

Scotland Veterans Advisory and Pensions Committee (VAPC) Meeting Minutes
Thursday 31st August 2023 (18:00-20:00), Held at Audrey Capital, 10 Coates Crescent,
Edinburgh, EX3 7AL.

Present in person: Carolyn Caddick, Chair (CC); Andrew Ward, Vice Chair (AW); Huw Sherrard, Secretary (HS); Laura Cox (LC).

Present online: Mike McCourt (MMcC); Kate Thomas (KT); Stuart Roberts (SRo); Sue Raw (SRa); Audrey Cuthbertson (AC); Alan Hamilton (AH); Iain Findlay (IF).

Apologies: Mark Logie (ML); Don Young (DY); Megan Brackley (MB).

1. Welcome & Apologies

CC welcomed members attending both virtually and in-person, and thanked AW for kindly agreeing to host the meeting and for providing refreshments.

2. Apologies

HS noted apologies he had received from members.

3. Minutes from Last meeting and Matters Arising

The Committee agreed the minutes of the previous meeting were accurate. CC noted that any matters arising would be covered by other agenda items.

4. Chair's Update

CC updated the Committee on a UK VAPC Chairs meeting held on the 4th of July 2023, and that CC was now a Vice Chair of the group tasked with representing the devolved nations. CC noted that the Special Interest Groups were looking for members. CC noted a number of Committee members involved in SIGs, and members described their experiences with them.

CC described the ongoing digitisation process of the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme and War Pensions Scheme, and members discussed their views on the processes for claims.

CC noted that the consultation for Veterans ID Cards had begun, but that VAPCs had not been utilised in the process. The Committee discussed the consultation, and potential hurdles for the scheme.

5. VAPC Member Recruitment

CC informed the Committee that the deadline for applications to join the Committee had been extended by three weeks, until the 19th of September 2023.

6. Update on VAPC Independent Review

CC updated the Committee on the Independent Review of VAPCs. A wider review of Veterans and the Armed Forces Community support was being conducted before any decision on VAPCs specifically would be made.

7. Internal Strategy Development

CC informed the committee that work on the Internal Strategy was ongoing.

8. Upcoming Meetings

CC noted a number of upcoming meetings and events, including a Covenant Conference to be held in Newcastle on the 14th of September 2023. AC asked for additional information regarding the on the

5th of September 2023. LC said that they would attend Highland Council's equivalent on behalf of the Committee, but that CC might be better placed to do so. CC agreed.

9. Upcoming Meetings

Jim Wilson had attended a Performance Data meeting on behalf of the Committee on the 28th of July 2023, and had sent out a summary to the Committee. CC noted that she was unable to attend the next meeting on the 22nd of September, and asked if any other members could attend. LC volunteered, if JW was unable to.

10. Members/Firm Base Updates

AH shared that there had been a meeting in West Lothian (Lothian Firm Base). The Armed Forces Champion was not present due to ill health. SRa shared information regarding the Association of War Widows' ongoing campaign. There had been some process since the last meeting: potential claimants can now lodge their interest, so that even if they predecease the roll-out of any initiative, their estate will still benefit. IF shared information about an upcoming Greater Glasgow meeting, which was largely virtual. IF asked if any other member might feel better placed to attend the group in lieu of himself. CC suggested that she could introduce herself to the next meeting of the group, and asked if IF would share her contact information. HS shared that there did not appear to be an interest in a formal Firmbase group for Clackmannanshire, although the Council remains enthusiastic and supportive of Armed Forces and veterans issues.

CC asked HS to action the geographic audit of members of the Committee, potentially before the next meeting, in relation to VAPC members attending Firm Base meetings and equivalents.

11. 2023 Annual Report

CC shared the progress made on the Annual Report, and noted that the Committee had responded positively to the draft. CC asked HS to distribute a final copy of the Scotland report to all Committee members for general information. CC also mentioned that some important amendments from a devolved perspective had been achieved in the drafting of the UK report. LC shared some other issues with a lack of devolved perspective for Armed Forces and Veterans' affairs.

12. AOCB

LC outlined their contact with Orkney Council, Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar, Perth and Kinross Council, and Shetland Council regarding Firm Base meetings. LC was still waiting on a reply from Shetland Council. AC shared that Lanarkshire was looking for a chair for the SAFFA committee, and that members should apply if Lanarkshire-based. CC noted that there was a new Head of Regional and Devolved Nations at the OVA. CC had not made contact yet, but was hoped to do so in the future.

13. Date of next meeting:

CC proposed a number of dates for online meetings in the coming months. Potential dates for future face to face meetings were discussed. SRo described the importance of maintaining virtual options to attend face to face meetings, which the Committee concurred with.

Signed as true on 30/11/23, by Carolyn Caddick as Chair

Carolyn Caddick

