VETERANS ADVISORY AND PENSIONS (VAPC) COMMITTEE – Annual Activity Report dated 31 July 2018

Annual Report from Northern Ireland Committee					
Achievement against VAPC Objectives					
Membership					
3 x Co-opted members:					
XXXXXXXXXX					
XXXXXXXXXX					
XXXXXXXXXX					
8 x new members appointed:					
XXXXXXXX XXXXXXXX XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX					
XXXXXXXX XXXXXXXX XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX					
1 x member re-appointed - XXXXXXXXXX					
1 x member resigned – XXXXXXXXXX					
Current Members:					
Kingsley Donaldson (Chairperson)					
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX					
XXXXXXXXX					
XXXXXXXXX					
XXXXXXXXX XXXXXXXXX					
XXXXXXXXXX					
XXXXXXXXX					
XXXXXXXXX					

Raising awareness activity

The Chair is satisfied that there is greater awareness of the existence and role of the NI VAPC. Two major engagements have helped to achieve that:

- 1. Chairman's address to the annual conference of the RBL NI.
- 2. Chairman's address to the UDR Associations Branch Chairs AGM.

We continue to operate alongside the Northern Ireland Veterans Support Committee(NIVSC). That organisation has funding and is beginning to develop strategies and plans for covenant implementation and cross government departmental support for veterans specific matters. The Chairman is a member of the NIVSC Steering Group ensuring VAPC influence and awareness is at the appropriate level.

The NI VAPC network has improved its effectiveness and we are now engaged with all the major national Veterans and Service charities. A number of new committee members have come from that wider network including RBL, HQ Royal Irish Regiment, UDR Association as well as several veterans.

The Chair and a number of members continue to lead the First World War Centenary Commemorations. This has helped to create exposure to a much wider veterans' network across the island of Ireland – the Chairman believes that we could play a much more active role in reaching out to British military veterans residing in the Republic of Ireland.

Committee is also represented on the NI Armed Forces Liaison Forum run by the Department of Health, which now has a standing item on 'Veterans Issues'. The AFLF has initiated one piece of work on the suitability of current mental health support services for veterans.

Engagement

The Committee have engaged with numerous Veterans groups across the island of Ireland as well as with academic studies at both Queens University and Ulster University.

Chairman continues to engage with a number of political and civil society organisations in Northern Ireland to raise awareness of Veterans needs, including so-called 'Armed Forces champions'. 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. More often than not, these are not legitimate VA & PC problems, however, we have been able to successfully signpost veterans to more suitable contact points for support and assistance. Often the requirements are very specific and supersede the support offered through the Veterans gateway.

Veterans Welfare Service Engagement activity

Former Chairman conducted a visit with the Welfare Service. Welfare Service personnel now attend the VAPC meetings.

Consultation

Committee members have been engaged directly in a number of legacy consultations, policy formulations, academic research initiatives. These are combinations of Northern Ireland specific matters relating to historical investigations, victims issues, mental and physical injuries, concerns over personal security of veterans and aspects of healthcare provision for Veterans.

Other activity

Plans for next year

The NI VAPC will consolidate its new members in to the Committee through holding an additional number of events to raise awareness of veterans issues and support structures available.

Members will be tasked with direct engagement and liaison with local council champions and 3rd sector reps in their areas.

The Committee is stood by to support and exploit opportunities to develop understanding of the Covenant and assist organisations with primary output responsibilities.

The Committee also want to take a more active role in developing models for transitioning aftercare provision.

The Committee intends to recruit additional members.

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Signed: