



SOCIAL SECURITY ACT 1989

SOUTH EAST VETERANS ADVISORY AND PENSIONS COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 23 JULY 2018 AT CASTAWAY HOUSE GOSPORT

PRESENT:

Mrs F Drummond – Chairman
Canon P Bruinvels – Deputy Chairman
Mrs L Gannon – Secretary
Ms K Fryatt
Mr M Robjohn
Mr P Bateman
Mr R Draper
Mr K Newton
Mr I Talbot
Mr R Nield
Mr S Jagdish
Mr C Snagge
Mr D Anderson
Mr R Rowntree
Mr D Luscombe

1. Welcome and Introductions

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and all members introduced themselves

Mr Bruinvels congratulated the Chairman on her appointment, on behalf of the Committee

2. Apologies

Apologies were received from Mr W Gillett, Mrs S Smith and Mr J Williams. Nothing had been received from Mr A Olson.

3. Declaration of Interest

The Chairman asked for members to notify her in advance of the meeting if there were any conflicts of interest.

3a. Minutes of the Last Meeting

The Secretary said she would resend the minutes with the report of this meeting.

4. Veterans Welfare Agency

Mr Luscombe said that he had been very busy with recruitment since taking up the post of Regional Welfare Manager last September. There had been some short staffing at first due to resignations and promotions but assured the committee that they were almost at full strength, just one position in Gosport that had been recruited but had not yet started work. He stated that his focus was firmly on the future and working with committee members.

There were no statistics for this meeting as Norcross have the post currently gapped. He reiterated that he was looking to deploy his resources in the most effective way and had identified processes to meet the veterans' needs. Cases were becoming increasingly more complex. The trends appeared to be mental health, financial, housing and employment issues.

Mr Rowntree said that his responsibility lay with VAPC's, VWS and the Polish Home at Ilford, as well as policy and guidance on AFCS etc.

He said that it was definitely a team game between VAPCs and Veterans UK – the skill sets and tools were all there and encouraged VAPC members to go on visits with VWS, to see what it actually happening. Although VAPC's have access to the Minister for Veterans, if you go direct, the Minister will come to me and ask what is happening, so please keep me in the loop, let's collaborate.

Mr Rowntree said that the Government wanted to do more, having created a cross government Veterans Office. Work is being conducted on Pensions – how career breaks, reserve service etc had an effect.

Work is being done on Veterans ID card as well. The first people to receive it will be current personnel transitioning into civilian life. Then personnel holding a veterans badge, then veterans without a badge but there will be a staggered launch with all this information, hopefully November 2018. It is hoped that all these ideas could be married up digitally so that only 1 file per veteran is used, rather than several files across all different departments – it would make work much easier.

There is work being conducted on the Integrated Care Pathway that aids seriously injured veterans into transition, and this was working very closely with the NHS. It had become apparent that 10 years down the line, people and their conditions/bodies have changed and may need more help, so it will become whole life care. AFCS and WPC claims have not tailed off at all, and there appears to be a surge in reviews – there may be a change to allow only a certain number of reviews before a charge may be levied – in discussions over this.

Mr Newton said that not all veterans would want an ID card – that would be their choice, although it was agreed that an ID card would be a valuable asset.

Mr Draper said that cases are taking way too long to be resolved, over a year in some cases. Mr Rowntree said that complex cases are taking time as it was better to get them right immediately than have to reassess further down the line.

Mr Jagdish asked if FCO soldiers would have access to healthcare etc in the UK. Mr Rowntree said that they are being looked after as much as possible and suggested using the Veterans Gateway (accessible worldwide).

Ms Fryatt suggested linking the ID card into the 2021 census to collect the necessary data.

5. Strategy 2018 – 20216.

6. Action Plan 2018 - 2019

The Chairman said she had received some feedback and wanted to get members to have dedicated areas to deal with. The TORs were available, as was Mr Bruinvels Forward Plan. She felt that if a member would lead on a certain area and feed it in to her, she would keep a central plan.

Mr Draper said that areas needed prioritising first as, although it is a useful starting point, he felt it was over ambitious, honing too far onto the Covenant and not enough on the Minister or Veterans. He suggested a reshuffle and change of headings.

Mr Bateman agreed and suggested that Mr Draper assist the Chairman, with Mr Bruinvels and Ms Fryatt's input, and produce another draft for the next meeting

There followed a discussion, with many points mentioned as to the way ahead, and it tied in with an Action Plan for the year ahead.

It was agreed that everyone would carry on with their work and feed in to the Chairman.

Areas that were identified as Immediate were:

Housing
Employment
Education
Healthcare and Mental Health

Mr Jagdish said that he was happy to focus on Health

Members need to report back to the Chairman on their counties – numbers of veterans and scale of any problems.

Mr Anderson said the committee must concentrate on what we want to do and ascertain our core business first of all, and keep to our own tasks.

At the end of this discussion there were 3 action points:

1. Accompany VWS on visits
2. Health report
3. CMP Board representation

Mr Bruinvels stated that he trained AFC's and would provide the committee with a list of lead officers.

7. Roles and Responsibilities within the Committee

The Chairman stated that the Secretary had stated that someone else should take this responsibility on, as she had been doing it for many years and asked for volunteers.

As none were forthcoming, the Chairman agreed to try and get someone from an organisation, citing Corporate Social Responsibility.

8. Members Reports (to be tabled before the meeting)

The Chairman asked for reports to be sent to her, as they could be added into the Annual Report, to be sent to Norcross.

9. Correspondence

The Chairman highlighted an issue in Kent, where people are pretending to be SSAFA workers. Stay aware.

10.

Mr Bateman asked if funding could be sourced to provide business cards for committee members.

Mr Anderson said that he was concerned over the lack of interest in the Veterans Gateway.

Mrs Gannon said that she was resigning from the committee on completion of this meeting, having spent about 13 years on the committee.

11. Dates and Numbers of Committee Meetings

It was agreed that 3 meetings per annum would suit the committee members, to be held on Mondays.

The next meeting will take place on Monday 22 October @ 1100, either at 11 Bde HQ in Aldershot or at County Hall in Kent (Mr Bruinvels contact).