

# Social Security Act 1989

## North East War Pensions Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 2nd April 2008, at Kingston Park TA Barracks,  
Newcastle upon Tyne

### Present:

Paul Kingham (PK)

- Chair

John Heron (JH)

-Vice Chair

John Black (JB)

Major Brian Finlayson (BF),

Geoff Rossman MBE (JR)

Kevin Carter (KC)

Sheila Crosby (SC)

Peter Sinclair (PS)

Alisdair Watson (AW)

David Luke (DL)

Major E W Campbell (BC)

### In Attendance:

Mr Alan Heron (AH)

- Welfare Manager

Mrs Aruna Kapur (AK)

- Committee Clerk

**Copies of the order establishing the Committee and of Statutory Rules and Orders comprising the War Pensions Committee Regulations were tabled for the information of the members.**

Minute		Action Points
56.0	<u>Welcome</u> Chair welcomed all members and thanked them for attending.	
56.1	<u>Apologies for Absence</u> Apologies were received from, Michael Donne (MD), Michael Hindmarsh (MH), Tony Tatam (AT), Michael Fisher (MF) No apologies received from John Salisbury-Baker (JS-B), David Robson (DR), Jeff Lodge MBE (JL)	

57.0

**Minutes of the Previous Meeting held on 12.12.07**

The Minutes of the previous meeting were accepted as a true record and there were no matters arising.

58.0

**Members Appraisal**

Chair explained to members that the focal point has asked for appraisal forms following the format of appendix 9 to WPC Notes for Members to be completed for 2007. Although the notes do not specify a time frame for appraisals this would not appear unreasonable. The Chair advised he was in the process of completing appraisals as at 31 March, he explained the 'consultation' process and asked that members sign and return them in the envelope provided once this was complete.

59.0

**Chairs Report**

The chair reported to members on the following issues:

59.1

**Project Collins**

As a result of a comprehensive review of pension files, an error was discovered in the transfer of information between the then Veterans Agency and the then Armed Forces Personnel Administration Agency. In these cases, Armed Forces pensions in payment should have been adjusted over time, in line with the VA re-assessment of disablement for the purposes of the WPS.

Project Collins work identified a small number of instances of overpayment to pensioners. £1.7M was identified as having been overpaid and 98 pensioners were informed in early January 2008 of a reduction in, or cessation of, their pension entitlement. A case for write-off of these overpayments has been made to the Treasury the outcome of which is awaited.

59.2

**Adjustment to the rules for AFCS**

The Scheme rules were changed in February relating to compensation payments made to those with multiple injuries for a single incident. These changes enable higher awards to be made for the most serious multiple injury cases by accepting all injuries at the 100% tariff rate.

59.3	<p><b><u>VWS accompanied visits</u></b></p> <p>The protocol was agreed and it was intend to come into operation from 1 April 2008 however there had been some confusion and confirmation of implementation will hopefully be cleared up in the near future. Once we get the go ahead we will begin to undertake these visits in accordance with the protocol and with the agreement of the Welfare Officers.</p>	
59.4	<p><b><u>Increase in pensions w.e.f Mon 7 April 2008</u></b></p> <p>Increase in pensions wef Mon 7 April 0 – 3.9% in line with Retail Price Index.</p>	
59.5	<p><b><u>Stewardship Review</u></b></p> <p>The points submitted have been consolidated with those from other WPCs and interested parties. It is unlikely that any outcome will be announced for some time as this was only the first stage in the consultation exercise.</p> <p>The Committee endorsed the chairs view that we have a duty to ensure that the WPS is not devalued as a result of this review and that care must be taken to preserve some of the supplementary allowances for which there is no direct comparison in the Social Security system.</p>	
59.6	<p><b><u>CAC Review</u></b></p> <p>Copies of the consultation document were circulated by the clerk following the last meeting. The draft outcome of the review has now been received and interested members may obtain a copy from Aruna.</p>	Clerk
59.7	<p><b><u>WPC Familiarisation visits to Norcross</u></b></p> <p>Chair advised members that the 2 dates for familiarisation visits :</p> <p>16/6/08</p> <p>11/8/08</p> <p>and requested names of members who would like to attend.</p>	All

59.8

**CE announcement**

Alison Sansome assumed the responsibilities as Director Veterans Services from February 2008, following Tim Taylor standing down due to ill health. The committee wishes him a speedy recovery to full health.

59.9

**Mental Health**

Improvement in mental health service for veterans. Various documents have been circulated following introduction of a scheme to provide additional resources. The Chair welcomed any reports or feedback from members regarding the provision in the region and whether it's making a difference.

