

MINUTES OF THE 27th MEETING
EAST MIDLANDS VETERANS ADVISORY & PENSIONS COMMITTEE
PRINCE WILLIAM OF GLOUCESTER BARRACKS, GRANTHAM
MONDAY 18 JUNE 2018

Present:

Barry SMITH (BS) Acting Chairman).
Larry HENSON (LH) Meeting Secretary.
David WILSON (DW) Secretary
John BERRY (JB)
Michael WHITEHEAD (MW)
David TAYLOR (DT)
David LOMAS (DL)
Dick HURWOOD (DH)
Stav MELIDES (SM)
Ben HODGES (BH)
Gillian EKINS (GE) (Co-opted Member)
Helen DREW-BRADLEY (HDB) (Co-opted Member).
Teresa QUINN (Veterans Welfare Service).

Apologies that were accepted:

Peter POOLE (PR) Chairman.
Patrick RENDALL (PR) (deputy Chairman)
Ron GAITPAIN (RG).
Jim WRIGHT (JW)
Bill DIXON-DODDS (BDD)
Janis MUMFORD (JM) (Co-opted Member)
Ray BOYFIELD (RB).

ITEM 1 - Welcome/Opening Remarks.

1. Barry SMITH (BS) said that the meeting was to have been chaired by Patrick RENDALL (PR) but due to a sudden illness that morning, the Vice Chair had been unable to attend and he had asked that BS chair the meeting in his enforced absence. BS apologised for the length of the Agenda but the late cancellation of the planned Committee meeting in March, due to snow and bad weather, meant that considerable ground had to be covered.
2. BS said that our Chairman Peter Poole (PP) was making progress after recovering in hospital from a recent serious illness. Both BS and PR had been in touch with him and had passed on our best wishes.
3. BS welcomed DW back to the Committee; he had been granted a years sabbatical due to civic duties. LH pointed out that DW dealt with general Committee correspondence while LH dealt with all matters appertaining to Committee meetings.
4. BS introduced Gillian EKINS (GE) and Helen DREW-BRADLEY (HDB) to the Committee who along with Janis MUMFORD (JM) were still awaiting formal Ministerial appointment letters but it was thought important to have them attend the committee as co-opted members in the meantime.

5. BS then asked GE and HDB to introduce themselves and both spoke of their commitment to veterans and of their own connection to the Armed Forces community. BS then asked each member to present and outline their own background and their role on the Committee.

ITEM 2 - Declarations of Interest

6. There were no declarations of interests.

ITEM 3 - Apologies for Absence

7. Minuted above.

ITEM 4 - VWS REPORT.

8. BS welcomed Teresa QUINN (TQ) on a follow-up visit to the Committee to give a short presentation on VWS matters. TQ highlighted the introduction of a new telephone system to provide a nationwide response to calls to the Service. As of 2 Jul 18, a designated duty manager will ensure all queries are answered immediately with follow-up activity performed by an appointed case worker. VWS are also migrating to the MOD IT system which should enable better internal communication with for example the appointed Effects Officer in the case of Death in Service. In addition, there are significant improvements being made to the VWS Welfare Case Management System. In the longer term, there is a plan for the current VWS office at Chetwynd Barracks to move to the DNRC at Stanford Hall, coincident with the closure of the Barracks. However, the Personnel Recovery Unit is to move to Cottesmore as part of the Bde relocation plan and that important link will need to be sustained (key VWS involvement in 28 day review of injured personnel).

9. TQ highlighted that their areas of responsibility (AOR) did not mirror the VAPC AOR; VWS activity was post code defined which helped with balancing resources and caseloads. TQ emphasised that there were special protocols for those who had served in the Special Forces arena. TQ outlined the types of cases they handle on a day to day basis and the number and type of meetings associated with her work including with the DWP. In questions, TQ highlighted that the number of cases where the claimant had multiple, complex needs were growing. This included PTSD and mental health issues in general. TQ highlighted that there have now been over 300 referrals to the new TILS team in the E Midlands to address veteran's mental health issues. The main protocols for VWS activity of Death in Service and Injured Personnel Transition had been joined by a Mesothelioma protocol which was particularly demanding in terms of response times. However, the VWS team in our region was now fully manned and a comprehensive training and mentoring regime was now in place for these new members as well as best practice events.

