

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE WEST MIDLANDS WAR PENSIONS
COMMITTEE HELD ON TUESDAY 21 AUGUST 2007 AT WPWO, FIVE WAYS
HOUSE, BIRMINGHAM
AT 11.00 AM**

Present: Mike Burrows BEM - Chair
Bob Belding MBE
Margaret Britton
Harold Canning MBE
Fred Davies
Edward Drake
Gerald Fairbrace
Ken Fisher
Ray Griffiths
Gary Kibblewhite
Brian Lenthall
Stan Taylor

In Attendance: Maria Godfrey – Clerk to the Committee

STATUTORY RULES AND ORDERS

Copies of the Statutory Rules and Orders were tabled for the information of members.

1. WELCOME

The Chair welcomed all members to the meeting. He voiced his appreciation of the continuous good attendance and thanked all the members for their commitment.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from John Atherton, Derek Johnson, Mike Morris and Denis Tideswell.

3. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

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

4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Chair signed the minutes of the previous meeting, having been circulated in advance, as a true and accurate record of the meeting held on 22 May.

Proposed by –Fred Davies, Seconded by –Bob Belding.

Matters Arising:

Although the Action Point relating to disabled parking was cleared at the last meeting, Margaret Britton stated that the matter is still on going. As local laws apply the police cannot enforce keeping parking bays free. It could be many years before any amendments are brought in.

5. REVIEW OF ACTION POINTS

a) Consultation

b) Raise Awareness

AP1 08/06 Disregard Letters

Ongoing

Maria Godfrey will prepare disregard letters to be sent out in November 2007. It was agreed that the eight councils who did not reply to our request for information last time, be reminded of their non-response.

**AP1 08/06
Clerk/Members**

c) Support and Monitor the work of the War Pensioners' Welfare Service

AP2 02/05 WM Job Shadowing

Ongoing

Some members have still not heard about making accompanied visits. Members present wishing to visit are; Ken Fisher, Ray Griffiths, Gerry Fairbrace, and Bryan Lenthall. Stan Taylor asked if he too might be considered, although he had visited some time ago.

AP2 02/05

The Chair pointed out that recent staff changes at the Birmingham WPWO might have made it difficult for arrangements to be made. Members can contact WPWO Birmingham direct to request an accompanied visit.

AP2 02/07 Veterans Awareness Events

Cleared

Seven members of the Committee helped during the recent celebrations in the West Midlands. Emails have been received from the Welfare Managers expressing their personal thanks to everyone for their time and hard work.

Stan Taylor said that he was very disappointed at the lack of coverage by the local media to events that were held in the suburbs. The Chair said that he would pass on these concerns.

**AP1 08/07
Chair**

d) Assist Individual War Pensioners and War Widows

e) General Action Points

AP1 08/04 Member's Handbook

Ongoing

The revised print of Part 1 of the Handbook to be distributed to members. Although the reprint of Part 2 has been issued to the WPC Chairs and Clerks, it was subsequently found to be incorrect. The correct version will be distributed when

received. The Clerk will obtain new binders for members requiring them.

AP4 08/05 Guest Speakers

Ongoing

Leesa McInnes will be attending today to speak about her work with the Army Welfare Service.

Margaret Britton passed on the name of a contact with the Community Safety Bureau, part of West Midlands Police, Debbie Pritchett. She may be willing to speak at a future meeting.

**AP4 08/05
All members**

AP4 11/06 Pen Picture

Cleared

The Chair is pleased to report that all Pen Pictures for the West Midlands are up to date on the website – apart from Margaret Britton's. She was requested to pass her details to the clerk. Thanks were given to WPC Clerk for ensuring that the Website is kept updated.

AP4 05/07 BBC Programme – The Forgotten Soldier

Bob Belding advised that he had contacted the BBC but they cannot trace any such programme going out on their network. Gerry Fairbrance confirmed that it was shown on BBC2. Bob to make further contact.