(The Chair will also make contact with Combat Stress to obtain their opinion of service provision in the NE)

Chair

60.0

**Welfare Services Update**

60.1

**Welfare Report**

TOTAL NO OF VISITS CARRIED OUT BY WELFARE MANAGERS FROM 13/12/07 TO 02/04/08.

**ALAN HERON**

TOTAL VISITS	89
NEW WIDOW	7

**JOHN FALCUS**

TOTAL VISITS	76
NEW WIDOW	9

**LIZ HIGHMOOR**

TOTAL VISITS	55
NEW WIDOW	5

60.2

**RAG Events carried out since last meeting**

25/2/08 Voluntary & Community Sector at Frankland Prison -Liz attended meeting to raise awareness of the work SPVA & VWS carry out.

Outreach Sessions at RAF Boulmer Operational site and the Hive attended on, by:

8/1/08 Alan Heron  
5/2/08 Alan Heron  
4/3/08 Liz Highmoor  
Alan Heron will be reviewing delivery at RAF Boulmer.

Vulnerable Service Leavers

Alan Heron has now taken up the role of Project officer for the VSL pilot. Liz Highmoor and John Falcus attend Catterick on request to offer their support, advice and information to the more vulnerable early service leavers. The project which started on 18/6/07 and review is ongoing.

Proposed Future Raising Awareness Events

Sat 26/4/08 -Presentation to SSAFA caseworkers at Northumbria University to be delivered by Liz Highmoor and John Falcus.

22/4/08 - Customer Forum will be held at the Dolphin Centre, Darlington. Representing the Agency will be Sue Turner [Head of Welfare] and Peter Hulme [Assistant Director of Operations], Liz Highmoor and Aruna Kapur.

Publicity Budget

We still have no further information on how raising awareness will be controlled in the future.

Newcastle Veterans Welfare Office move and Staffing

The VWS office has moved from Arden House to Wallsend Jobcentre Plus, Hadrian House on the 14 February 2008. Authority to recruit a casual to replace Trudy Taylor has now been received and the recruiting process is underway.

61.0

**Publicity and Raising awareness**

The Chair explained that after several successful initiatives the Committee had deliberately eased of on this area as there was a danger of overdoing various

aspects with the risk of losing some of the good will we enjoy. He suggested that the time is right to once again pick up the baton. In the first instance the sub committee should meet to agree objectives and means of achieving them.

- 61.1 Bill Campbell advised of the free entry to “**Veterans Day Event**” on 27 June 2008 at the RBL Club Forest Hall where a free Buffet will be provided and there will be a Raffle. This event is not being publicised as the venue can only accommodate a relatively small number of people.
- 61.2 BC advised of “**a night of entertainment & raffle**” held at RBL Club Forest Hall in aid of the Gurkha Welfare Trust on Saturday 3 May. [Tickets will be £3.00.].
- 61.3 Bill Campbell advised of a big event taking place in Newcastle on ‘**TA 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**’ on 10 May 2008.
- 61.4 AW raised concern there was not enough publicity and raising awareness in rural areas.
- 61.5 The chair canvassed members for ideas for this summer and for 2009 several suggestions were discussed.
- 61.6 The Committee authorised DL to go ahead with the planning for a raising awareness event targeted at those who would not have attended the Agency Sponsored event in Newcastle but who could in some way assist WPs in the region. Senior members of local councils, managers of medical trusts etc. Members are asked to provide details of potential invitees to DL but at this stage are not to discuss the event with them. It is anticipated that planning for the event will be complete before the next meeting and members will be kept in the picture by email/post, through the Chair.
- 61.7 AW rightly pointed out that bidding for resources, securing pitches and planning peoples time required a considerable lead in. Although members were asked to assist in determining priorities for this year last December there had been little input. It was agreed that members should come to the next meeting with any proposals for 2009, in order that appropriate timely action be taken.

62.0

**AOB**

62.1

AH informed the meeting that two senior officials from the SPVA will be attending the customer forum at the Dolphin Centre, Darlington on 22 April 2008. He asked members if they have any pensioners who would like to attend the forum and asked if they can pass their names directly to the Clerk.

62.2

PS Asked if members were aware of any possible affect on Pensioners 'Disregards' following the replacement of Housing Benefit by Local Housing Allowance (LHA) from 7 April 2008. He had been contacted by Age Concern in Cleveland regarding a War Pensioner who had been told by his Local Authority that they were unable to confirm whether or not War Pensions would be disregarded when calculating entitlement to LHA. Having noted that Jonathan Iremonger from the Veterans Policy Unit was going to speak about housing issues at the Chairs conference on 9 April 2008 PK stated that he would take the opportunity to pursue the question.

The next meeting will be held at the same venue on **Wednesday 6 August 2008 at 11.00 am.**

**There being no other business, the meeting closed at 13.15 pm.**