

**MINUTES OF THE EAST MIDLANDS WAR PENSIONS COMMITTEE**  
**MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 27<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2006**  
**AT AGE CONCERN, LEICESTER**

**Present:** Lt.Col. P M Poole MBE – Chairman  
Mr R Boyfield  
Mrs M Brailsford MBE  
Mr M Crew  
Mr C Harrison  
Mr D Heaps  
Mr G Hibbert  
Wing Cdr G M Matthews  
Mr K Meakin  
Mrs I Shiels OBE  
Mr R K Whaley

<b>In Attendance</b>	<b>Mrs P A Cox</b>	<b>Committee Support</b>
	<b>Mrs S D Rivington</b>	<b>Clerk to the Committee</b>

**1. WELCOME**

The Chairman welcomed members to the meeting.

**2. APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence had been received from Mr T Bryant, Mr C Fear and Major D H Harding

**3. DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest of a financial or pecuniary nature.

**4. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the previous meeting, having previously been circulated, were signed by the Chairman as a true and accurate record of the meeting held on 9<sup>th</sup> February 2006.

Proposed by: Wing Cdr G Matthews    Seconded by: Mr C Harrison

**5. MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETING**

Mrs Cox had been asked by Mr Bryant, why the WPC minutes are not appearing on the Agency website – this matter has been raised before. The minutes are sent to Matt Twidale at Norcross for input onto the website once they have been approved by the Committee – Matt Twidale has agreed to look into the matter.

<b>AP4 02/05 – Mobile Unit</b>	<b>Ongoing</b>
The Chairman feels that the Welfare Service and the Committee should be represented at the County Shows in the East Midlands area. Members were asked to provide information regarding the shows in their area this for consideration in 2007.	
<b>AP11 04/05 – Priority Treatment</b>	<b>Ongoing</b>
The Chairman advised that this subject had been discussed at the recent Chairman’s Conference. Dr Braidwood had confirmed that the Agency finds it extremely difficult to enforce, as it is left to the GP or Consultant to determine the level of priority, and is based on clinical need.	
<b>AP12 04/05 – Contact Local Regimental &amp; Ex-Service Organisations</b>	<b>Ongoing</b>
Members to continue to do this on an ongoing basis. They felt that to explain the role of the WPC would be rather onerous. A Factsheet on the role of WPC’s to be issued to each member.	<b>AP1 04/06 Clerk</b>
<b>AP3 07/05 – Copy Letters</b>	<b>Cleared</b>
<b>AP1 09/05 - Letters to members who have resigned</b>	<b>Ongoing</b>
Letters have still to be issued.	
<b>AP2 09/05 - Draft letter to Councils regarding Statutory Disregards</b>	<b>Cleared</b>
<b>AP3 09/05 - Guest Speaker – member of staff from AFPAA</b>	<b>Ongoing</b>
Mrs Cox advised that she had been unable to engage a speaker from AFPAA for this meeting.	
<b>AP4 09/05 – VA Procurement of Audiology Reports – copy letter to members</b>	<b>Cleared</b>
<b>AP5 09/05 - WPC Focal Point – copy letter to members</b>	<b>Cleared</b>
<b>AP1 02/06 – Contact to be made with previous panel case</b>	<b>Ongoing</b>
Further issues have been raised by the client, a copy of which has gone to Norcross for their response.	
<b>AP2 02/06 – Sight of discharge information from those discharged under the current scheme</b>	<b>Ongoing</b>
None available to date	
<b>AP3 02/06 – Article for Veterans World &amp; Ex-Service Magazines</b>	<b>Ongoing</b>
<b>AP4 02/06 – War Pensioner’s Report – copy to members</b>	<b>Cleared</b>
This report is available to members via the Internet. If any member would like a ‘paper’ copy (not glossy) would they advise the Clerk.	<b>AP2 04/06 Members</b>

**AP5 02/06 Information re attendance at Treatment Centres to members**

**Cleared**

Mrs Cox asked members if they wished to pursue this issue, regarding rates for reimbursement of travelling and subsistence expenses, with Norcross, following receipt of the information. A general discussion ensued and it was agreed not to pursue this matter any further.

**6. SUB GROUP REPORT - EVENTS**

Wing Cdr Matthews gave a report on the events arranged for 2006.

Lincolnshire – 13<sup>th</sup> July 2006 – visit and tour to the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight at Coningsby, followed by afternoon tea at the Petwood Hotel, Woodhall Spa.

Derbyshire – 21<sup>st</sup> September 2006 - visit including lunch to the National Memorial Arboretum at Alrewas. War Pensioners and War Widows from South Derbyshire, South Nottinghamshire and North West Leicestershire will be invited.

Mrs Shiels has yet to confirm a date for the North Derbyshire outing towards the end of September.

Northamptonshire – 29<sup>th</sup> November 2006 – Christmas Lunch at the Freemason's Hall, Northampton. War Pensioners and War Widows from Northampton, Towcester, Brackley and surrounding areas will be invited.

Nottinghamshire – 30<sup>th</sup> November 2006 – Christmas Lunch at the West Retford Hotel at East Retford.

Leicestershire – 6<sup>th</sup> December 2006 – Christmas Lunch at Devonshire Place, Leicester. This will follow the last meeting of the present East Midlands WPC to be held at 10.00am.

The Chairman thanked the sub-group members for their excellent work in arranging these events.

**7. CHALLENGE FUND / LOCAL VETERANS DAY FUNDING**

The Chairman advised members of information about these funds which was made available at the Plenary Forum. The Challenge Fund is a sum of £¾ million available annually for projects or research under the Strategy for Veterans published in March 2003. The Strategy aims to support Service personnel for return to civilian life, to support veterans where needed and to promote the recognition and status of veterans. A copy of this document is to be circulated to all members. The Local Veterans Day Funding is for financial assistance to support events held on or around 27<sup>th</sup> June 2006, which help to deliver the Veterans Day messages of how the veteran's community is so diverse, how veterans can be any age and how they have made and continue to make a major contribution to our nation, As applications for this funding had to be made by 12<sup>th</sup> May 2006, copies of these documents were made available to members at this meeting.

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Clerk**

## 8. SUB GROUP REPORT - RAISING AWARENESS

Mr Crew had recently represented the sub-group at a meeting of the Welfare Service Raising Awareness Group at Birmingham, taking with him all his ideas and items he had previously discussed at the last few meetings. These were well received both by Welfare Service representatives and members from VA Communications Team. Mr Crew has been invited to a meeting at Norcross to assist in the progression and updating of the website, as well as discussing other ideas and items for publicising the Veterans Agency, the War Pensioners' Welfare Service and the War Pensions Committees. The Chairman and members thanked Mr Crew for his continuing efforts to publicise the work of the Committee and the Agency. Mrs Cox had received comments from a member of the RAG team, thanking Mr Crew for his innovative ideas.

## 9. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Chairman gave detailed reports on his attendance at both the Plenary Forum in London and the Chairman's Conference at Blackpool.

**Plenary Forum** - Defence Services Secretary opened the meeting with an update on contemporary Veterans affairs. The following subjects were discussed:-

Veterans Badges – w.e.f 27/06/06 the qualifying date for application will be 31/12/1959. Badge applications are being dealt with on a 3 day turnaround by the NX staff.

Strengthening ties between the Services and the National Health Service.

Gulf War Syndrome

Monitoring of Servicemen in Iraq.

Prison Inreach – dealing with ex-servicemen who have become offenders.

Reaching out to the general public e.g. Veterans Day – 27<sup>th</sup> June annually.

Operational Update – 20% of the UK force are on deployment at all times – serving in 17 different countries.

Ongoing work with Coutts on work placement following service life – 96% who leave the Forces find employment within 6 months.

Continuing progress with 'early service leavers' – those who leave within 6 months of joining.

The Chairman requested that a copy of the 2005 Veterans Programme Progress Report be copied to all members.

Mr Heaps advised members that he had received an invitation to attend the 'Shadow' Plenary Forum on 14<sup>th</sup> May 2006.

**Chairman's Conference** – Wendy Stewart, Director of Corporate Services attended this meeting on behalf of Alan Burnham, Chief Executive, who is to retire at the end of June. The new Chief Executive will be Timothy Taylor – as a member of the CAC, Mrs Shiels had received a copy of his CV, which she duly read to the

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members.

The following subjects were discussed:-

Extension of the FEPOW ex-gratia payment

WPC Focal Point established

Armed Forces Compensation Scheme

Raising Awareness

WPWS/WPC Joint research initiative on homeless veterans

Medical policy update

WPWS update

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The Chairman requested that a copy of the Conference minutes be issued to members when received.

Mr Meakin raised a concern about the DN postcodes – copy of the Welfare area postcode list to be issued. He also raised the issue regarding eligibility to a War Widows Pension when an amputee has died of related heart problems – Hubrec Rhyder Theory. He felt that some Welfare Managers, especially those new to the Welfare Service, may be unaware of this information. This was considered to be a staff training issue and would be passed on to the Training Group.

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Clerk**

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Clerk**

## **10. VA / WELFARE REPORT**

AFCS- Your Compensation Scheme Explained – Addendum This is in addition to the copy of the booklet issued last year. Further copies can be supplied if required. The amendments have been updated on the Internet for anyone printing a copy.

