

SOCIAL SECURITY ACT 1989

SOUTH EAST WAR PENSIONS COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on Friday 30th Nov '07
British Legion Headquarters, Pall Mall, London.

PRESENT:

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

IN ATTENDANCE:

Mrs A Da Rocha – Committee Clerk

The Statutory Rules and Regulations were tabled before the meeting.

MINUTE		ACTION/ RESPONSE
	<u>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</u> Jo Bontoft, Peter Bruinvels, Malcolm Bellwood, Lyn Gannon	
	<u>MINUTES FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 14 Sept 07</u> The minutes of the previous meeting had been circulated prior to the meeting and agreed and signed by the Chairman.	

<p>35.</p>	<p><u>Feliks Puczyłowski</u></p> <p>A minutes silence was called in remembrance of fellow member Feliks, following his death on 9 Nov 07. David Wright, Michael Bray, Dr Lawrence, Kath Wilson and Anne Da Rocha had attended the funeral in High Wycombe on behalf of the committee. David spoke of his eventful life, how he was taken prisoner by the Soviets, how he joined the Polish-Soviet division, spent time in Rhodesia, was a teacher of Biology, and left behind 3 daughters and one son.</p>	
<p>36.</p>	<p><u>Matters Arising from last Minutes</u></p> <p>Item 23, requesting someone from Senior Management to attend a future meeting. The VA Director, Tim Taylor is currently on long-term sick. Senior Management are very busy with the new Agency. A meeting may be organised at Headley court in the future and Chrissie or Sandra invited to attend.</p> <p>Item 24, Jack Hargreaves has been ill, but hopefully a training date will be arranged very soon.</p> <p>Item 28, the AFCS scheme, payment for the first serious 3 conditions only, is to be superseded. Future claims will take into account all injuries, but award still capped at £285,000 + GIP. Legislation will not be retrospective, but every case since April 5 2005 will be reviewed. However the 5 year claim period still does not cover late-onset conditions eg Mesothelioma, although the WP scheme still covers these. At the start, it was stated that periodic reviews would be made, and they will continue to review if specific cases brought to their attention. GIP will also be reviewed every 2 years. The SPVA have acknowledged that a lot of claims are not being made due to fear of affecting career prospects, however, the 5-year cut-off should prompt them to do this. The Chain of Command in each Service need to educate their Service personnel that they will not be penalised for making a claim.</p> <p>The Committee was concerned that troops going out to Afghanistan are being advised to obtain and sold life insurance about 3 weeks before they go out or the premiums are increased, as they are told if anything</p>	<p>David to liase with Jack</p>

	<p>happens to them the MoD payout is very low. It is of concern that psychiatric problems may be the biggest issue, and is not being addressed with sufficient urgency. The Committee believes that people are dropping through the net because the regimental organisations are not being sufficiently used.</p> <p>We also need to highlight any action points from the Minutes as these are not being read, and ask for the Focal Point to pass these on to the relevant parties.</p> <p>37. <u>Norcross Visit</u></p> <p>David visited SPVA for 3 days at the invitation of the RBL (under his RAFA hat). He visited most Departments. David got a strong feeling of commitment from the staff and middle management to provide as much support to the Service and Veterans personnel. He was also pleasantly surprised at the knowledge of the WPC by each Department especially the Helpline often signpost enquiries to WPCs. However, there is too much business speak and statistics talk etc from Senior Management. No-one seems to mention welfare.</p> <p>David hopes to attend the next RWM meeting.</p> <p>38. <u>Media Awareness</u></p> <p>There is a 3 minute film to be brought out in Cinema's, which is very moving and catchy, that links the 18 year old to the 80 year old in the Services Community, and which will remind the general public of the Covenant. Not sure of the release date, and whether this is Copyright, or can be shown on the website.</p> <p>The Poppy Appeal has also done much better this year, more younger people contributing, much more generous and bigger crowds for all events everywhere. This year's posters were also better and more effective.</p> <p>David recently attended a 6th Form Conference and was very surprised at the awareness of current Service problems. John Kemp mentioned too that at the War Graves in France there are school parties attending every day.</p> <p>The RBL also works the schools, getting kids to select</p>	<p>Can Focal Point ensure this film is issued to all WPCs</p>
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	<p>a headstone and then back at school giving the reason for their choice. The RBL are running trips to the Memorial at the Arboretum in Staffordshire</p> <p>John Regan however did 4 military briefings to 600 personnel, and not one knew of AFCS, and the 5-year claim rule.</p>	
<p>39.</p>	<p><u>Review of WP Scheme</u></p> <p>David has received a confidential email from the Minister about a review of the WP scheme. Trying to get first impressions and then come up with a consultation process to review the scheme, which is believed to be costly in time and resources. This suggests that Supplementary Allowances will be taken away and dealt with by the DWP. Appeals would therefore go before Social Services Tribunals instead of Pension Appeal Tribunals. The Committee's concern was that there would be no military experience on the tribunals hearing these cases. Pre-73 widows would be brought in line with all other widows. There will probably be a cut-off date for WP claims, and then everything will come under AFCS. David's views on this will be forwarded.</p>	<p>Focal Point please note this should be pointed at relevant Dept</p>
<p>40.</p>	<p><u>Council Disregards</u></p> <p>A small minority of Local Authorities are still not disregarding War Pensions. They need to be reminded of this. All Local Authorities currently disregarding should be informed that the same disregard should apply to AFCS Pensioners too.</p>	<p>Focal Point please forward minutes to relevant Department</p>
<p>41.</p>	<p><u>Medical Cases</u></p> <p>Patrick voiced concern that the quality of medicals to assess injuries in lots of discharge cases is very thin. Medical Boards are quite good, but still a postcode lottery. The NHS no longer trains Doctor's; they only learn once in post, the nurses do most of the work these days. The new modern Doctors may not be well versed with veterans. A large proportion of decisions are made by a SPVA layperson, not medical, who deal with tick box forms, and not qualified to assess cases.</p>	

