

Social Security Act 1989

North East Veterans Advisory and Pensions Committee

**Minutes of meeting held on 8 December 2017
at Finchale Training College Durham**

Present: Mr P E Kingham (*Chairman*) (PK)
Mr A deCourtney-Wellum (ACW)
Mr B G de la Haye OBE (BdH)
Mr M Pears MBE (MP)
Mr M Potts (MMP)
Mrs L Smith (LS)
Mr A J P Watson (*Secretary*) (AW)
Mr A Winnett (TW)

In attendance: Mr A Heron VWS
Mr A Pearson VWS

Apologies: Mr S Green
Mr B Halfpenny
Dr D Mayes
Mr C Rushton
Mr P Sinclair

Welcome and Introduction.

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting which commenced at 1000 hrs.

It was agreed that in the absence of any new direction, the meeting would be conducted under the rules and guidance previously pertaining to War Pensions Committees and the VAPC Members handbook.

Item		Action
238	Declarations of Interest	
238.1	The Chairman tabled the Statutory Instrument and reminded members that should anything be discussed at the meeting which might constitute a conflict of interest between their personal life and VAPC business, they are required to declare such interest and take no part in the item concerned.	
238.2	There were no Declarations of Financial or Pecuniary Interest.	
239	Confirmation of minutes	
239.1	The members confirmed the minutes of the meeting of 25 th September 2017, previously circulated, were a true record	

	& they were then signed by PK.	
240	Matters Arising	
240.1	PK asked members to take notice of the forthcoming NHS changes for the treatment of veterans mental health	
240.2	231.3 PK reminded members of the need to capture details of the work they do for veterans between meetings	
240.3	231.4 PK A re working of the VAPC handbook is underway and PK has met with the OPPT staff at Norcross to work on it.	
240.4	233.1 is on going with the need for PK to work with LS	
240.5	235.1 The question about providing appropriate support through transition for those medically discharged with a nil award is proving difficult to tie down. Consideration of speaking to resettlement officer for Albemarle following discussion perhaps meeting with Career Transition Partnership staff. It was however felt that the issue was one which would have a better outcome if it was staffed through the chain of command rather than via Veterans UK.	
241	Amendment to the War Pension Committee Legislation	
241.1	The SI amending the 2000 Regulations had been promulgated to members.	
241.2	A copy of the amended 2000 Regulations will be forwarded in due course.	AW
241.3	New Terms of Reference for VAPCs are also being prepared and will be circulated to members once available.	PK
242	Chairmans Report	
242.1	This had been circulated before the meeting and the following points were highlighted :-	
242.2	Generic VAPC business cards – PK will secure	
242.3	To circulate the recently published Veterans Key Facts literature which is now available at the following link Key Facts	
242.4	Having agreed that Project NOVA will be a standing agenda item the chairs conference was addressed by Steven Lowe the project manager for the north of England and Helen Perkins who is the lead in the North West. Although the project is not yet 'national' it has been rolled out in the Northumbria, Durham and Cleveland police	

	<p>areas. From discussion at our previous meetings we are aware that it is well established in Northumberland but less so in Durham. During his brief Steven had explained that the main reason for this is that Durham Constabulary does not have the latest IT systems which prompt key questions being asked in the custody suite. These systems are due to be updated during 2017. Subject to funding it is intended that the project will continue to roll out slowly across UK but as elements are commercially sensitive the team were unable to let other VAPCs know when it may be implemented in their areas.</p>	
242.5	Veterans UK update. A copy of the update provided for the Chairs conference was circulated with the report.	
242.6	Northumbria University's Northern Hub for Veterans and Military Families Research held their first national conference at St James's Park on 16 Nov 17 during which the research team and a number of guest speakers highlighted their findings and experiences in dealing with veterans with substance misuse (including alcohol) issues.	
242.7	Recruiting - PK drew attention to the new advert.	
243	Regional Welfare Services Report	
243.1	AH reported that after John Falkus left in April he had been covering two areas. In August/September welfare managers from Norcross moved Liz Highmoor into the Sunderland area.	
243.2	The Committee were informed that NE47, 48, 49 post codes were now being dealt with by Donna Lyons who is based in Keswick. VWS had recently been given authorisation to recruit new staff in different areas. This had included the recruitment of Alan Pearson (who was present, introduced and welcomed by the committee). Alan will effectively succeed John Falcus and once his induction is complete work in the south of our region.	
243.3	The long standing issues with communications/IT access at the RBL office in Newcastle have still not been fully resolved and the welfare officers are still working on Wi-Fi and 3g with associated reliability issues.	PK to take this up again with Norcross management team.
243.4	AH reported that the Pop-in RBL facility is being used heavily and is effective in saving traveling time.	
	<p>Numbers of VWS visits 26 Sep to Dec 17:</p> <p>Alan Heron 2 widows 66 other visits 27 first point of</p>	

	contacts 95 in total.	
243.5	Elizabeth Highmoor 14 visits, 1 surgery visit and 3 VeteransUK visits, 37 first point 55 in total.	
244	Developing an e-library resource	
244.1	PK had secured a copy of the e library from Yorkshire & Humberside committee, which is a useful start point. With some updating and inclusion of information specific to our region it could be developed into a useful tool for members.	
244.2	PK asked for volunteers to take this forward. It was agreed that BdH would coordinate the work, with TW, MMP and LS as members.	
245	Homelessness project	
245.1	At the last meeting we had discussions on this point (item 234.1). PK had been with Marcus Hawthorn from RBL at a recent meeting and told him that RBL had identified 60 homeless vets in Sunderland.	
245.2	BdH had raised the situation at Tees Valley AFF and was met with a blank look from Council representatives.	
245.3	Whilst the issue appeared to be well managed and under control in some areas in others it is still proving difficult to establish the ground truth.	
245.4	The Committee agreed it should provide another round of presentations about the VAPC and VWS and would include this issue as part of the brief.	
246	Transport Concessions for Disabled Veterans	
246.1	Regionally Councillor Green has taken this up with Nexus, as policy is a Council responsibility. PK had established in June 2016 the Department of Transport had issued an explanatory note reminding Councils of the departments guidelines in regard of the concessions.	
246.2	There was discussion as to whether this guidance was wrong, where it needs to be looked at. LS raised the issue of cross border travel using such local busses, where a veteran may have to travel eg from Co Durham to Newcastle and as such only part of the cost of the journey would be met.	
246.3	It would be a huge step forward if the scheme adopted in London where there is free public transport for all veterans in receipt of a receipt of a WP or AFCS GIS. However this would be difficult to attain and some areas may choose to remove existing concessions rather than face increased costs. It was therefore agreed that in the first instance we	

	should seek to ensure that the current guidelines are implemented consistently across our region.	
247	Northumbria University – Map of Need project	
247.1	Dr Matt Kiernan had addressed delegates on 17 Nov about the Map of Need project and development of the Veteran's Service Directory Application, which if successfully implemented could go a long way to identifying where veterans with issues are and the resources needed to address those needs.	
247.2	The university has developed an application which will be free for charities, social workers etc to use which will help match resources to need.	
247.3	RBL and SSAFA have signed up to use the application as have many of the clinicians who deliver treatments and therapies.	
247.4	MP pointed out there was going to be training on use of the app from Monday. There are data protection issues. There was discussion about why the app isn't linked with the Gateway.	
248	Stats	
248.1	There was discussion about the work done by MMP and the KITE project at the Newcastle business school.	
248.2	MP understands that information was held at Brigade level showing what stats were held about service leavers and where they were settling.	
249	Finchale College	
249.1	MP explained that the college had recently won a contract from Durham County Council called Durham Sparks for small business development and the potential benefits of this for veterans.	
249.2	All contracts with Help for Heroes etc for this year were already full for the year.	
249.3	He outlined the modernisation and rebuilding which will be happening at the site giving assurance that whilst the physical changes will be extensive they will be carried out without impact on the work the college does with veterans or other customers.	
249.4	PK thanked MP and the college for the not inconsiderable support given to the Committee.	

250	2018 Meetings	
250.1	The meeting for 2018 will be held on Friday 16 th March (training meeting held over from December), Monday 11 th June, Monday 10 th September & Friday 7 th December.	
250.2	The Committee formally requests the attendance of a local welfare manager from the VWS.	
250.3	There being no further business, the Chairman closed the meeting at 1213hrs.	