

TO: PS/Min DPV

FROM: Head Veterans UK

13 December 2018

VETERANS ADVISORY AND PENSIONS COMMITTEES (VAPCs) ANNUAL REPORT

Issue

1. There is a requirement under The Veterans Advisory & Pensions Committees Regulations 2017, to report on the activities of the VAPC. This is done via annual reporting to the Head of Veterans UK, as the MOD sponsor team lead in DBS Veterans UK and summarised to Minister Defence People and Veterans.

Recommendation

2. Min DPV is requested to:
- a) Read the Annual VAPC Activity Report 2018 at Annex A.
 - b) Indicate that he is satisfied with the performance of the regional committees.
 - c) Indicate any areas where increased activity may be of benefit to veterans.

Timing

3. A response would be appreciated by 19 January 2019 please.

Background

4. All VAPC Chairmen and Members are appointed by Min DPV and, as such, Veterans UK as the Sponsor Department, has a duty to appraise Minister of the performance of the VAPC on an annual basis. The VAPC Chairmen prepare an annual report for Head of Veterans UK setting out their regional Committee's achievements over the previous 12 months and future goals. At the end of each calendar year Head of Veterans UK prepares a report on the performance of each Chairman and an overall report for Min DPV highlighting key outputs.

Presentational Issues

5. There are no presentational issues. However, as each Committee has its own web page their published activities are in the public domain.

Financial Implications

6. There are no financial implications.

Copy to:
CE/DBS
DH SP Support & Welfare
DBS Civ Pers Non-Standard Appts Manager

Veterans UK Support & Welfare DH
Veterans UK COS

Veterans Advisory and Pensions Committee – End Of Year Report 2018

The Veterans Advisory and Pensions Committee (VAPC) is an Advisory Non-Departmental Public Body which regulates its own business independent of the Ministry of Defence, to acknowledge regional differences particularly in the devolved administrations. The VAPC's main areas of responsibility are as follows:

Raise awareness, especially at local level of:

- i) The War Pensions Scheme,
- ii) Armed Forces Compensation Scheme,
- iii) The Veterans UK Welfare Service
- iv) The availability of cross government support to the Armed Forces, their families and Veterans.
- v) Act as advocates for implementing the Armed Forces Covenant and associated measures at a local level.

Provide support to the Ministry of Defence by acting as advocates for the implementation of cross government support to injured personnel, their dependents and veterans. Highlighting gaps or issues in provision and feeding these back initially through Veterans UK or any mechanism put in place by the service provider.

Understand the Welfare Provision Network in the local areas and assist Veterans and dependants in accessing local services as envisaged under the Armed Forces Covenant.

Support Veterans UK by performing a quality assurance role in respect of its Veterans' Welfare Service.

To act as a conduit for local consultation based on their involvement in the wider process and their contact with individuals in the local areas, with Ministers, the Ministry of Defence and Veterans UK on issues affecting recipients of pension from the War Pensions Scheme and Armed Forces Compensation Scheme.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

Representation at Armed Forces (AF) Forums as well as at key events such as AF Network/Champions events has helped to raise the profile, of not only the VAPC but of Veterans UK and the Compensation schemes that we administer. The VAPC has also been instrumental in some LAs reinvigorating flagging support for the Armed Forces Covenant (AFC). Yorks and Humber, with only 12 committee members, is represented on all 22 Local Authority (LA) AF Forums in its region. The Eastern region has also worked very hard in this area and has achieved full membership of all County AFC boards with the region. The North East Committee too, is highly respected amongst the 12 LAs in its region, so much so, that it is invited to take part in discussions regarding the allocation of Covenant funding to regional veteran's activities and groups. Engagement with all LAs is more problematic in other regions however. In the North West there are 43 LAs and the Chairman is working hard on plans for the sub-division of work in an attempt to overcome this issue.

In addition to fostering strong links with LAs, most regional committees have strong links with other service and welfare providers. The Welsh Committee has links into Cardiff Prison in support of the transition of military personnel. The Northern Ireland VAPC has collaborated with the Northern Ireland Veterans Support Committee to assist with the development of strategies for covenant implementation and other cross government support strategies. The West Midlands Committee has links with NHS Mental Health and the Probation Service and, through many of its Members, charitable organisations such as The Royal British Legion, SSAFA, Combat Stress and BLESMA.

Nationally, the VAPC has assisted many veterans and their families with issues such as housing, mental health and employment. Sometimes it is simply a matter of signposting someone to the correct organisation, occasionally issues are more complex and Committee Members may have to become more involved in arranging for the correct advice and assistance from various agencies and even visiting the Veteran and their family.

Some Committees have been involved in organising events in their regions. The West Midlands VAPC has held a Compensation/Pensions advice clinic for staff and clients at a West Midlands Warrior Programme event. The South East Committee facilitated the funding of and participated in the 8th Oxfordshire Veterans Forum with 65 people attending.

Other Committees have been involved in consultation, with the West of Scotland Committee providing input into reports for the Scottish Veterans Commissioner and reviewing reports on Veterans' Health and Wellbeing. Yorks and Humber have engaged with SSAFA and Help4Homeless on a homelessness study. The East Midlands Committee has been involved in regional reviews concerning housing and education.

FUTURE GOALS AND STRATEGIES

The London Committee plan to hold a free seminar in the near future with regard to LA housing policy best practice as it applies to Veterans in London. There has been interest so far from local authorities and service charities. London is also engaging with the Greater London Authority regarding the future appointment of an Armed Forces Champion. Although the GLA has signed up to the Covenant it does not have such a role.

The Welsh Committee will look to produce a report on how the AFC is working across Wales and will deliver their report to at the Armed Forces Champions Meeting and the Welsh Assembly Government.

SUMMARY

The VAPCs have had another strong year. They have become more firmly embedded in regional AFC Forums and in some areas are seen as leading voices on local Veterans Groups.

The VAPC has lost 3 of its regional Chairmen over the last 12 months including the Vice National Chair who took with him a wealth of experience and local knowledge.

The National Chair has also stood down from that position. There has however recently been an election to fill the positions of National/Vice National Chair and I am confident in the choices made of Kingsley Donaldson (Northern Ireland Committee) as National Chair and John Lighten (North West Committee) Vice National Chair. They have already been active in their new roles with Kingsley having represented the VAPC at the Veterans Customer Advisory Group and sitting on an interview panel for new regional Chairmen. John Lighten recently played a leading part in a training event for the new Chairman for the South West.

Andy Dowds

Head of Veterans UK