

MINUTES OF THE 27TH MEETING OF THE EAST MIDLANDS

**ADVISORY COMMITTEE AT PRINCE WILLIAM OF
GLOUCESTER BARRACKS, GRANTHAM
MONDAY 22ND JANUARY 2018 AT 10.30AM**

Present:

Patrick RENDALL (PR) Deputy Chair (as acting Chairman).

Larry HENSON (LH) Meetings Secretary.

Ron GATEPAIN (RG) (Coopted Member).

Barry SMITH (BS)

Michael WHITEHEAD (MW).

Dick HURWOOD (DH).

Stav MELIDES (SM).

David LOMAS (DL).

David TAYLOR (DT).

John BERRY (JB).

In attendance

Theresa Quinn VWS

Jackie McGrath VWS

Apologies that were accepted.

Peter POOLE (PP) Chairman.

David WILSON (DW).

Jim WRIGHT (JW).

Bill DIXON-DODDS (BDD).

Ben HODGES (BH).

Ray BOYFIELD (RB).

ITEM 1. WELCOME/OPENING REMARKS.

1. The Deputy Chair (PR) welcomed all present, in particular Teresa Quinn and Jackie McGrath of the Veterans Welfare Service (VWS) and thanked them for attending.

2. Our long serving committee member Terl Bryant had very recently passed away after an illness and will be sadly missed. Terl was well known in his community in local organisations, was a Cabinet Member on his Borough Council and had been a tireless campaigner for those suffering with MS. The meeting stood for a minute as a mark of respect.

3. Peter Poole was making progress after an operation and sent his regards. The ongoing treatment would be tiring but he hoped to attend in future.

ITEM 2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

4. There were no declarations of interest.

ITEM 8. PRESENTATION BY VETERANS WELFARE SERVICE.

5. Theresa Quinn and Jackie McGrath gave a detailed and informative explanation of the role of the VWS and the way it operated. The following was discussed:

- a. The VWS areas do not conform to VAPC areas, with quite a divergence in our region.
- b. The VWS welcomed our offer of joint visits. The purpose was to support Veterans UK by providing a level of independent quality assurance for its VWS with a view to ensuring that the welfare needs of veterans and their dependents are suitably addressed. The visits would be on an occasional basis.
- c. Any visits where members of the VAPC accompanied the VWS workers would be on a voluntary basis and only if one of our members was available.
- d. The question of confirming VAPC members would be covered by insurance on these visits would have to be addressed. After note: The Government has indicated that an individual board member who has acted honestly and in good faith will not have to meet out of his or her own personal resources any personal civil liability which is incurred in the execution or purported execution of his or her board function, save where the person has acted recklessly.

Action: Chairman

- e. It was agreed there might be a requirement for some training and the VWS would investigate this. Training need not be too detailed or onerous.

Action: VWS

6. In thanking Theresa Quinn and Jackie McGrath for their attendance the Chairman pointed out that meeting with the VWS in the way outlined in the discussion was in line with our TORs and might help us in our linking with regional agencies including Local Authorities and the NHS. Finally it was agreed that we would welcome VWS attendance at all our meetings to provide members with an update over the previous few months.

Action: Chairman

ITEM 4. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING / MATTERS ARISING.

7. It was noted that the spelling of Gatepain and Whitehead (not Whitehouse) should be changed.

Action: Secretary

8. The Chairman notified the committee that he would be unable to attend the Chair of Chairs meeting and he would let members know if Peter Poole was also unable to attend. After note: Peter Poole is to attend.

Action: Note

ITEM 5 COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT.

9. The next Annual Report was due later in the year and the Chairman asked for sub-committee leads to provide input in July. After note: These notes have been asked for by 1st May 2018 as the annual report has to be submitted earlier than at first thought.

Action: Sub-committee leads.

10. In addressing the annual report it was mentioned that some of the sub-committees would need realigning because of a numbers imbalance. After note: It has been decided to do nothing in the short term until after the current recruiting round has been completed. Six people were due to be interviewed.

Action: Note

ITEM 6 and 7 BUSINESS PLAN UPDATES/COMMENTS SUB REPORTS AND FUTURE PLANS.

