

## VETERANS ADVISORY AND PENSIONS (VAPC) COMMITTEE – Annual Activity Report dated ...31 August 2018...

### Annual Report from ...East Midlands .....Committee

#### Achievement against VAPC Objectives

##### Membership

###### Current Membership

Peter POOLE (PP) Chair.  
Patrick RENDALL (PR) (Deputy Chair)  
Larry HENSON (LH)  
John BERRY (JB)  
\*Janis MUMFORD(JM)  
Barry SMITH (BS)  
Michael WHITEHEAD (MW)  
\*Gillian EKINS (GE)  
Paul DAVIES (PD)  
Jim WRIGHT (JW)  
\*Helen DREW-BRADLEY(HDB)  
Dick HARWOOD (DH)  
Stav MELIDES (SM)  
David WILSON (DW)  
David TAYLOR (DT)  
Bill DIXON-DODDS (BDD)

###### Co-opted Members

Ben HODGES (BH)  
Ron GAITPAIN (RG)

\*Recruited in 2018

Over the course of the year the Committee has lost four members, they were:

Charlie Streater, Charlie timed his retirement from the Committee to coincide with his retirement from BLESMA and his move to another part of the country. Charlie had served the Committee for almost ten years and is greatly missed - not least for his extraordinary knowledge of both the AFPS and the WPS– but also for his no nonsense but warm approach to

sorting out veterans' issues.

David Lomas. David's retirement from the Committee is relatively recent and he will be missed for the local politics input he was able to provide to the Committee. David had spent many years serving the community as a counsellor – a fact that was recognised by the award of a BEM last year.

Terl Bryant. The saddest loss this year was in January when Terl Bryant lost his battle with cancer. Terl will be remembered by all who knew him as a tireless campaigner for veterans. Terl had been a member of the Committee for over fifteen years having transferred to the VAPC directly from the War Pensions Committee. Terl's strength lay in his ability to understand the complexities of the local government system both as a County and Town Councillor and it was in this arena, long before the Covenant came into being, that he fought many battles, particularly on the subject of housing and the rights and entitlements of veterans once they had left the services. Although, or perhaps because he suffered from Multiple Sclerosis himself Terl became the "go to" person for veterans suffering from this disease and won many pension battles on their behalf.

Paul Davies. Paul resigned from the committee at the time he retired from the RAF Association where he had been the Eastern Region Area Welfare Officer. He now lives outside the East Midlands area. Paul brought a wealth of Veterans' welfare knowledge to our committee. Through his work he had a significant number of useful contacts and his working knowledge of veterans issues helped committee members better understand the ongoing needs of veterans in the area.

### **Raising awareness activity**

*To include Committee's Key achievements, Planned activity.*

A copy of the updated Committee Strategy which outlines our intended activities for the year 2017/18 is attached at Annex A. This Strategy, which was first put together in 2016, provides a living document that enables the Committee to operate within the broad parameters that are provided by the VAPC ToRs. Further as recruiting takes place and the skill sets of our members change the Strategy is updated and developed to ensure that the Committee is acting in the most efficient way possible. Similarly the targets contained in the Strategy are reviewed by the Committee as a whole and are a work in process as opposed to completed actions. The targets continue to include engagement with local industry, education, local authorities, service charities and the NHS.

As explained in the last report the East Midlands Committee is organised around four sub Committees, each with their own activity area. Each sub Committee is responsible for raising awareness within their own area of expertise, though there are occasions when the sub

Committees work together to address the areas where there is a crossover of responsibility, this is particularly the case in matters that are covered under the AF Covenant.

Plans for each of the sub Committees are attached to the main strategy document.

Raising awareness is very much an “on-going” task as organisations and the personnel within them develop and change. This applies to the majority of the organisations with which the Committee is in contact and covers both the public and the private sector. Over the last year the focus of raising awareness has been on becoming known as skilled and knowledgeable representatives of the veteran community particularly in the public sector.

The Committee will continue to work hard to engage – and thus – raise awareness of VAPCs over the next year.

### **Engagement**

*To include examples of Regional engagement, Local Authority, NHS, Third sector etc to cover methods used, eg face to face, correspondence, joint attendance at events etc*

To a large extent engagement and raising awareness are inextricably combined, for without the one there cannot be the other. As can be seen from our strategic document each of the sub Committees is tasked with a specific role to engage with their opposite numbers.

#### Policy/Governance Committee Lead - Group Captain (Retd) Barry Smith RAF

This sub Committee is charged with maintaining a communication channel with the 6 County Councils, 37 District Councils and 3 City Councils that are within the East Midlands area. The aim is to assist them in their endeavours to meet the terms of the Covenant. Within each Council, Forces Champions have been appointed. These individuals are our conduit to each of the Local Authority (LA) units and our success in this task is measured by our engagement success of 70%.

Much of this engagement activity is through Joint Civil Military AFC Partnership Boards which have become an important meeting forum within each county for information sharing and reporting on progress with respect to the various AFC initiatives implemented by the individual service delivery partners. Together with partners we are able to:

- identify LAs who demonstrate best practice and encourage them to share with those less successful in meeting Veterans needs/ issues.
- Assist LAs with the Joint Strategic Needs Analysis Consultation that must be an outcome of their adoption of the AFC.
- By consultation the P&G sub-committee seeks to ensure the Covenant intent is clear across the region.
- Support requests to government for appropriate resources to be put in place for the various action plans that have been

developed.

- Contribute to the debate over which themes are to take precedence – health, housing, transition etc.

Over the last year the P&G SC report that “Best Practice” is emerging but still requires more stakeholders to sign up. In this context attendance at AFC Partnership Boards is important but unfortunately attendance by NHS CCGs and 3<sup>rd</sup> Sector organisations is patchy. Shared Action Plans are emerging but are not universal and there is little agreement on their extent and scale among the Partnership Boards.

The driving force for change and successful implementation of AFC initiatives rests with the AFC Development Officers that have been appointed in some counties in the East Midlands following MoD Covenant funding of their posts. Board members recognise that a new structure needs to be developed across the region to ensure current momentum and realised benefits of these project posts are sustained to prevent the subsequent waste of public resource. The Policy and Governance sub Committee have proposed a structural solution that has been shared informally with the leadership of some Partnership Boards who have agreed with our analysis. This work is ongoing.

To mark the relaunch of the Community Covenant as part of the AFC each Partnership Board is, or has been, engaged in the re-signing of the AFC. Lincolnshire and Northamptonshire have re-signed and all of the other LA's in our region intend to sign in the near future. As a committee, we have been engaged in the drafting of the new LA Covenant documents and been asked to attend the formal re-signing events as a key stakeholder in the monitoring of AFC delivery and Covenant development in the East Midlands region."

#### Welfare Sub Committee Lead - Major David Taylor

Charged with making and maintaining contact with all Third Sector ex service organisations covering the whole span of the ex-service community. The sub Committee lead has now split our AOR into three, each taking responsibility for their local area. A stakeholder mapping exercise was underway and a database is in the process of being built in order to take the next step and engage the key players in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sector in our region and show them how we can work together.

#### Health Sub Committee Lead – Dr Richard Hurwood

Last year the sub Committee achieved engagement with the regional leads of the NHS and made inroads in the target to liaise with CCGs. Contact with the major ex-service health charities ( Combat Stress, Blesma and Blind Veterans UK had been achieved by relationships developed through individual members. This year that progress has been built on to improve outcomes for Veterans with regard to the NHS within the Lincolnshire, Leicester and Rutland AOR and continues apace. That said resources (time & personnel) constraints have prevented any detailed engagement by the team into other County areas. Together with the Policy and Governance sub Committee this Committee has identified a series of opportunities for greater engagement vis a viz Veterans in the Criminal Justice

system and these are being followed up.

#### Communications Sub Committee Lead – Michael Whitehead

A considerable amount of preparatory work has been done to ensure our members have access to a library of base/policy documents and regular updates and news items and this has improved storage and information flow within the committee. Our social media presence is now established and we have some dedicated followers looking at the material we post.

#### **Assistance to Veterans**

*To include any examples of personal assistance, wider reaching activities/events etc*

Each year the East Midlands Committee identifies less fortunate veterans, widows and family members who may not be able to enjoy a Christmas Lunch. By obtaining sponsorship from local businesses and the ex-service charities the Committee provided a Christmas Lunch at the Leicestershire Cricket Club for some forty five veterans.

The two complex cases concerning the rights of veterans are ongoing, but the input from PP has been reduced due to illness.

#### **Veterans Welfare Service Engagement activity**

*To include details of visits undertaken/meetings attended etc*

The issue of the opportunity to be included in joint visits to veterans has not been resolved despite a management level meeting with the Regional Welfare Officer and VWS representation at 2 of our committee meetings in the last year where the issue has been raised. As a Committee we have been unable to perform either the monitoring role described in our TORs, or build and develop the necessary relationships with the welfare officers in our region that are also called for in our TORs. VWS advise us that the cases in our region are increasingly complex and multi-faceted but we are unable to provide an independent audit of these problems. Our own internal system analysis has highlighted that the current VWS structure in our region may not be "fit for purpose" because of its complexity and the extant post code construct compared with our regions' county boundaries. I and the Committee believe there is a need to move quickly to develop the symbiotic relationship that should exist between the VWS and EMVAPC to ensure that the needs of veterans in our region are properly understood by all."

#### **Consultation**

*To include any consultation activity either at Chair level or full Committee regionally/nationally/MOD.*

EM VAPC has been engaged in a number of reviews across the region ranging from the tactical level (e.g. Future Housing Strategy in South Kesteven; Schools Admissions Policy for the children of Veterans and Service personnel in Lincolnshire) through to the Operational layer (development of new AFC documents for the LAs in our region). Disappointingly however, despite engagement at a recent Lincolnshire AFC Forum meeting - both in person at the time and subsequently by email to the MoD Covenant Team - there has been no follow-up activity from the MoD. Thus the opportunity to gain regional insight for the development of the new Veterans Strategy, as called for in our TORs, has been lost. Similarly we have not succeeded in our attempt to become engaged in the award of Covenant Grants in our region where we believe we could bring coherency and ensure a consistent outcome for the veteran community in the East Midlands from these awards.

The Committee has contributed to draft TORs, leave behind documentation and all other consultation.

#### **Other activity**

*To include examples of best practice activity etc*

Members of the Committee have regular and detailed discussions with the AFC Development Officers to highlight best practice from both inside and outside our region. An example of success in this respect has been the widespread adoption of the Warwickshire email learning package for front line staff in the LAs on Veterans and the AFC across our region as well as different AFC DO's presenting the results of their projects to other Partnership Boards. The creation of a Facebook page for the EM DO's has provided a vehicle for the sharing of best practice across the region.

Committee members participated in centrally organised Member Training

#### **Plans for next year**

*To include key objectives/plans*

To build on the work that has been done this year. The objectives and plans for the next year are contained within the plan at Annex A

#### **Other key points**

This year the EM VAPC Chairman has, through illness been unavailable for meetings both internal and external. Similarly there have been times when I have not been able to keep abreast of the huge amount of work that has been a feature of the Committee over the last year. I want to thank the sub Committee Leads and most importantly my Vice Chairman for all the extra work this has placed on

their shoulders.

**Signed:**