10. In questions from members, TQ highlighted the issue of nominated beneficiaries for serving personnel and the need for this nomination to be kept updated. BS asked if members could attend these best practice events. In addition, BS emphasised that the link between the

committee and the VWS needed to be strengthened. As part of the new VAPC TORs, we were now required to provide an independent Quality Assurance overview of the service delivery of the VWS at a local level. In addition, the committee was required to develop relationships with Regional Welfare Managers to gain an awareness of Veteran’s welfare concerns at a regional level and advise on how best to maximise effective welfare support. TQ took an action to discuss this issue with her line management. TQ highlighted that John Parkin had recently left his post as Head of Veterans UK (replaced by Andy Dowds). TQ also mentioned a recent review of Vets UK activities and the need for us to get a copy of the recommendations to support our new monitoring role.

ACTION: PR to follow-up with VWS Regional Head to discuss: attendance at VWS best practice events; joining VWS personnel on client visits; and requesting a copy of the recent Vets UK review documentation.

11. BS thanked TQ on the committees’ behalf for the update. TQ then left the meeting.

ITEM 5 - MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING.

12. BS addressed the question of insurance when supporting VWS visits and stated it had been established that members were covered by MoD indemnity. However, there are strict protocols in place and it was generally felt that that some training was required and this would be followed up with VWS. BS said this would be raised at the next Chair of Chairs meeting.

13. BS highlighted that the EMVAPC Annual Report is due in July 18 and that PP has undertaken to write this and all members would be able to comment on the draft when written and circulated. Sub-Committee heads had had a meeting with management to update on their activities and a further study day was set for later in the summer.

14. BS highlighted that the Veterans Gateway and its functionality is an agenda item within the Chair of Chairs meeting. The minutes were then unanimously approved.

ITEM 6 - OUTCOME OF RECRUITMENT EXERCISE.

15 BS said that two candidates had been interviewed and that a third awaited interview. This had been delayed due to the Chairs/Independent Assessors recent unavailability due to illness but all 3 were thought to be suitable committee members by the Chair. As a result and with the agreement of Vets UK, all 3 had been co-opted onto the committee.

ITEM 7 - OUTCOME OF CHAIR OF CHAIRS MEETING.

16. BS highlighted that PP had been well enough to attend the meeting on 14 Mar 18. A summary of Actions had been published as well as an update on Ongoing Actions. The table below summarises the major issues of interest to the EMVAPC.

Leave behind Trifold	Our EMVAPC draft had been approved by DBS Comms with the proviso that the MoD logo was removed to emphasis VAPC’s independence from MoD
Data Protection Legislation	Impact on NDPB’s of new GDPR legislation

	still to be agreed by the Centre. No guidance issued as yet.
VAPC Handbook	Need for update recognised but on hold due to review of Complaints (view that some ICP cases may be better dealt with as VAPC cases) & VWS Monitoring Sections. Intent that update to be completed in time for next VAPC training course in Jul 18.
Forum for sharing Best Practice	More work was required to establish a format for this activity but assistance of Chairs was required in identifying Best Practice from their own region.
VAPC Member Training	Mini-TNA to be conducted as view was that current format had become stale. More volunteers from current committees required to present at these courses.
Evidence to Defence Select Committee	Min DPV will write to current Chair of HCDC to request VAPC representation
AFC & Veterans Board Statistics	Vets UK has requested that these be made available to VAPCs and an update is awaited from Min DPV's office.
Veterans Gateway (VG) Performance	There have been examples where the (RBL-led) VG was not working correctly and complaints that SSAFA was not receiving referrals as they should. Chairs were asked to closely monitor the performance of the VG to see if any further intervention was required.

In subsequent discussions, LH said that when first recruited, at the start of the new Committee System during 2010, he had received two days of intense training. However, since that time the VAPC training had not provided any depth at all.

ITEM 8 - COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT.

17. BS reiterated that this was in the process of being written by PP and the draft would be available shortly for review by the sub-committee chairs.

ACTION: PP to circulate the 2018 Annual Report for consideration and comment by members ASAP.

ITEM 9 - BUSINESS PLANS UPDATE

18. BS said a P&G SC draft 2018 Business Plan had been prepared for PR/PP and would be circulated shortly.

ACTION: BS to circulate a draft P&G SC Business Plan by end-July.

ITEM 10 – SUB COMMITTEE REPORTS.

