

SOCIAL SECURITY ACT 1989

SOUTH EAST WAR PENSIONS COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on Friday 8th June '07
British Legion Headquarters. Pall Mall. London.

PRESENT:

Mr D Wright - Chairman
Dr P Lawrence - Vice Chairman
Canon Bruinvels
Mr P Mumford
Brig. J Wilks
Mr M Bellwood
Mrs M Dunn
Mr M Bray
Mr John McLennan
Mrs R Campbell
Mr J Kemp
Mr D Dunks
Mr J Regan

IN ATTENDANCE:

Mrs Anne Da Rocha – Committee Clerk

The Statutory Rules and Regulations were tabled before the meeting.

MINUTE		ACTION
	<u>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</u> Lynn Gannon, Jo Bontoft, Feliks Puczyłowski	
	<u>MINUTES FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 2 Feb 07</u> The minutes of the previous meeting had been circulated prior to the meeting and agreed and signed by the Chairman.	

<p>14.</p>	<p><u>Raising Awareness Events</u></p> <p>John McLennan stated that the SPVA mobile Unit is unavailable for the Drumhead Service, and it was extremely short notice to be letting people down. SSAFA are organising a tent for the service.</p> <p>Canon Bruinvels has been awarded a grant for Lingfield Park, but there is no funding for the races. He was promised a grant from the SPVA of £6000, but when they realised a profit might be made due to charging, the SPVA cancelled with very short notice. The SPVA still however want them to continue with the “Hold the Front Page” Competition. Canon Bruinvels also requested badges to be awarded in the Cathedral, but received an unsigned letter from the Deputy Director of the SPVA turning this down.</p> <p>David Wills, Director General of the RBL has resigned. His successor was announced as Chris Simpkins.</p> <p>Dr Lawrence mentioned the Blenheim Palace event on 22 June, which is a major SSAFA event with helicopters and 3 Bands. Also noted that Bands are now being deployed, including the Royal Artillery Band, due to the overstretch of the Forces.</p> <p>David Dunks said the Folkestone June 30th event, although small and efficient, had to be cancelled due to demands of 2 councils on insurance, road licence, whether roads would accept military vehicles etc.</p> <p>John Wilks said it is very disappointing to be let down by the SPVA so late, when money has already been put into advertising etc. Organisations are expected to supply information at very short notice, but the SPVA can take forever to reply to any communication. The Canon was told the earlier the application, the earlier the reply.</p> <p>The Committee wishes these points on short notice cancellations to be noted by SPVA and a full reason given as to why this occurred.</p> <p>Lynn Gannon will be attending an event at Southsea Common on 7/8 July and at Southport, all invited.</p>	

15.

Priority Treatment

John McLennan, Canon Bruinvels and Michael Bray attended a two day Royal British Legion Welfare Conference in Milton Keynes, and it was evident not much is known on Priority Treatment. All service Charities are now working in partnership to promote this. John Kemp was tasked with writing to every PCT, and has written to every Chief Executive, and has since visited Ashford and West Sussex. East Kent PCT has since written a personal letter to each one of their GP's explaining Priority treatment. Only Kent Mental Health Trust never replied and then said nothing to do with them. John was praised for his work and has achieved more in 2 months than Norcross has in 5 years. It was asked if he could consolidate all the responses with dates from each area, into a report to be sent to all members and Norcross.

It is not clear how each PCT works. It is usually the consultants who make the clinical decision depending on a patient's condition. However this will not work if the GP's do not even know that the War pensioner should have priority treatment over anyone who has the same or lesser need. John Regan stated that it is the clerical staff who actually make the decision if a cancellation comes through, and how would they know if it is a War Pensioner. Many are still paying for their prescriptions. Malcolm Bellwood hands out copies of the PT letters to all his clients, but agrees it is not easy to monitor. People are ill informed, and it does not mean they go to the top of the queue automatically. As Dr Anne Braidwood said, it is Priority Treatment not Preferential Treatment. This does not include War Widow's and is only relevant for the accepted disablement. This is being re-looked at in the SAM system (Sickness Absence Management).

16.

Selly Oak

Many GP's have never heard of Selly Oak or Combat Stress. Some ex-servicemen have been out for 8-9 years, alcoholics and drug-users and do not know of these places, and may not be War pensioners. John Regan usually finds problems manifest themselves between 6-8 years. John McLennan's figures show the average time it takes for a client to contact Combat Stress is usually about 11 years. York University have also done research and found people usually become homeless at the 12-year point. John Kemp said that Kent

<p>17.</p>	<p>County Council give priority housing to the vulnerable and the military. Ashford have also come on board with this, but all local authorities should provide this. Malcolm Bellwood stated that research is still ongoing at UCL on “Delayed Onset/ Presentation Research”. Also details of the help available to the TA under the Mental Health scheme are on the MOD website. John Kemp was told there is no record of anyone hurt in the Reserves, whether TA or not. SSAFA do not know either. These disappear into a black hole after leaving, and it is left to them to contact someone for help once in civilian life. John Wilks knows of 2 PWRR discharges from Iraq, who were not seen by anyone, and had no point of contact even from regimental HQ’s. So for the AFCS scheme, where a claim has to be made within 5 years, most servicemen would be out of time with this. It was also mentioned that 3 Senior Serving NCOs have backed up concerns as to why more people are not claiming under the AFCS scheme, because there is a belief that this will affect promotion prospects. Norcross will not accept this.</p> <p><u>Chairman’s Conference</u></p> <p>David unfortunately missed the first day of the conference, the first since the newly formed SPVA. The question on the role of the War Pension Committee’s came up, and still at a loss to define what is the major role of the Committee’s. We are still pushing for the monitoring role of the SPVA, and through this can effect policy change, but this is still on the desk for discussion. IT was felt by the Committee that it is taking too long to get responses from Norcross on roles and support to Committees.</p> <p>John McLennan quoted the role of the WPC from the Handbook notes, Monitoring, Publicity and Complaints, and stated that a budget should be given to help in raising awareness. This was applied for in February, but still awaiting a response.</p> <p>The Committee has the right to write to Minister directly though it was requested that this be done through the SPVA. David did so recently but received a reply from Norcross, not from the Minister. The reply did not answer the questions asked nor was there any acknowledgement that the Minister had seen the letter.. Subsequent letters from Norcross were not dealt with in a professional or courteous manner.</p>	
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<p>18.</p>	<p>At a past Conference it was stated there was no conflict of interest in representing War Pensioners at Tribunals, but this has since changed. Members can represent people in our Charitable Capacity or as private individuals but not as Committee members. In the past Committee members could obviously deal with panel cases. However, most of these types of cases are now dealt with at Pension Appeal Tribunals. It is therefore logical that members should now be able to represent at Tribunals. There are now 4 Chairman on the Central Advisory Committee. The WPC Chairmen's Conference is a sub-committee of the CAC. There is a lot of expertise, amongst the Chairmen and Committees, including most ex-Service organisations, RAFA Ben fund, Combat Stress, SSAFA, RBL, Cavalry Regiment Association, BLESMA, etc, but what is actually being achieved by the Committees outside of members charitable roles is not clear.</p> <p>It was suggested that we all send thoughts on the role of the Committee to David, who will consolidate these views.</p> <p>About 5 years ago, there used to be regular visits from Management at Norcross. This seems to have fallen by the wayside. Can we also ask Chrissie or Sandra, the WPC Focal points to a future meeting.</p> <p>It was felt that the recent success of the Committee's letters on Priority Treatment to PCTs in the SE should be acknowledged by Norcross. We would be amenable to use one of our meetings to present the methodology to Management.</p> <p>John Kemp also deserves acknowledgement for his work on Priority Treatment.</p> <p>Patrick Lawrence has volunteered to attend the next Chairman's conference in September as David is away.</p> <p><u>Training</u></p> <p>David is still looking into the Training package, which is taking too long to get any action. All the information has been sent to Norcross, and asked for a reply by the end of July, so the discs can be sent out, and to liase with the London Committee for a joint training day.</p> <p>If at the next Chairman's Conference, this has not yet been resolved, this could lead to the demise of the Committee's as the Chairman are getting very demoralised.</p> <p>On the Veterans website, the page on the Role of the SPVA is very informative, about where to get medals etc.</p>	
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<p>19.</p>	<p><u>Hospitals</u></p> <p>Military hospitals have been closed, as the services contract so showing there is no demand for them. There used to be a number of them such as Frimley Park Military Ward. One Southampton Consultant has not had a referral from HASLAR in six months.</p> <p>John Wilks said there is a very high turnover of staff at hospitals, 2 years is usually a long time. At Ashford Hospital, 300 beds have been taken out, when the population is still growing. There is a waiting list to see a consultant, even before the 18-week target list. Some people are even waiting 52 weeks. The stats are just enhanced.</p>	
<p>20.</p>	<p><u>Quality Control Questionnaire</u></p> <p>This was sent to all War Pensioners, War Widows and Charitable organisations as to how the SPVA is doing. What was the purpose of this? Will probably reflect in the next Business plan. Targets need to be realistic, saving time, but efficient at the same time. It is currently 30 working days for straightforward claims. However it is the medical policy decisions, which are very slow.</p>	
<p>21.</p>	<p><u>ID Cards</u></p> <p>ID cards have not even been started yet. Chrissie to chase up if nothing heard in two weeks.</p> <p>The next meeting to be held at Portsmouth, change of venue.</p> <p><u>Dates for next meeting</u></p> <p>14 Sep 07 Portsmouth 30 Nov 07 RBL</p>	

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