**AP4 05/07
Bob Belding**

AP5 05/07 Distribution of Information from Website

Cleared

Sub Group Action points

AP1 05/07 - Final Invitation Letters to Cosford

Cleared

AP2 05/07 – Provisional Booking of Christmas Event

Cleared

AP3 05/07 – Invitation Letters for All members to Christmas Event

Ongoing

6. SUB GROUP REPORT

Cosford Summer Outing - 3 July 2007

Although 100 invitations were sent only 55 positive replies were received. On the day 46 pensioners/widows joined the committee for a memorable day. Harold Canning has written to Cosford thanking them for their care and attention and for providing knowledgeable guides.

Maria Godfrey said that she had received a number of letters and telephone calls thanking the WPC for arranging the event. Pat Cox has made a number of new contacts. She and Linda Smith have expressed their thanks at being invited to join the event.

Christmas Event

A provisional booking has been made for 120, on Friday 14

December 2007 at the Village Hotel, Walsall. Coffee/tea will be provided on arrival at 11.00am and the lunch will be served at 12 o'clock.

The theme for the lunch is 'Young at Heart' and the dining room will be shared with another party of 60. The hotel is organising a bingo session for both parties. They will also provide chocolates and biscuits for a raffle. The Chair said that we need to restrict the raffle to just a few prizes otherwise the draw will take too long. Details will be worked out at a sub group meeting to be held on **Monday 29 October 2007 at 11.00am.**

Bob Belding will prepare badges to identify our party members. The Chair said that as we need 120 guests, we might need to target a wider area. Harold Canning has asked to accompany Bob to the hotel.

The Chair reminded the Clerk that letters of invitation should be sent all committee members.

Gary Kibblewhite proposed a vote of thanks to the sub committee for working so hard to organise this event.

All members unanimously seconded this.

7. TREASURER'S REPORT

	£
Previous Balance as at 24/04/07	991.50
Income	2429.00
Expenditure	749.00
Balance as at 20/08/07	2671.50

The Benevolent Funds have responded to our requests for donations in support of our Raising Awareness Events as follows:

RAF Benevolent Fund	144.00
Not Forgotten Association	1200.00
Army Benevolent Fund	1000.00

The Mayor of Sandwell has donated £75.00 and the Mayor of Dudley is also to send £75.00. The Mayor of Wolverhampton is unable to make a donation but has passed on our request to their Adult Services. There has been no response from the Mayor of Walsall. Stan Taylor has offered to make further enquiries on behalf of the Committee.

The expected expenditure for the Christmas Event is £1710.00.

**Sub group
AP1 08/07 Bob
Belding/Harold
Canning**

**Sub group
AP3 05/07
Clerk**

**Sub group
AP2 08/07
Stan Taylor**

Bob Belding also advised that he has invited all contributors to attend any event held by the West Midlands WPC.

Fred Davies, on behalf of all the Committee members, thanked Bob Belding for his work in obtaining funding.

8. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Lots of information was passed to members in the form of photocopied documents. These were:

CAC Minutes of the last meeting held 19 June 2007.

Letters sent by Tim Usher to WPC Focal Point regarding Recruitment and Appointments, together with Focal Point reply.

Letter issued by SPVA regarding the Umbrella Term of Gulf War Syndrome.

Information about the medical Assessment programme and its extension.

The Chairman asked that copies be sent to the members not present at the meeting.

**AP2 08/07
Clerk**

Training – A computer disk has been prepared that members can use. The Chair has requested that each member be given an individual copy to work through. Members will be able to feedback any requests for more information. Maria Godfrey has confirmed that disks will be available for every member. However the WPC Focal Point would like feedback from Chairmen at the next conference before they are distributed.

14/08/07 - Chair attended an Independent Complaints Panel at Five Ways House.

