

VETERANS ADVISORY AND PENSIONS (VAPC) COMMITTEE – Annual Activity Report dated 31 July 2017

Annual Report from Northern Ireland Committee

Achievement against VAPC Objectives

Membership

*New Chairman appointed – Lt Col (Retd) Kingsley Donaldson
1 x Co-option under consideration – Mr XXXXXXXXXXXX
1 x member not reappointed – Mr XXXXXXXXXXXX
2 x members re-appointed Mr XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX*

Current Members:

*Kingsley Donaldson (Chairperson)
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX (Secretary)
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Raising awareness activity

We have worked closely with the Northern Ireland Veterans Support Committee(NIVSC) in order to raise awareness of the gaps in Veteran provision in Northern Ireland. The NIVSC is the ‘umbrella’ grouping of the various Veterans organisations, spanning the statutory and voluntary sectors, working across Northern Ireland. They in turn, with assistance of the wider NI VAPC network, have been able to harness significant support at political and policy level to get additional ‘specific-to-NI’ support through the Covenant Reference Group. This has been achieved through the direct support of Chairman and Members of NI VAPC to Chief Executive NI RFCA, who has the lead on this activity. Attached letter for the NIVSC explains that progress in more detail.

A number of Committee members supported the Northern Ireland launch of the Veterans Gateway.

The Chair and a number of members are actively involved with First World War Centenary Commemorations work and this is helping to develop a much wider network of contacts within the island of Ireland and has led to a big increase in the number of veterans involved in this commemorative work.

Engagement

Meetings have been held with the major Service Charities in Northern Ireland and a number of their representatives in the Republic of Ireland. There is a strong relationship developing with TRBL NI and TRBL RoI in particular, both of whom have the widest Veterans networks and most active volunteers. Chairman NI VAPC has briefed President and Chairman NI TRBL. Next step will be to address TRBL NI Conference in order to appraise Branch Chairpersons of our role and responsibilities.

Chairman has also briefed the Armed Forces Liaison Forum on the NI VAPC and its role.

Chairman has engaged with a number of political and civil society organisations in Northern Ireland to raise awareness of Veterans needs as part of the ongoing political negotiations, of which the implementation of the Armed Forces Covenant is a particular contested issue. The Committee members are constantly engaged with other Veterans groups and key influencers across NI and beyond to raise awareness of both Veterans needs and existing capability and capacity to help meet those needs.

Assistance to Veterans

NI VAPC continues to provide assistance to those individuals who feel that they have not received a satisfactory outcome. The Committee has been actively involved in four specific cases in the past 12 months that have involved Veterans UK.

The Committee Members have also assisted in signposting a number of other Veterans to local and national sources of assistance. The Committee has also been engaged with group based initiatives within the UDR Association to help focus their needs. This is ongoing work and the Chair will meet the leaders of the UDR Association in the coming months.

Veterans Welfare Service Engagement activity

Former Chairman conducted a visit with the Welfare Service.

Current Chairman has visited the staff in Belfast. No visit yet undertaken with Welfare Service staff.

Consultation

The Chair and a number of members have been directly involved in the work undertaken by the Northern Ireland Veterans Support

Committee. The Chair has also participated in meetings of the Armed Forces Liaison Forum, which is a gathering of Northern Ireland based statutory agencies, with a focus on support to service personnel.

Other activity

A number of Committee members have engaged in a Veterans Needs Analysis project being run by Ulster University. NI VAPC Members are also active in a number of other Veterans groups at local, regional and national levels..

Plans for next year

The NI VAPC will raise its profile during the period August 2017 – July 2018.

As the results of the work undertaken by the NIVSC come to fruition and Veterans needs become even more formally recognised, the NI VAPC will work to ensure that Veterans are aware of its existence and its role. This will involve greater engagement with other Veterans organisations.

Plans include a briefing to the UDR Association AGM in October 2017 and the NI TRBL AGM in January 2018.

The NI VAPC will also look to increase its membership, with a focus on recruiting members with recent experience of military service overseas, also a new member with Reserves experience and a member with experience in the medical profession.

The Chairman will conduct 2 visits with Welfare Service staff.

The Chairman intends to hold a joint meeting with colleagues from the RoI and officials from relevant NI and RoI government departments in order to better understand needs and provisions across the island.

Other key points

Signed: