

SOCIAL SECURITY ACT 1989

SOUTH EAST WAR PENSIONS COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON FRIDAY 14TH MARCH 2008 AT RNBT CASTAWAY HOUSE PORTSMOUTH.

PRESENT:

Mr D Wright - Chairman
Dr P Lawrence - Vice Chairman
Mr P Mumford
Brig. J Wilks
Mrs M Dunn
Mrs R Campbell
Mrs J Bontoft
Mrs L Gannon
Mr M Bray
Mr J Kemp
Mrs J Hobbs

IN ATTENDANCE:

Mrs C Parsonage – SPVA VWS Regional Welfare Manager
Mrs A Da Rocha – Welfare Manager High Wycombe
Mrs L Davis – Committee Clerk

The Statutory Rules and Regulations were tabled before the meeting.

OPENING REMARKS	ACTION/ RESPONSE
<p>The Chairman opened the meeting, he introduced Lorraine Davis who has recently taken over as Clerk to the Committee, and thanked Anne Da Rocha for the work she had undertaken whilst in the role of Clerk. He also welcomed Claire Parsonage Regional Welfare Manager for the area covered by this Committee.</p> <p>The Chairman then introduced Mrs Joy Hobbs who is considering joining the Committee as a co-opted member.</p> <p>ITEM 1 APOLOGIES</p> <p>1. Apologies were received from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Canon P Bruinvels• Mr J McLennan• Mr J Regan• Mr D Dunks <p>ITEM 2 - DECLARATION OF INTEREST</p> <p>2. The Chairman reminded members that should anything be discussed at the meeting which might constitute a conflict of interest between their personal or business life and WPC business, they should declare it at the outset.</p> <p>ITEM 3 - MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING</p> <p>3. Para 36 - the Chairman advised that it is hoped to arrange a joint training event</p>	

<p>with the London WPC, the focus will be on how to advise clients on the process of Pension Appeals Tribunals (PATs). Jo Bontoft offered to provide training from a legal aspect and Claire Parsonage from a welfare perspective.</p>	
<p>4. The Chairman briefed on a meeting, attended by representatives of various ex-Service organisations, and held to discuss ways of standardising the approach when supporting Veterans through the PATs process. However, because of differences in ways of working, due mainly to insufficient resources, it is not possible to adopt a standard procedure. A protocol agreed by ex-Service charities to assist tribunal representatives, has been produced; a copy of which will be sent out with these minutes. The RBL have agreed to fund training for tribunal representatives where it is required.</p>	Clerk
<p>5. John Wilkes has been involved with a case where a client had been unable to attend a PAT due to illness. The Chairman said that there is an option to postpone the appeal by notifying the tribunal that a client is unable to attend. John Kemp asked how to proceed when a case is lost following appeal, the Chairman explained that there is a right of appeal only when it involves a 'point of law'. Where a client is unable to attend due to incapacity there is an option to request a domiciliary hearing. It is hoped that the agreed protocol will assist in providing guidance with addressing these scenarios.</p>	
<p>6. Para 38 - the Chairman advised that the 3 minute film has not yet been released.</p>	
<p>7. Para 39 - the Chairman said that he has not yet received any feedback from the paper he had submitted on the subject of the Review of the War Pension Scheme. However, it is unlikely that the review will take place before 2010.</p>	
<p>8. Para 40 - there are only a small minority of local authorities who do not disregard War Pensions when calculating Housing benefit and Council tax payments. The Clerk will try to identify if there are any councils in the South East region who do not disregard. John Kemp will enquire what the policy is in West Sussex.</p>	John Kemp/Clerk
<p>9. Para 41 - The Chairman asked that the information produced by the Army Welfare Service be re-sent as not all members had received a copy.</p>	John Regan
<p>10. Para 43 - John Kemp said that he had received a response from the Kent Mental Health Trust who informed him that GPs are aware of the policy but Mental Health patients do not always tell their GPs they are Veterans.</p>	
<p>ITEM 4 - RECRUITMENT</p>	
<p>11. The Chairman explained the main criteria when joining a War Pensions Committee. He said that in order to prevent Committee numbers falling below the minimum requirement it had become necessary to recruit new members. As re-constitution is due to take place next year, he will, in the interim be co-opting new members with particular focus on those with Mental Health knowledge. A number of names have been put forward and he will be contacting them in due course. Clerk to send 4 recruitment packs to the Chairman.</p>	Clerk
<p>ITEM 5 - EXPANSION OF PRIORITY TREATMENT SCHEME</p>	
<p>12. The Health Service Guidelines and Department of Health letter will be circulated with these minutes.</p>	Clerk