Health:

19. DH identified that progress to improve outcomes for Veterans w/r to the NHS within the LLR AOR continued apace but that resource (time & personnel) constraints had prevented any detailed engagement by his team into other County areas. JB had identified a series of opportunities for greater engagement vis a viz Veterans in the Justice system and these were being followed up.

Welfare:

20. DT said that he, RG and JW had split our AOR into three, each taking responsibility for their local area. A stakeholder mapping exercise was underway and the SC was building a database in order to take the next step and engage the key players in the 3rd Sector in our region and show them how we can work together.

Policy and Governance:

21. The P&G SC report for the period Jan-Jun18 was presented and is attached to these minutes for reference. BS said that Best Practice is starting to emerge but highlighted that 3rd Sector attendance at the various AFC Partnership Boards is patchy. He added that NHS CCG representation was also variable. In terms of shared Action Plans, they were emerging but unfortunately, not everywhere and there was a debate over their scale and content within the Boards. BS said there were marked differences across the region between those service providers getting “on board” and those “getting engaged”. BS said another common theme was the challenges associated with the transition from Service to Civilian Life for Veterans.

Communications:

22. MW highlighted that our inability to utilise the MODWeb facility that had been proposed had led to a change in direction w/r to information storage and information flow within the committee. However, our social media presence was now established and we had some dedicated followers looking at the material we post.

ITEM 11 - LEAVE BEHIND PUBLICITY MATERIAL.

23 BS highlighted that following the ruling from the DBS Comms team, the intent was to move forward with the Trifold leaflet describing EMVAPC's roles and responsibilities. DH said, after removing the MoD logo, he would now look to utilise the printing facilities at his disposal to produce an initial batch.

ACTION: DH to produce an initial run of EMVAPC Trifold document for use by Committee members when engaging with stakeholders by end-July.

ITEM 12 - STRATEGIC PLAN REVISION

24. BS briefed a précised version of the new plan and said that comments were required by 30 Jun18. Once these were incorporated, the 2018 Plan would be published under PR's signature.

25. DW highlighted that housing provision for veterans was still not a level playing field across the various councils. In his experience, as a Councillor Housing Portfolio holder, he had identified that getting veterans into housing was the optimal starting point, so that the welfare system could then address the often complex and interrelated problems that the veteran faced. However, it was recognised that there was a national housing crisis in terms of availability of private and public rented properties.

ACTION: BS to publish the EMVAPC Strategic Plan NLT mid-Jul 18 following collation of committee members comments on the recently circulated draft.

ITEM 13 - CHRISTMAS FUNCTION 2018.

26. BS said there was to be a change of direction on this activity and in future it would be our intent for committee members to attend AFC Board & 3rd Sector Partner Xmas functions across our AOR and contribute financially to them. The focus would be on networking at these events and engaging with both stakeholders and veterans to highlight the role of the EMVAPC. Management would lead on directing committee attendance across the AOR.

ACTION: PP/PR to identify the specific engagement activities all Committee members would undertake with stakeholders in the run-up to Xmas 2018.

ITEM 14 - STORAGE AND CIRCULATION OF DOCUMENTS.

27. MW showed those present an external hard drive that would become the data vault for the committee. This would run hand in hand with the (principally) gov.uk information sourced by BDD that is circulated by email. There would be a division into SC sub-folders within the vault which can be accessed by members.

ACTION: MW to circulate a draft information policy protocol for use by committee members prior to the next main Committee meeting.

ITEM 15 - ANY OTHER BUSINESS.

28. BS returned to the issue of GDPR Compliance and said PP/PR had been attempting to obtain detailed guidance from Vets UK on this issue for over six months. BS highlighted GE had considerable experience on this issue and she then briefed the committee on the impact of the new legislation based on her experience implementing the relevant procedures into her company. HDB also briefed on the procedures w/r to GDPR within Parish Councils. GE would raise the issue during her upcoming training session at Vets UK in July. GE was invited to produce a draft policy document for the committee to implement as part of their modus operandi.

ACTION: GE to circulate a draft GDPR compliance policy protocol for use by the committee prior to the next main Committee meeting.

ITEM 16 - DATE OF NEXT MEETING

29. LH highlighted that the next Committee Meeting is to take place at Grantham Barracks at 10.30 am on Monday 17 Sep 18.

The meeting closed at 1.55PM