5/6 09/07 – Date of the Next Chairmen's Conference. Chair will be attending the next Conference

12/09/07 – A War Pensions Welfare Customer Focus Forum is to be held at Venning Barracks, Telford. The Chair and Maria Godfrey will attend on behalf of the Committee.

9. VA/WELFARE REPORT

Region 3 News

Linda Stokes is today taking a party of approximately 146 pensioners and widows on the annual outing to Southport.

Annette Walton is retiring in October 2007. Helen Parker will

be taking over her area and there will also be some changes of postcodes for the other Welfare Managers. More details will be available in October.

The region is receiving lots of Death In Service Referrals as the Worcestershire and Sherwood Foresters are currently deployed in Iraq.

Members are asked to pass on details to WPWS of anyone enquiring about Priority Treatment under the AFCS Scheme. The Chair suggested that these should be few as In Service Medical Treatment would be available to those still serving and making an application under the AFCS scheme.

Norwich – Tricia Norman the New Welfare Advisor is now well into her training. Once this is completed she will be taking over the role of WPC Clerk to the Eastern WPC from Mike Hudson.

John Bryant will leave in September. His post has been advertised in the redeployment pool but the one applicant was sifted out. The advert is now with the wider MOD and the closing date is 20/08/07. There have been seven enquiries so far, and one definite application.

Nottingham – no staff movements or changes.

17/09/07 – A national meeting of WPWS staff is to be held.

10. WAR PENSION MEDICALS – Fred Davies

Fred voiced his concerns about vulnerable ex service personnel attending medical examinations and tribunals who perhaps need to be accompanied. He has recently had contact with a veteran who believes that he did not get sympathetic treatment at a medical.

Fred is also concerned at the treatment given by representatives at Pension Appeal Tribunals.

The issue was discussed thoroughly. Margaret Britton advised that she had attended a medical earlier in the year. There is no problem as long as the Medical Services know in advance that a person is being accompanied.

The Chair said that this is linked into the WPC's raising awareness role, ensuring people know that we are here to help and advise, and that, as individuals, we are prepared to accompany veterans to medicals, tribunals etc. However this is not the same as representing veterans on these occasions, which should be left to those individuals who are experienced in this role.

Should any member need further advice, they can contact the Chairman who will help or find out further information.

11. GUEST SPEAKERS – WO Leesa McInnes and Sgt Jim Windsor

Leesa and Jim are Army Welfare Workers based at Selly Oak Hospital as part of Defence Medicine (RCDM) who have recently moved to Tennel Grange, Harborne, Birmingham. Their work is based over five sites, Selly Oak, Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Birmingham Eye Hospital, Birmingham Orthopaedic Hospital, and Birmingham Heartlands. The role of RCDM is to provide a second line of welfare for soldiers and their families. At present they are involved with a range of different issues but the main problem is separation from families. Other concerns relate to debt, childcare needs, housing etc. Family accommodation is available in the Birmingham area for those visiting the injured whilst in hospital. They have no access to funds, therefore they signpost to organisations that can help. They also liaise with SPVA as many soldiers can only claim through the AFCS, as they do not have insurance. This led to a debate on the need for serving personnel to take out insurance cover. Sgt Windsor gave a brief overview of the training processes staff at RCDM undergo.

Information leaflets were then handed out.

The Chairman thanked the speakers for taking time out of their day to tell the Committee about their work and also to Ray Griffiths for liaising on behalf of the Committee.

12. AOB

The Chair asked about the quality of the lunch as he was unhappy with the food provided. He asked that the Clerk make contact re the non supply of tea/coffee at 10.30am. A short discussion followed about a different location for the meeting but the main stumbling block at other venues is the lack of parking or suitable meeting rooms. He did confirm that a meeting would be held at Audley Court next year together with a guided tour.

13. Dates of Next Meeting

Please note the dates are 20 November 2007 and 19 February 2008 at WPWO, Five Ways House.

There being no further business the Chair closed the meeting at 14:00