<p>13. Michael Bray commented that Health Authorities in Scotland have agreed a protocol on the subject. The Chairman asked for a copy of the protocol to take to the next meeting of the Chairman of the WPCs.</p> <p>14. John Kemp provided details of a successful Priority Treatment case that he had been involved with, the Chairman said that successful cases are rarely reported.</p> <p>ITEM 6 - PANEL CASE</p> <p>15. The Chairman briefed on visits he had undertaken to ascertain whether they may be possible panel cases. He went on to say that in general these days they are complaints by clients and as such should be dealt with by the complaints procedures which Norcross has in place. He said that any complaints in the South East region should be routed through him. When a complaint does not involve the SPVA, clients should be 'signposted' in the right direction.</p> <p>16. Claire Parsonage gave an overview of how cases are processed, and difficulties that may be encountered. However, in proportion to the number of cases dealt with by the Agency the number of complaints is a small percentage of the total.</p> <p>ITEM 7 - AOB</p> <p>17. Patrick Lawrence raised the issue of Veterans Week, saying that the government is keeping the event in the public eye and currently there are 15 events taking place around the country. The Chairmen added that the main thing from the Committees point of view is to support local events.</p> <p>18. Claire Parsonage explained that Councils have until the 31 May 2008 to apply for a grant (up to £10,000) to support the event locally; she gave examples of some of the events planned by different councils. The flagship event this year will take place in Blackpool. Details of events taking place across the country can be found on the Veterans UK website</p> <p>19. Lyn Gannon invited members to attend the Veterans weekend to be held at Trowbridge on 28/29 Jun 08, with the Royal Naval Benevolent Trust in attendance on both days.</p> <p>20. John Kemp commented that following visits that he has made to Veterans who are in prison, there does not seem to be much support for Mental Health prisoners on release. The Chairman said that SSAFA have a process in place to support ex-prisoners.</p> <p>21. The Chairman said he has applications forms for Veterans who wish to put their names forward for an invitation to attend a Garden Party at Buckingham Palace. It should be noted that the invitations are for Veterans only, they can however be accompanied by carers.</p> <p>22. The Chairman provided details of the review of the Tribunal Service being undertaken by the Department of Constitutional Affairs. The Chairman stated that he has submitted a paper identifying his concerns; these include the possibility of there no longer being a military presence at tribunals; and the suggestion that administration may be de-centralised. Michael Bray added that COBSEO and SSAFA are also lobbying for a continued Military presence at tribunals.</p> <p>23. John Wilks enquired about medical expertise at tribunals; the Chairman</p>	<p>Michael Bray</p>
--	---------------------

explained that a medical examination is rarely undertaken on the day. A discussion followed, on the process of how medical examinations are conducted including how questions are answered regarding conditions and the opportunity to appeal the outcome of a medical.

24. The RBL are holding a Veterans Race day on the 1 July 2008 at Lingfield Park, Derek Twigg MP Minister for Veterans will be in attendance.

ITEM 8 - CLOSING REMARKS/ARRANGEMENTS FOR NEXT MEETING

There being no further business the Chairman closed the Meeting at 12:50, the next meeting will be held at 11:00 on 13 June 2008 at Aborfield.