11. **Policy** Barry Smith referred to meetings he attended mainly with Local Authorities. He said that Councils were generally taking the AFC seriously and some had recruited Covenant officers who had been funded from the AFC. With the exception of Derbyshire, where a meeting was planned he had attended all the remaining council meetings and the VAPC has now been included in further meetings schedules. He reported that two councils had taken the opportunity to re-sign the covenant. Notwithstanding the positive way councils were generally approaching the work to comply with the AFC, some of the meetings had not included all interested parties and he would be advising on this.

Action: Note

12. **Welfare** David Taylor referred to the draft leaflet, which was to be used to provide our stakeholders with something simple to be able to understand the functions of the VAPC. He acknowledged that this helped with understanding our role but he had questioned the key words used in it to ensure they were correctly used. He shared his thoughts, which he had drafted and this was to be checked out of committee. He also offered Oakham School as a venue for the next sub-committee leads meeting and this gratefully accepted.

Action: Barry Smith

13. **Communication** Michael Whitehead said there was a lack of control with some initiatives and the Veterans Gateway had not been met favourably by everyone. In addition to his knowledge it was only presently funded for 2 years. He also reported that in Northamptonshire 243 unemployed veterans were being directed to the Veterans Gateway to try and assist them in gaining employment. It was acknowledged that loneliness and isolation were important issues and many veterans fall into that category. Communication tools may be able to help and it would be useful to understand the terms of the new minister Tracey Crouch MP who was taking a government lead

14. **Health** Dick Hurwood had recently attended a Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland (LLR) meeting and listed those present. All attendees were empowered and he was impressed with the way various organisations were working together to meet the requirements of the AFC. He had found out that Help for Heroes had up to £400M and wondered whether Vets UK would be able to approach the charity with a view to helping to fund VAPCs. It was acknowledged that the current £35K across the 13 VAPCs did not go far. He spoke about the Defence National Rehabilitation Centre (DNRC), which will have 200 beds and 450 staff when it opens in 2019. It would also handle many outpatients and that area was not currently well served with public transport. He had also made enquiries about Prince William of Gloucester Barracks Grantham, which eventually would be closed, although this would not be in the near term.

15. In summary the chairman thanked chairs of sub-committees and asked that although much of the recent work had been preliminary and investigative where possible they should endeavour ensure all members are invited to take part in further work.

ITEM 9 AND 10 COMMUNICATION WITH MINISTER AND STUDY DAY AND CHRISTMAS FUNCTION 20

16. The Chairman talked about a plan to write to Minister with a report of VAPC progress in the East Midlands using this as an opportunity to raise issues that had been uncovered in our initial work outlined above. In addition this year there had been some discussion at a sub-committee chairs meeting to hold a regional VAPC conference where stakeholders in the region could be invited. This would be the subject of further discussion at a meeting to take place on 5th February at Oakham, which would involve the sub-committee leads. After note: At that meeting it was decided that our points would be raised through the Chair of Chairs meeting in March, to which the Minister intended to attend, rather than by a separate letter.

Action: Sub-Committee Chairs

17. On the issue of the Christmas Lunch, which had been successful again this year, we were still considering options for 2018. One issue was that two committee members with direct access to veterans had left the committee on their retirement and therefore it would be more difficult to contact so many veterans for an event in future. In addition, there is a question over whether it would be appropriate to hold a lunch, when veterans were not so willing to attend as they had in the past. There was a question therefore, of perceived need. It was however acknowledged that there were funds in our bank account that had been raised through donations for these lunches, but not yet spent. The money was not available to be used in a different way.

Action: Note

ITEM 11 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

18. Stav Melides said 30 British Legion Standard Bearers had been taken to the House of Commons and this year and he wondered whether a visit to Buckingham Palace would be both suitable and appropriate. Buckingham Palace is open to visitors, although it is often busy. It would be unlikely that other visits could be arranged.

Action: Note

19. Barry Smith spoke about Veterans' Gateway and said he had received mixed reviews. In addition it was only funded for 2 years. He also referred to the latest list of Defence questions, which included objectives for the Armed Forces Covenant, War Widows, the future accommodation model, Armed Forces Mental Health support together with the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme. He would forward a copy of the questions to members.

Action: Barry Smith

ITEM 12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING.

20. The next meeting would take place at Grantham on Monday 19th March 2018 beginning at 10.30am.

Action: All