

**Scotland Veterans Advisory and Pensions Committee (VAPC) Meeting**  
**Wednesday the 12th of January 2022, Held Virtually**

**Present:** David Page, Chair (DP); Laura Cox, Vice Chair (LC); Huw Sherrard, Secretary (HS); Alan Hamilton (AH); Mark Logie (ML); Mike McCourt (MMcC); Megan Brackley (MB); Andrew Ward (AW); Sandy Reid (SR); Kate Thomas (KT); Ally Gemmal (AG); Jim Wilson (JW); Iain Findlay (IF).

**Apologies:** Don Young (DY), Paul Cleugh (PC), Jock Drysdale (JD).

**Absent:** Caroline Robertson (CR), Bill Lindsay (BL), Donald Prentice (DP), Richard Anderson (RA), Audrey Cuthbertson (AC).

**1) Approval of Last Meeting's Minutes.**

The committee approved the minutes of the last meeting.

**2) Update from Chair.**

DP informed the board that Chris Roads had circulated best practice for VAPC Secretaries.

UK Chairs approved of a new focus on a number of new sub groups, focusing on key areas of VAPCs' roles.

DP outlined conversations with VAPCS and the Association of Service Drop-In Centres (ASDIC), who have received funding from the Armed Forces Covenant as well as other sources. Scotland is one of ASDIC's regions, and DP asked if a Scotland VAPC member could be involved as a Deputy Regional Co-ordinator, although noting that more communication between both parties should occur first. DP agreed to send on an email with information to all members. MMcC expressed interest in following up with them regarding the opportunity for the committee's involvement.

DP provided a devolved nations update, highlighting the work with the Welsh VAPC and the Welsh Government, as well as obstacles the Northern Irish VAPC was experiencing in its development. OVA and MOD sometimes unresponsive, and a number of institutional barriers to progress at various points.

January 27th, meeting with Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Veterans. DP outlined that sponsorship of the VAPC's work by the Scottish Government is vital to its efficacy in Scotland, asked LC to discuss points for the meeting at a later date. DP also noted that a meeting with COSLA would also be beneficial in the future.

JW, in their capacity as the secretary of the Armed Forces CPG, arranged for DP to attend the upcoming Scottish Committee and present the VAPC and its role, as well as the updated Terms of Reference.

DP raised concerns regarding wider national groups across VAPCs and their consideration of the devolved context of some committees.

DP has been asked to be a Vice Chair of the UK Chairs in regards to devolved nations. While time commitment was a concern, DP would agree unless either other Chair of another devolved VAPC was able to.

**3) Update on Firmbase Coverage.**

LC provided an update on members proposing to attend local authorities' Firmbase meetings. About half of members had come forward with a proposed favoured local authority.

DP outlined concerns that Firmbases may differ wildly from local authority (or group) to local authority. DP outlined the VAPC's Firmbase involvement is a key concern for the upcoming meeting with Keith Brown MSP. DP asked how members would attend Firmbase meetings. LC outlined how to find contact information for each local authority's Armed Forces Champion, and if that didn't prove successful, information for the military contact (who would at least know information).

ML asked DP as to the plausibility of an introductory letter from either DP as Chair or the Minister for Defence People and Veterans. DP agreed to draft a letter to each local authority's chief executives to facilitate member's attendance as a formal introduction. Any input from members on the content of the letter would be appreciated in the coming weeks. Stewart inputted from their experience of attending Firmbase meetings in another capacity that introduction from a higher level would be invaluable, as VAPCs are largely unknown. The committee brought up the upcoming local elections in May again as another obstacle.

#### **4) Any Other Business.**

DP asked the committee their feelings on the scheduled face to face meeting in March. A number of members outlined their perspectives on face to face meetings in their other capacities, with a mix of decisions across various members' contexts as to whether they were online, hybrid, or solely in person. DP outlined the feasibility of a hybrid option, which Stuart and JW both advocated for, for both members' personal safety and comfort as well as convenience. The committee agreed to a hybrid option for the scheduled meeting in March. DP suggested that, depending on the upcoming meeting with the CSJ&V, they might be invited to attend as well. In regards to the length and time of the meeting, DP suggested around 13:00/14:00-16:00. The committee agreed.

MMcC outlined their ongoing case regarding the individual seeking consideration of their The individual had contacted MMcC through LinkedIn, had known them for a considerable period of time and worked with them before. A number of health issues related to their service in the Gulf War. Problems with an assigned representative from a veterans organisation, a number of medical appointments as part of the appeal process. The individual asked MMcC for any advice possible on their housing context within veterans organisations, as well as the individuals' pensions. The individual had another appeal coming up, and has employed the service of a solicitor regarding their Armed Forces Compensation Scheme. It was noted that the VAPC cannot represent the individual in any capacity, but can provide advice and support.

DP outlined the benefit in members' presence on networking platforms like LinkedIn, though the issues concerned with GDPR and professional confidences should be considered. The VAPC's role in signposting and directing individuals to the proper bodies for various concerns and needs.

**Signed as true on 22/06/22 by David Page, Chair:**