TRAINING - Mark Crew attended a 'Children and Bereavement' training course last month at the Lucas Centre, Birmingham. There has been positive feedback from all attendees with Mark almost immediately putting his skills into practice. I know this course may not have been suitable for everyone but if the opportunity arises to invite members to other 'Best Practice' events I will contact all members.

STAFF RESOURCES – Nottingham WO is still understaffed and we are currently interviewing for a Welfare Advisor to work alongside the 6 Welfare Managers now in post.

Birmingham - Again the office is understaffed with 2 Welfare Managers currently on sick leave, both myself and Derek Hughes are taking on Welfare visits to maintain the quality service provided by the WMs. Interviews are also taking place for an Admin AO to work alongside Leigh Peplow the Regional Admin Manager. There have been no firm dates given for any changes to the Shropshire area. This is still being looked after by the Wrexham office.

WPC support- again no further information from Chief Exec's office re WPC support for this committee, However a meeting of support staff is being arranged for June. We understand this is to talk about Budgets and Reconstitution.

RECONSTITUTION - You will all have received your letters re application for another term on the East Midlands WPC. Your focal point at NX will oversee the exercise though it is believed that majority of the clerical work will be done locally. Appraisals for all members will

be completed by the Chairman.

INTERNET – The internet site has been revamped and easier access to the WPC site is being looked at - Matt Twidale has advised he is looking into this. Copies of minutes have been issued to NX but to date minutes are only available to July 2005 - this is being looked into. Mark Crew has highlighted certain problems, security issues to do with the Intranet site. You may not be aware the Intranet site is available for MoD staff only but Mark has been able to access various parts of this site. I have passed the information to IT security but have not heard anything to date.

FORWARD LOOK CALENDAR – I have taken a draft copy of the FLC for you to see This is a national log of events appearing on the Intranet site. Majority of events are logged in this way and it may be useful for members to see regular updated copies for any event that they wish to either support or help with.

CONTACT LIST – There is a new list out any member wishing to receive a copy please let us know. Any member that is not happy for their details to be given out in this way, please advise us, as we are able to delete the details at any time.

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CUSTOMER FOCUS GROUP – Attended by Richard London WA from Birmingham, the Chairman, Sue Turner and Erik Newman and myself. A mixture of pensioners, widows and a carer, with varying disablement percentages and ages attended. Many issues were discussed - letters and forms, Helpline, claims considerations and decisions, disregards, Priority Treatment, POCA, Raising Awareness and Veterans World. Notes from the meeting are now available.

NORCROSS VISITS – Another round are being arranged and if any members wish to go along your names will be given to Norcross, who will arrange dates and advise. Arthur Hibbert will be going to the next session. Course content will include: - Widows, AFCS, Gulf, Minor Scheme, Appeals, Treatment Allowance, Helpline/Welfare, CI, Supp Allow and Medical Advisers.

PUBLICITY DRIVE- A large campaign was run in Newcastle launched by the Minister, The event was based around a conference attended by the Minister and was the start of the 2 week publicity event. The Mobile unit visited Supermarkets etc and there were various stands, displays and advertisements across the area. Feedback from the campaign has been positive with increased calls to Helpline from the Newcastle area and many requests for help, Plans are being made to stage another event, possibly in the Midlands. The WPC will be asked to help and/or support the events, and I will advise you of venue etc when known.

RATES 2006 – The upratings are now in situ but to date we have not received printed leaflets of the new rates, I do have a draft copy if anyone wishes to obtain the rates let mw know. Leaflets have been received at the Nottingham office and will be distributed to members.

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STATE PENSION – DWP are inviting more and more electronic applications - State Pension being available by this method, At a training course the other day I was told DLA / AA claims are also available by this method.

## **11. VIDEO – REACHING OUT TO VETERANS – A PARTNERSHIP**

This short video, narrated by Simon Weston, had recently been produced for use in promoting partnerships.

## **12. REVIEW OF COMPLAINTS PANELS**

The issue is still ongoing with the client who requested the Committee' support for reimbursement of treatment for PTSD and digital hearing aids. Mrs Cox will draft a letter to this gentleman and will consult the Chairman before issue.

## **13. HOUSING DISREGARDS**

All letters have been issued to Local Councils, with approximately 50% replies being received to date. All Councils state that they disregard in full War Pension, including Unemployability Supplement and War Widows Pension. With regards to the AFCS payments – if Councils interpreted the legislation correctly, they would only operate the £10 statutory disregard in these cases.

## **14. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Wing Cdr. Matthews had received a letter from a local SSAFA member, complaining about a Medical Board he had attended. The Chairman agreed to respond to this letter and send a copy of his response to Wing Cdr. Matthews.

## **15. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The date of the next meeting is Thursday, September 7<sup>th</sup> 2006 at RAFA, Tornado Club, Melton Mowbray.

There being no further business the Chairman thanked members for their attendance and the meeting closed at 14.45p.m.