<p>42.</p>	<p>John Regan has information on the Army Welfare Service system for medically discharged cases, which he will circulate to all members.</p> <p>David gets statistics on clearance times and quarterly returns. It is currently 30 working days to clear a claim. The WPC have made a point that accuracy must be maintained, a proper decision made and not just a race to meet targets.</p> <p><u>VWS Monitoring Protocol</u></p> <p>This Protocol is different to what David had seen originally. 2 other Chairmen have agreed with David that this should not be a Management tool, but a quality Auditor. Also the VWS management will chose who we can visit. David has agreed with the Regional Welfare Manager that we will continue as we are. Any complaint will be liased with the RWM and investigated. Complaints, visits and panels seem to have dried up, maybe because we are offering a more personable, cost-effective service in the South East. The Happy Faces form has a WPC awareness question. Most old Panel cases are now answerable at the Pensions Appeal Tribunal, so we no longer need to do a report, just sign-post customers to go to the tribunal David is available to advise on suitability of appealing to PAT. If a client is properly advised what to put on Appeal papers, more evidence and a reasoned argument, the decision can sometimes be reversed before it goes to tribunal.</p>	<p>John Regan to circulate</p> <p>David to send out next Quarterly statistics</p> <p>David to issue papers</p>
<p>43.</p>	<p><u>Access to Health Services</u></p> <p>A letter from Hull Teaching PCT Board informing important changes around access to services for military veterans was circulated to all members. This needs to be widened to all PCT's as it is very good. John Kemp will take this forward. He has heard from all except Kent Mental HealthTrust. John will forward his report on Treatment of Ex-Servicemen by the NHS, to all members once replies received.</p>	<p>John Kemp to collate Report</p>

44.	<p><u>Co-Opting new Members</u></p> <p>Michael Bray has changed jobs, and is now working for COBSEO. His successor is interested in being co-opted. Dr. Lawrence also knows a retired orthopaedic surgeon who could be a possible future member.</p>	
45.	<p><u>Age Concern</u></p> <p>Age concern have produced a very good free booklet which can be handed out to clients ' Can I claim it' and 'About Benefits'.</p>	
46.	<p><u>CNO/VO</u></p> <p>Michael stated that the Army have discovered large numbers of Servicemen are returning from Afghanistan, which they cannot cope with, so they have asked the regimental associations to help out with Casualty Notification Officers, and Visiting Officers, but need training.</p>	
47.	<p><u>Committee Clerk</u></p> <p>A new Committee Clerk has recently been appointed to deal with the SEWPC and London Committee, Lorraine Davis who will be based at Havant WPWO, and has a lot of previous experience in committee work. Anne will hand over to her once her training is complete.</p> <p><u>Dates for next meeting</u></p> <p>Friday March 14th RNBT Portsmouth</p> <p>Friday June 13th TRBL Aborfield</p> <p>Thursday Sept 11th Headley Court?</p> <p>Thursday Dec 4th Chatham</p>	

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