed it was decided that we should review the data we currently hold and mandate a policy statement for future work. To that end the following actions were agreed:
 - a. Veterans UK / MoD need to provide a policy statement for VAPCs.
 - b. All personal data (including Committee Members’ contact details) will be removed from the “Dropbox” account and access to the account will be made available to all Members.
 - c. A Policy Statement on GDPR will be collated.
 - d. Absent Committee Members will be contacted to gain their consent for distribution of contact details to Members.

JLJ

RC

DP

DM

ITEM 5 – Rob Rowntree – Deputy Head of Veterans UK.

13. Unfortunately Rob Rowntree was unable to attend owing to recuperation. He has an open invitation and it is hoped he will attend a future meeting.

ITEM 6 – John Phillips - Project Nova Regional Coordinator for Beds, Cambs & Herts.

14. Funded by the NHS and starting in 2014, Project Nova is a collaboration between the Regular Forces Employment Association (RFEA) and Walking with Wounded supporting veterans who have been arrested or are at risk of arrest. The Project work with NHS Liaison and Diversion services (“LADS”) and custody teams who undertake initial mental health assessments. LADS will refer veterans to Nova who will then intervene with the aim of preventing reoffending and getting the veteran into work. Reoffending costs circa £150k per individual and the success of Project Nova can be seen by reoffending rates – 6% for Nova against a national average of 24%.
15. John described his current role as a pathfinder within Nova. He works for the NHS clinical governance group and has 40 clients in the area from St Albans to Peterborough. He undertakes a “needs” assessment then makes referral to relevant agencies (SSAFA, mental health etc) and crucially stays with client for up to 18 months providing continuity through the intervention. John reported that his caseload is soon to increase to ~60 as the benefits of Project Nova become more well-known and widespread. The value of intervention is measured using the Outcome STAR model.
16. Project Nova is available to all Veterans (including Reserve Forces) and they also work with prisoners in terms of housing and drug & alcohol dependency etc to change habits. They are embedded within TILS and the Veterans Gateway and are members of COBSEO.
17. The Chairman thanked John for his enthusiastic presentation and for giving us a perspective on this worthwhile project.

ITEM 7 – Review of Covenant Board meetings and interventions.

18. BG gave an update from the Hertfordshire meeting 6/3/18, his third meeting. Supported by a pro-active Chair, the meeting was held at PJHQ, Northwood and BG felt it was beneficial for Covenant Boards to attend military sites whenever possible. Main topics of discussion were on housing, particularly with the MoD drive for increasing regional stability, thereby encouraging more permanence for families in an area. The recognition by the MoD of long-term relationships and civil partnerships was discussed and the benefits early housing stability brings particularly during transition to civilian life.
19. BG also identified that Local Authorities now have much more information on the Covenant so there is no excuse for ignorance. Likewise the money available for bids (circa £10M) is grossly underutilised as there are simply insufficient bids.
20. The issue of Armed Forces Champions was then discussed and whether there are national Terms of Reference. It appears that LAs are producing their own ToRs but may not be utilising Champions effectively. A national strategy was recommended.
21. One very positive area was the “pupil premium” (a £300 payment to a school per service child). BG admitted he had been sceptical about the potential (mis)use of these funds but was greatly encouraged to see they were used in an effective manner.
22. Finally BG reported that Herts are keen to engage with Beds to ensure good

practice is spread.

23. MA gave a report on his 3rd meeting with the Essex Partnership Board, 13/3/18. He felt there was quite a bias in favour of the Army, but overall the Board focussed well on housing and employment (MA had distributed a presentation on the "Building for Heroes" project). Health and wellbeing was less favourable and although TILS is well established in the Colchester area its effectiveness is diluted with distance. Neither education or policing were discussed at the meeting owing to no representatives being sent but the enthusiastic Chair recognises these issues and hopes to improve things in the future. MA concluded by saying he does feel integrated with the Board.
24. DM was unable to attend the Suffolk Board meeting 22/3/18 due to a last-minute work issue. The main topic of the meeting was welcoming the new Suffolk Armed Forces Commissioner, Col John Ogden, and DM will contact the Commissioner to make his introduction prior to the next meeting in June. **DM**
25. Forthcoming meetings were discussed particularly Cambridge, 25/5/18, which will be attended by JLJ and CT. CT also reminded Members that local elections will soon be held so we are encouraged to monitor any issues or changes which may be relevant to Community Covenant Boards. **ALL**
26. JLJ thanked all contributors for their attendance at, and reporting of, CCB meetings.

ITEM 8 – Strategic Plan Update.

27. Following the detailed discussions at the January meeting this was the final opportunity to discuss and agree on the Strategic Plan. JLJ started the discussion by reiterating the Terms of Reference of VAPCs which state we will continue to represent appeals on pensions as they arise. This re-statement was felt necessary to ensure Committee Members did not feel that our only purpose is to monitor and report on the Covenant and its implementation in our region.
28. The forward Strategy will focus on delivery in the Region. It will not solely deal with Veterans UK, but will encompass other agencies at a strategic level where there are gaps in a very crowded market-place (numerous Veteran agencies potentially in competition, forgetting the needs of the "customer").
29. JLJ reiterated our strength is our independence without agenda or favour. We can help CCBs mould to maximise benefit to Veterans while also influencing policy through Veterans UK and to the Minister directly.
30. The Strategic Plan had 2 key revisions to the draft: it is no longer a "2-year" plan, but will be reviewed annually and discussed at each quarterly meeting to ensure relevance. The plan will also use the assessments of individual CCBs to determine required interventions.
31. In support of this second change it was agreed that we need to develop the means of assessing CCBs. BG volunteered to take the lead on this and it expected that all Members will assist in its production and implementation ("one EVAPC voice"). **BG (Lead) / ALL**
32. The Strategic Plan was accepted and is now live.

ITEM 9 – VWS Activity Report.

33. Unfortunately no VWS representative was available to attend.

ITEM 10 – Any Other Business.

34. There being no further business the meeting was concluded at 12:40.

Item 11 - Date of next meeting.

35. The next meeting will be Thursday 12th July at the Cadet HQ, Waterbeach, starting at 10:30.

Signed:

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