

Scotland Veterans Advisory and Pensions Committee (VAPC) Meeting
Wednesday the 21st of July 2022, Held Virtually

Present: Laura Cox, Vice Chair (LC); Huw Sherrard, Secretary (HS); Alan Hamilton (AH); Ally Gemmell (AG); Sue Raw (SRa); Audrey Cuthbertson (AC); Iain Findlay (IF); Mike McCourt (MMcC); Jim Wilson (JW); Mark Logie (ML).

Attending: Kate McCullough, Defence Transition Services (KMCC); Colin Vooght, Lowland Reserve Forces' and Cadets' Association (CV).

Apologies: None.

1) Welcome, Introductions, and Apologies

LC welcomed and introduced the members and attendees. The committee also noted with sadness the passing of VAPC member Group Captain (Rtd) Jock Drysdale.

2) Previous Minutes and Matters Arising

The committee approved the previous meeting's minutes.

3) Update from the Chair

LC outlined the upcoming process to appoint a new Chair of the VAPC, and asked any interested members to get in touch. LC had met with five of the committee members as part of the ongoing initiative to speak with each member one on one.

AH provided an update from the national Chairs meeting, which they had attended on behalf of the VAPC, and stated that there was discussion of similar topics as previous updates to the committee provided by David Page during their tenure as Chair. One subject discussed related to reducing the recent report on the activities of the VAPCs, which was currently very lengthy. There was an intention to create a précis to address this. LC thanked AH for attending the meeting on behalf of the VAPC.

4) Presentation from Defence Transition Services (Kate McCullough, Head of DTS)

LC introduced KM to the committee. KM provided an update from the perspective of the Defence Transition Service, including the process to hire new personnel, including a new Case Worker and Regional Manager, and an intention to meet more closely with the VAPC especially in relation to the upcoming meeting in November.

KM provided an overview of the DTS' position within the wider Defence Business Service and the Ministry of Defence, the distinctions within their activities, and where DTS becomes involved - including the process of referrals. The role and activities of the Veterans Welfare Service (VWS) was also outlined.

ML asked if KM had a metric of how successful DTS' work is, and how they evaluated their impact - as well as how veterans who had left the armed services a longer period of time ago were supported. KM outlined that the latter individuals would fall under the influence of VWS. Regarding the evaluation, KM stated that DTS did not track metrics of their potential effectiveness, but described a number of potential evaluations that may be occurring in the future. ML stated that such evaluation would provide evidence against claims of DTS' ineffectiveness.

JW asked whether the proportion of those service leavers who are referred to the DTS, and what proportion of them might fall under the Scotland VAPC's remit geographically. KM said that they would pass on the information to the committee after the meeting. JW additionally asked what actions the committee might take in relation to employers and local authorities to improve the transition for veterans, as well as whether the recent vacancies have affected DTS' provision in

Scotland. KM stated that the vacancies have not resulted in any reduction in provision, and individuals are still receiving support - RE: the former component of the question, key priorities were housing, finance, employment, and what is being, and may be, done to address those priorities.

LC thanked KM for their presentation and for answering the committees questions, and raised the resource for introducing the VAPC - KM outlined a briefing document to pass over

5) Presentation from Lowland Reserve Forces and Cadets Association (Colin Vooght, Lowland RFCA Employer Engagement)

LC introduced CV. CV described the purpose and role of RFCAs, primarily within the employers engagement role, and the Employers Recognition Scheme. CV outlined imminent organisational change, with RFCAs becoming ANDPBs, and the soon to be implemented national structure. CV described a recent positive increase in the number of Armed Forces Covenant sign-ups. Discussions about whether AFC priorities should be for quantity, or quality, of signatories. CV described their perspective on the experience of service leavers progressively after leaving the Armed Forces, though the RFCA had a comparatively smaller remit in relation to veterans and service leavers.

MMcC asked whether ongoing socio-cultural phenomena meant that more individuals who might otherwise be service leavers were remaining in the services. CV agreed that, in their experience, that likely was the case through the COVID-19 pandemic. CV and LC provided some information on the proportion of service leavers. Other committee members provided their experience on service leavers' experiences, particularly in relation to employers.

ML asked how the RFCA approached expectation management with employers. CV provided their perspective, and their goals and ideal approach that employers might implement.

6) Members' Update

LC stated that due to time constraints, the updates will be rolled over to the September.

7) AOB

None.

Signed as true on 29/09/22 by Alan Hamilton, Acting Chair:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Alan Hamilton', written over a horizontal line.