

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE EAST MIDLANDS VETERANS ADVISORY AND PENSIONS COMMITTEE (EM VAPC) HELD AT THE OFFICERS' MESS, PRINCE WILLIAM OF GLOUCESTER BARRACKS ON 13 FEBRUARY 2023**

Present	Barry Smith Richard Hurwood Ian Crowe (IC) Andrew Holt Ron Moonesinghe Thomas Smith Brendan Daly (Co-opted Member) (BD) Paul Drury (Co-opted Member) David Houghton	Chair Vice-Chair/Health Lead  CJS Lead  Housing Lead  Secretary and Strategy Lead
In Attendance	Louise Briggs Michael Smith	MOD DTS MOD VWS
Apologies	Karen Cox Bill Dixon-Dodds (Co-opted Member) Gary Holden Stav Melides Michael Whitehead	Industry Lead Communications Lead

Item		Action
<b>1</b>	<b>Welcome and Opening Remarks</b>	
	The Chair welcomed Members to the meeting, and extended his thanks to the PMC and Officers' Mess staff for supporting the meeting. The recently-appointed Co-Opted Members introduced themselves to other meeting attendees, and were welcomed to the Committee.	
<b>2</b>	<b>Apologies for Absence</b>	
	The Chair accepted pre-notified apologies from those who were unable to attend the meeting.	
<b>3</b>	<b>Declarations of Interest</b>	
	There were no declarations of interest that would affect the work of the Committee.	
<b>4</b>	<b>DTS Update</b>	
<b>4.1</b>	The MOD DTS representative presented an update on DTS' current activity in the EM region, noting that DTS is currently handling approximately 43 'Red' (high intensity) cases, of which 21 are in the DTS EM Region (which is not the same geographical area as the EM VAPC region). It was highlighted that DTS continue to have some staff vacancies that inevitably impact on DTS' ability to provide services, but that the EM Region was now fully-staffed.	
<b>4.2</b>	The meeting discussed the recent deliberations between DTS and MOD Armed Forces People Support (AFPSp) regarding immediate DTS resourcing requirements, and noted that that discussion had now been superseded by a request from AFPSp that DTS staffs work with them to carry out a 'quick fire review of DTS' available resources.	
<b>4.3</b>	Members were briefed that MOD and DTS have conducted a review of the Integrated Personal Commissioning for Veterans Framework (IPC4V) ( <a href="https://www.england.nhs.uk/personalisedcare/upc/ipc-for-veterans/">https://www.england.nhs.uk/personalisedcare/upc/ipc-for-veterans/</a> ) to provide greater clarity on the eligibility of personnel to utilise the IPC4V. It was noted that the review may form part of the Quinquennial Review (QQR).	
<b>5</b>	<b>VWS Update</b>	
<b>5.1</b>	The MOD VWS representative highlighted to Members that VWS staff had undertaken 32648 interactions in 2022, with 2849 of those interactions	

	occurring during Dec 22. Members noted that the online system for compensation claims was now being used much more widely, but that the paper-based system remained in place for individuals who are unable to use the online process.	
5.2	Members were updated on continued improvements in filling previously vacant VWS Posts, with 3 new VWS staff recruited for the Midlands and Wales area. The meeting was also updated on the utility of VWS surgeries at Stanford Hall – such surgeries had been fully-subscribed.	
<b>6</b>	<b>Minutes of Last Meeting and Actions Arising</b>	
6.1	The minutes of the last meeting were accepted.	
6.2	<p>The meeting returned to the continued need to identify examples of existing 'due regard good practice' that could be shared across relevant organisations within the EM Region, discussed at Item 7.3 of the meeting held on 17 Oct 22. IC highlighted the work of the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland (LLR) Integrated Care Board (ICB) (<a href="https://leicesterleicestershireandrutland.icb.nhs.uk/">https://leicesterleicestershireandrutland.icb.nhs.uk/</a>), which had developed a 'Task/Finish Group' utilising a RAG rating to focus on due regard activities.</p> <p>The meeting was advised that the LLR ICB was driving towards a Single Point of Contact (SPOC) system (based on a system/service SPOC rather than a single person SPOC). An operational document was being developed that would inform the LLR ICB SPOC by Jun 23 (TBC). This would identify data that needs to be captured in order to assess the effectiveness of the SPOC, but which could also be rolled-out across other ICBs as 'good practice'. The LLR ICB SPOC Service Justification and Service Specification are at Enclosure 1 and Enclosure 2 respectively. Members were encouraged to share these examples of potential due regard good practice with their Armed Forces Covenant Partnership Boards (AFCPB).</p>	All
6.3	Members discussed the utility of other AFCPBs to replicate the type of review/refresh of AFCPB arrangements conducted recently by Derbyshire's AFCPB, and outlined at Item 8.3.1 of the meeting held on 17 Oct 22. It was noted that, while systems vary across the various EM AFCPBs, Derbyshire's move to a 'Strategy Board', 'Operational Board' and 'Network' construct had improved the provision of support to the AF community in that area, and may be of utility in other EM areas. Members were encouraged to discuss such a construct with their AFCPBs.	All
<b>7</b>	<b>Out Brief from Ministerial Engagement &amp; Subsequent Chair of Chairs Activity</b>	
7.1	The Chair highlighted that there had been significant recent engagement with Ministers. Future meetings were now scheduled to take place every 6 months, with the next meeting on 18 May 23. Members noted the appointment of The Rt Hon Andrew Murrison MP ( <a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/people/andrew-murrison">https://www.gov.uk/government/people/andrew-murrison</a> ) as Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Defence People, Veterans and Service Families (Min DPVSF)) at the Ministry of Defence since the last EM VAPC Meeting in Oct 22.	
7.2	Members noted that a speech by Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Johnny Mercer, on 11 Jan 23 ( <a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/minister-for-veterans-affairs-speech-to-the-veterans-trauma-network">https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/minister-for-veterans-affairs-speech-to-the-veterans-trauma-network</a> ) highlighted the Government's potential direction of travel for the 'veterans agenda', specifically mental health support via Op Courage, homelessness reduction	All

	<p>via Op Fortitude, and a new emphasis on veterans' physical health. In addition, Min DPVSF had asked VAPCs to help him understand how local AF charities are operating and what impact they are making (including with statutory providers and with one another) and to gain an understanding of the level of awareness of Covenant and the AF Community at the local and regional level, in particular among those captured by the new Covenant Duty.</p>	
<b>7.3</b>	<p>While noting the qualitative nature of such evidence, the meeting noted that the Min DPVSF has asked that evidence of/information about the latter 2 priorities should be included in the VAPCs' Annual Report, e.g. levels of awareness, regional differences. The latter is seen as being key to understanding what, if any, policy changes might need to be made in the future. Details of who provided the evidence, when and at what event will help with cross-referencing across the regions and persuading others to adopt a particular approach.</p>	
<b>7.4</b>	<p>The meeting noted that the VAPCs were now only required to provide the Minister with 1 Report each year (vice 2 Reports). Regional VAPC inputs will be gathered by end Jun 23, with the pan-VAPCs' Report being completed by the end of Jul 23.</p>	
<b>7.5</b>	<p>Members discussed the Private Members VAPC Bill tabled to Parliament by Robin Millar MP (<a href="https://www.robin-millar.org.uk/">https://www.robin-millar.org.uk/</a>), which is believed to have cross-bench and Government support. The Bill is expected to be presented to Parliament on 24 Feb 23, and aims to put in place a duty to support the entire AF community while also enshrining the current VAPC TORs in law. The meeting noted that, notwithstanding this Bill, the statutory underpinnings of the VAPCs will still be the AF Act 2006 (<a href="https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/52/contents">https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/52/contents</a>).</p>	
<b>7.6</b>	<p>The meeting discussed the continuing frustration and disappointment surrounding the enduring delays in issuing veterans' ID cards (<a href="https://www.gov.uk/service-standard-reports/apply-for-a-veterans-id-card-alpha-assessment">https://www.gov.uk/service-standard-reports/apply-for-a-veterans-id-card-alpha-assessment</a>). It was noted that the MOD/Vets UK will now lead on the delivery of the ID cards, and that a very limited 'beta' trial to issue cards to 1000 veterans who left the Services before 2019 was planned to take place in mid-2023.</p>	
<b>7.7</b>	<p>Members noted that the VAPCs QQR, Chaired by Mark Thompson, had now interviewed the VAPC Regional Chairs. The DRAFT QQR Report is expected by the end of Feb 23.</p>	
<b>7.8</b>	<p>The meeting discussed and noted the greater mandate now placed on veterans to provide evidence (e.g. GP or consultant reports) in a timely manner to support any claims for compensation. It was also noted that claimants in England will move to a system of 'direct lodgement' (<a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/possible-amendments-to-the-tribunal-procedure-first-tier-tribunal-war-pensions-and-armed-forces-compensation-chamber-rules-2008-to-accommodate-the">https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/possible-amendments-to-the-tribunal-procedure-first-tier-tribunal-war-pensions-and-armed-forces-compensation-chamber-rules-2008-to-accommodate-the</a>) (similar to the system already in place in Scotland, albeit currently with a different set of time criteria) wef 1 Apr 23, with Wales and Northern Ireland following idc.</p>	
<b>7.9</b>	<p>It was noted that the recently-appointed Chief of Defence People, Rear Admiral Phillip Hally (<a href="https://twitter.com/radmphilhally?lang=en">https://twitter.com/radmphilhally?lang=en</a>) had highlighted his desire to improve the administrative processes for both serving personnel and veterans by getting rid of bureaucratic hurdles to</p>	

7.10	<p>improved outcomes. Admiral Hally's focus is on moving to Oracle Fusion with a seamless view of the individual and the data that surrounds them. This vision has a 10-year timeframe for implementation and is the next stage to the digital transformation underway within the Agency which has a 5-year horizon for full implementation. Of note for veterans, it has also been agreed that veterans and their support lie firmly within the MOD's bailiwick.</p> <p>The meeting noted the potential for greater interaction between the Independent Medical Expert Group (IMEG) (<a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/independent-medical-expert-group">https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/independent-medical-expert-group</a>) and Ministers, which could act as model for VAPCs' interaction with Ministers. It was noted that, while the recent appointment of a Senior Medical Advisor (SMA) to advise Brigadier Caroline Hull, Head of DBS Armed Forces and Veterans Services, creates a potential 'air gap' to the other MAs, the SMA will be responsible for ensuring that the MAs have appropriate training for their role and also providing appropriate oversight. Importantly, the SMA will also act as an interlocutor with the policy team in MOD and provide a link to the IMEG in its specialist role as ministerial medical advisors.</p>	
<b>8</b>	<b>Individual Member Reports – Updates</b>	
<b>8.1</b>	<b>Policy &amp; Governance</b>	
8.1.1	<p>Members allocated/assigned to individual EM AFCPBs provided updates on continuing work, emerging issues and new initiatives from their respective AFCPBs. It was noted that the utility of, and knowledge within, the Regional AFCPBs continued to be variable. As an example, it was highlighted that, while Nottinghamshire has an active AF Champion, there was divergence between the level of support/activity provided by Nottingham City Council compared to Nottinghamshire, seemingly driven by 'politics'. In contrast, recent activity within the LLR AFCPB included supporting the work of RE:ACT (<a href="https://www.re-act.org.uk/about/https://www.re-act.org.uk/about/">https://www.re-act.org.uk/about/https://www.re-act.org.uk/about/</a>).</p>	All
8.1.2	<p>The meeting was briefed about a recent Sandhurst-sponsored 2* military grouping event held in Leicestershire, and noted with disappointment that some of the military attendees at the event seemed to demonstrate a lack of understanding or empathy for veterans. BD undertook to forward a briefing used at that event to the Secretary, for onward distribution to all Members.</p>	BD
<b>8.2</b>	<b>Health</b>	
8.2.1	<p>The meeting was informed that the Chair had attended a Veterans' Places, Pathways and People Programme (<a href="https://covenantfund.org.uk/programme/veterans-places-pathways-and-people-programme/">https://covenantfund.org.uk/programme/veterans-places-pathways-and-people-programme/</a>) meeting in early Feb 23. The meeting included a briefing from the Veterans Covenant Healthcare Alliance (VCHA) (<a href="https://veteranaware.nhs.uk/background/">https://veteranaware.nhs.uk/background/</a>), which highlighted that the current VCHA system of accreditation will end in 2026. Members discussed what follow-on system may be required, including the potential to move from an accreditation system to an assurance system. IC agreed to investigate how the VAPCs could influence the post-accreditation system process.</p>	IC
<b>8.3</b>	<b>Veterans Interaction with CJS</b>	
8.3.1	<p>The CJS Lead Member updated Members on the continuing work within the National Police Chiefs' Council (<a href="https://www.npcc.police.uk/">https://www.npcc.police.uk/</a>) to appoint a national lead for veterans within the NPCC's people area. The CJS Lead</p>	CJS Lead

	Member agreed to investigate how VAPCs will be able to interact with this initiative.	
<b>8.3.2</b>	The meeting noted that work being undertaken by Greater Manchester Police (GMP) to create a 'demand reduction' on GMP services by supporting veterans more effectively before they enter the CJS was now being rolled out. GMP was also supporting this initiative by drawing on the experience and potential expertise of veterans now working with GMP.	
<b>8.4</b>	<b>Mental Health of Veterans in Prison</b>	
<b>8.4.1</b>	The meeting discussed the issue of delays in addressing the mental health issues of veterans who are detained in secure units. It was noted that the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) did not believe that veterans were being disadvantaged in this area compared to the non-veteran prison population, but that the Ministry was seeking evidence to better inform their understanding of the potential issue. Members were encouraged to seek-out and highlight such evidence where/if it exists, noting the expectation of the AFC 'advantage' caused by trauma that may have been suffered by veterans during their time in the Services.	All
<b>8.5</b>	<b>Housing</b>	
<b>8.5.1</b>	The meeting discussed the potential to use the tenets of Op FORTITUDE ( <a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-funding-and-support-scheme-to-finally-end-armed-forces-veterans-homelessness">https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-funding-and-support-scheme-to-finally-end-armed-forces-veterans-homelessness</a> ) to try and leverage funding for the development of 'novel' solutions to address homelessness amongst veterans. An example of such novel solutions was the work being undertaken with the South Kesteven Housing Executive to investigate the potential to convert surplus Council office accommodation into housing units.	
<b>8.5.2</b>	The Housing Lead Member informed the meeting that the work with West Lindsey Council to look at incorporating housing for veterans within the redevelopment of the RAF Scampton site was likely to be delayed by mandatory pre-election purdah.	
<b>8.5.3</b>	Members discussed the pan-EM Regional Veterans' Housing Forum agreed as a priority at the strategy meeting held on 12 Dec 22. The importance of applying pressure on the various EM Council Housing Executives/Departments to ensure that suitably informed and empowered representatives from each Council attend the Forum at RAFC Cranwell later in 2023 (date TBD) was emphasised and noted.	All
<b>8.6</b>	<b>Health and Wellbeing Hubs</b>	
<b>8.6.1</b>	It was noted that the VPPP continued to expand the number of hubs they are supporting across the EM region, with some 2000 personnel supporting mental health initiatives across the EM.	
<b>8.7</b>	<b>Recruitment Update</b>	
<b>8.7.1</b>	The Chair advised the meeting that the next campaign to recruit new Members to the EM VAPC is likely to be launched in May/June 23.	
<b>9</b>	<b>Outcomes and Way Ahead from Dec 22 EM VAPC Strategy Meeting</b>	

<b>9.1</b>	The Meeting confirmed and approved the outcomes of the strategy meeting held on 12 Dec 22, including the establishment of a pan-EM Regional Veterans' Housing Forum (see Item <b>8.5.3</b> ).	
<b>10</b>	<b>Pan-VAPCs' Strategy Group Update</b>	
<b>10.1</b>	The Strategy Lead Member updated the meeting on the pan-VAPCs' Strategy Working Group (WG). It was highlighted that the WG had been developing regional and pan-VAPC work to inform key questions such as what the VAPCS are for, what the VAPCs are currently doing and what they should be doing. Each VAPC has undertaken a 'data capture' exercise and SWOT analysis, the results of which are now being sifted and collated. It is envisaged that a follow-on WG to build a strategy framework will circulate their request for inputs to the regional VAPC Strategy Leads in Mar 23. Members welcomed the WG's work, and asked to be kept updated on developments.	Strategy Lead
<b>11</b>	<b>AOB</b>	
<b>11.1</b>	It was noted that Norcross-led online training for VAPC Members et al. will be available on 28 Feb 23.	All
<b>11.2</b>	IC informed the meeting that Leicester University has secured funding from the Veterans' Health Innovation Fund ( <a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/veterans-affairs-health-innovation-fund">https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/veterans-affairs-health-innovation-fund</a> ) to support a programme aimed at using computer modelling to identify PTSD.	
<b>11.3</b>	IC also informed the meeting the Rutland Local Authority Health and Wellbeing Board ( <a href="https://www.rutland.gov.uk/health-wellbeing/health-wellbeing-board">https://www.rutland.gov.uk/health-wellbeing/health-wellbeing-board</a> ) has now incorporated a specific AF Community section within each element of its activity.	
<b>11.4</b>	The meeting noted the development of MIND ( <a href="https://www.mind.org.uk/">https://www.mind.org.uk/</a> ) virtual cafes across the Derbyshire/Northamptonshire/Nottinghamshire area, which will supplement existing physical MIND crisis cafes. Members were encouraged to highlight this initiative to their AFC contacts.	All
<b>11.5</b>	Members discussed the resent query from VAPC Sponsor Team regarding Members' 'biographies' available online at <a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/vapc-east-midlands-committee-members/east-midlands-veterans-advisory-and-pensions-committee-members">https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/vapc-east-midlands-committee-members/east-midlands-veterans-advisory-and-pensions-committee-members</a> , and whether more detailed Members' biographies/CVs should be available online. Members were requested to inform the Secretary if they felt that more detailed biographies/CVs should be available on the gov.uk website.	All
<b>12</b>	<b>Date of Next Meeting</b>	
<b>12.1</b>	The next meeting will be a hybrid meeting, and is planned to take place at the EM Reserve Forces and Cadet Association (RFCA) ( <a href="https://eastmidlandsrfa.co.uk/contact-us/">https://eastmidlandsrfa.co.uk/contact-us/</a> ) on 19 Jun 23 from 1330 hours.	All

*Signed electronically*

D A HOUGHTON  
Secretary, EM VAPC

Enclosures:

1. LLR ICB SPOC - Service Justification.
2. LLR ICB SPOC - Service Specification.