



VAPC Meeting 23rd October 2019

held at Reserve Forces & Cadets Association for Yorkshire & The
Humber, 20 St George's Place, York, YO24 1DS

Attendees:

Alex Baxter (Chairman)
John Topping (Secretary)
Maj (Rtd) Duncan Bell
Alex Bentley
Ms Helen Singleton
Dr David Jolliffe CB
Rick Short
Tim Cole
Jonathan Treen

Apologies:

Gary Collins
Andrew Palmer
Sqn Ldr (Rtd) Mike Chambers MBE
Lt Col (Rtd) Peter Shields MBE QGM
Capt Peter Mason
Lt Col (Rtd) Alan Skidmore

Observer/Guests:

Nil

Absent

VWS representative

Item**Discussion****1. General Items.****a. Introduction, Apologies, Minutes of Last Meeting/Matters Arising**

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting. An outline of the changes to Ministerial posts was highlighted with particular emphasis on the establishment of the 'Office for Veterans Affairs' (OVA) which will sit within the Cabinet Office and is established to pull-together all functions of central government and better co-ordinate charity sector provision. Colonel David Richmond CBE, (Retd) a former Commanding Officer of 5th Battalion the Royal Regiment of Scotland, who served in Afghanistan and Iraq and subsequently became the Recovery Director at Help



for Heroes, has been appointed to head up the OVA. It is hoped to invite Col. David Richardson to a future meeting.

Action Point. Chairman to provide the Secretary with details who will issue the invite.

ii. The minutes of the last meeting, which had been circulated beforehand, were discussed, confirmed and agreed.

iii. There were no matters arising.

b. Recruiting and Membership.

i. The Chairman thanked all members whose terms of appointment were due to expire in late November and who had had applied for another term of office.

ii. Interviews for new members would take place on the 26th November at the RF&CA, York.

c. Reports: Members External Events; Quarterly Newsletter Items.

i. The Chairman said that the MOD Quarterly Newsletter would be circulated to members who then reported on the various meetings that they had attended.

1. Wakefield
2. Rotherham
3. N. Yorks.
4. Harrogate DTS meeting

ii. The Chairman asked the Secretary to obtain all the postcodes of members so that when meetings came up in their area they would be given the opportunity to attend them on behalf on the VAPC.

Action Point. Secretary to obtain all the relevant information and bring up to date the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) – Consent Forms and circulate the Data Disclosure Authority form that Peter Shields and the Secretary had produced.

iii. The Annual Report to be circulated to all members.

Action Point. Secretary.

iv. It was agreed that the minutes of all Covenant meeting etc. attended by Members would now be circulated to all committee members to assists with continuity and assist promotion of best practices.

Action Point. All.



d. Chairs Conference November.

- i. The Chairman briefed members about various items including impending changes to the VAPC National Chair which will be determined prior to Chairs Conference being held 5th and 6th November 2019.
- ii. The Agenda had not yet been confirmed but if any member wished him to add to those items already submitted the deadline is 25th October,
- iii. It was highlighted that when dealing with Norcross and the Veterans Agency the National Insurance Number of the veteran was critical starting point and should be considered when offering assistance or advocacy (Permission of individuals should be sought prior to engagement)

2. NHS Medical Support.

a. GP Services and Data recording – update.

- i. A meeting is being held of the Yorkshire & Humberside Armed Forces Network (Y&H AFN) at the Royal Armouries, Leeds on the 4th November. It was agreed that the Secretary and Duncan Bell would attend. It is important that the subject of GP Registration remains extant and that it is likely further promotion of GP Veterans Friendly Surgeries will be promoted at this meeting.

Action Point. John topping and Duncan Bell.

b. Mental health services – update from Subgroup members - if available.

- i. No further information available.

c. Update from Duncan Bell with regards to Medical Board assessments and effects on Veterans.

- i. Duncan reported that his recent visit with a Veteran from the Ripon area was totally unsatisfactory. He has attended a number of these previously as a critical friend and this visit appeared to further confirm how 'perfunctory' it appears the Boards are functioning. This is a matter that will be (*so far as we are able*) escalated to appropriate senior channels for a response.

Action Point. Chairman.

3. Developing Collaboration in our Region

- a. Local Authority:** Update from members of all developments. Also feedback from members who have attended LA Covenant boards.



i. This item was covered at item 1, c.

b. DWP progression: Establishment of Armed Forces Champions within the Department of Works and Pensions appears to be working well with good coordination and functioning in support of specific Veterans matters.

Ongoing/update.

i. This work is progressing well although feedback indicates minor difficulties are being experienced in some regions where a Champion is established, but where access to this initiative is more difficult within rural areas due to lack of public transport facilities.

c. Support to Veterans and Early service Leavers – discussion.

i. The Defence Transition Service (DTS) had been discussed earlier but concern was expressed by committee members as to its (current) overall effectiveness. – Further information will be sought.

ii. A pension scam concerning veterans was discussed. It was felt as Military pensions are in the main controlled by Glasgow they may also have the duty of care. It was highlighted that this sort of scam is sometimes very professionally targeted and difficult to regulate – this will be researched further.

4. Various.

a. VAPC Centenary (19 Aug 2021): options for marking the occasion.

i. Andrew Palmer provide the minutes of the Minutes: VAPC100 SUB Committee Inaugural Regional Meeting was held on Friday 26 July 2019 at 1200 via Skype. This is ongoing and we are awaiting developments but all are keen to support this initiative.

b. Management Plan: Develop strategy 2018-2022

i. This item is being held in abeyance after November until the new members of the committee are appointed, although it is currently on-track and progressing well.

c. Veterans Gateway: Update and awareness.

i. It was agreed that this was a very good tool and LA's can go online to access a training programme.



d. Veterans Strategy: Update.

i. Changes to ministerial posts will undoubtedly see new initiatives and it is important to ensure as these evolve, members receive early notice out-with of normal committee meeting dates.

5. VWS Monitoring & Welfare Items.

i. The VAPC's have a duty to undertake a monitoring and quality control role but it must be seen in a supportive nature. The ongoing challenges with our remit to carry out quality control visit remains very much work-in-progress. The secretary contacted VWS to ascertain the situation but has at the time of the meeting is still awaiting a response.

ii. War pension claims still outstanding complicated by potentially lengthy delays was discussed. We normally have a report from the VWS representative but they were unfortunately unable to attend and no alternative communication has been received – it is however understood that current workload within Vets UK is extremely high, but it is hoped to bring this facility back on track as quickly as is practicable. Members asked what the number of appeals are outstanding and what was the percentage of appeals after the first award of a War Pension was issued. The Secretary was asked to contact VWS and obtain the information.

Action Point. Secretary.

6. Any Other Business.

i. The Chairman thanked all members for their continuing support and especially those who were standing down after their final permitted terms had finished. The Chairman expressed his grateful thanks for the vital contributions they have all made during their period of tenure and hoped to invite them to consider becoming co-opted for specific projects in the future.

7. Next Meetings.

Wednesday 19th February 2020, Wednesday 17th June 2020 and Wednesday 14 October 2010.