

Scotland Veterans Advisory and Pensions Committee (VAPC) Meeting Minutes Tuesday the 11th of June 2024 (18:00-20:00), Held Virtually.

Present: Carolyn Caddick, Chair (CC); Huw Sherrard, Secretary (HS); Iain Findlay (IF); Audrey Cuthbertson (AC); Donald Prentice (DP); Jim Wilson (JW); Kate Thomas (KT); Sue Raw (SR); Bill Lindsay (BL).

Apologies: Don Young (DY); Alec Rose (AC); Stuart Roberts (SRo); Mike McCourt (MMcC); Gordon Michie (GM).

1. Welcome & Apologies

CC welcomed those attending the meeting, and the Committee noted the apologies given by Members. HS noted apologies he had received.

2. Previous Minutes & Matters Arising

The Committee approved the minutes of the previous meeting, and CC outlined a number of matters arising. Plans for a workshop on female veterans had been put on hold by the forthcoming election. CC inquired if Committee Members were receiving the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust's newsletter, and encouraged those not currently receiving it to sign up. CC asked HS to circulate the link to sign up to the Trust's newsletter. CC asked for the Committee's views on the recently held workshop on pensions and compensation: the Committee's feedback was very positive, and noted how useful the newly released guidance was to improving understanding on pensions and compensation.

3. Chair Update

CC updated the Committee on her work as Chair since the last meeting. The General Election, and the absence of a responsible Minister for the VAPCs, has caused a number of delays to ongoing work at multiple levels.

4. Member Updates

A number of Committee members updated the Committee on their work since the last meeting, which included attending events relating to the anniversary of D-Day. KT shared that she had attended an observation of ANZAC Day. CC noted that the Inverness Poppy Scotland HQ had closed, which meant that there was no longer a Veterans Hub in the north. KT informed the Committee that the Commonwealth War Graves Commission was hosting a number of tours of graveyards and cemeteries, which might be of interest to the Committee.

5. Vice Chair & Committee Secretary Roles

CC introduced the topic of the Committee electing two office bearing roles: the Committee's Vice Chair, and Committee Secretary. HS described the background to the elections: the end of the incumbent Vice Chair's term since the last election in 2022; and HS' own desire to stand down as Committee Secretary if another member was willing to replace him. The Committee agreed to consider the elections at a future meeting. CC notified the Committee that there was a member from a different VAPC returning to live in Scotland, who had expressed an interest in joining the Scotland VAPC as a co-opted member. Considering the contribution that the potential

member would make to the Committee's skills and expertise, the Committee agreed to consider co-option, and to invite them to the next meeting.

6. Annual Report

CC reiterated the background to the VAPCs' Annual Report, the Minister now will not expect a report till the end of March 2025. The Committee discussed the Annual Report, including what content specifically the Minister might desire for it to include, and what the Committee should do in order to inform its report. CC thanked members for their contributions, and suggested a working group to work on the Annual Report: to exist until March 2025, and which would report back regularly to the Committee. CC, KT, & JW volunteered as initial members.

7. Scottish Census Update

JW provided the Committee with an update on the data available from the Scottish Census, and stated that the first tranche of data relevant to the Committee's work would be released later in the week. JW noted that England and Wales' data had already been released, and that it would be valuable for the Committee to compare the data. The Committee concurred.

8. Members' Coverage

HS provided an update on the work to examine members' geographic positions, work and connections with the veterans and armed forces community, and involvement with NHS Boards and other health-related groups. HS stated that data from the consultation would be made available before the next meeting.

9. Armed Forces Compensation Scheme & War Pension Analytics

CC outlined a number of dynamics in the current processing of AFCS and War Pension claims, including the current processing time and steps being taken to improve upon it, as well as the effect of the new complaints procedure.

10. Expenses & Reimbursement

CC reiterated the importance of members filing expenses and reimbursement for costs incurred in their capacity as Committee members.

11. Future Meetings & Speakers

The Committee discussed future meetings, and possible speakers to invite. The proposed next meeting was the 27th of August, held in person at the HQ Poppy Scotland Boardroom, with an alternative date of the 3rd of September depending on members' availability. The following meeting of the Committee was decided to be held on the 19th of November, virtually, and the meeting after to be held on the 18th of February, in person.

12. AOCB

JW shared that The First Scottish International Conference on Armed Forces in Society was to be held in Edinburgh during August, and that there were a number of sponsored tickets available for veterans: JW asked if any Committee members would be interested in attending in this regard. Interested members were to contact JW, copying HS in. CC informed the Committee that she had been appointed to the Board of the Forces Pension Society.

Signed as true on 27/08/24, by Carolyn Caddick as Chair:

Carolyn Caddick

