

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE WEST MIDLANDS WAR PENSIONS
COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY, 21 NOVEMBER 2006 AT THE
NAUTICAL CLUB, BIRMINGHAM
AT 11.00 AM**

Present:

**Mike Burrows BEM
John Atherton MBE
Bob Belding MBE
Margaret Britton
Harold Canning MBE
Fred Davies
Edward Drake
Ken Fisher
Ray Griffiths
Derek Johnson
Stan Taylor**

In Attendance:

**Pat Cox – Committee Support
Sue Rivington – Clerk to the Committee
Maria Godfrey – ‘Future’ Clerk to the Committee**

STATUTORY RULES AND ORDERS

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

1. WELCOME

Mike Burrows welcomed members to the 12th meeting of the West Midlands WPC, also the last meeting of the present committee. Thanks to all for their submissions to serve for the next three years. The Chief Executive of the Veterans Agency will issue letters of appointment on behalf of Secretary of State.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies received from Alison Hines and Gary Kibblewhite. Mike will write a letter of thanks to Alison, as this would have been the last committee meeting she would have attended

AP1 11/06

3. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

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

4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the previous meeting had been circulated. Two amendments need to be made. AP04 on page 3 needs deleting as the Norcross visits had taken place and the first sentence on page 5 needs to read, "were asked..."

The Chairman will sign the minutes, after amendments, as a true and accurate record of the meeting held on 21 November 2006.

Proposed by – Edward Drake.

Seconded by – Ken Fisher.

5. REVIEW OF ACTION POINTS

a) Consultation

b) Raise Awareness

AP1 08/06 Disregard Letters

Ongoing

Sue Rivington confirmed that reminder letters had been issued to the relevant Councils via members but some have still not replied. Chair to be informed.

**AP1 08/06
Clerk**

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

AP2 02/05 WM Job Shadowing

Ongoing

Two members are still waiting for dates. Pat Cox advised that the Birmingham WPWO will arrange dates.

d) Assist Individual War Pensioners and War Widows

e) General Action Points

AP1 08/04 Member's Handbook

Ongoing

Ray Holland – Chairman of the Eastern Committee is in the process of re-writing this document for approval by his fellow Chairmen.

AP4 08/05 Guest Speakers

Ongoing

Mike Burrows confirmed that Audrey Malley would be speaking at the end of this meeting about her role as an Inland Revenue Inspector. Please advise him of any particular topics that members would like covering in the future.

AP3 05/06 Raffle Prizes **Cleared**

Members had kindly brought along prizes to this meeting.

AP2 08/06 Treasurer's Report **Cleared**

This is now a standing item on the agenda

AP3 08/06 Birmingham Publicity Campaign **Cleared**

All members had been supplied with a list of events.

AP4 08/06 Birmingham Publicity Campaign **Cleared**

Those members able to attend had done so.

AP5 08/06 Case 3 **Cleared**

Bob Belding never received the case as the client had progressed his problem with BT.

6 SUB GROUP REPORT (SOCIAL EVENTS)

Harold Canning gave an update as follows: -

Birmingham Publicity Campaign

Thanks to all members who helped with filling envelopes and those who took the time to attend events.

5th December 2006 – Motor Cycle Museum

As wine is very expensive at the venue it was felt that the committee, regretfully, couldn't afford to supply the drinks on the day. Funding will be used for the meal only as funds were raised for this purpose. Menus for members' information will be distributed at the end of the meeting. Margaret asked for a separate table be supplied to display the raffle prizes Sue advised that numbers would be confirmed the week before the meal. There have been no problems so far. It was agreed that round table settings for 12 people would be best.

Harold hopes to arrange a sub group meeting in the New Year, to arrange fund raising for the Young Peoples Awareness Campaign. Need pupils, youngsters, veterans and members of the public to come along. He has started to put together a package to bid for funding. Mike stressed the need to follow the criteria in the Funding Pack.

The summer event is due to take place in June/July in Stratford upon Avon. Looking at inviting 70 –80 war pensioners and war

widows. Mike voiced his concerns about not getting sufficient numbers to come along.

A discussion followed on holding events/meals in various locations as many people feel that they are being left out. Stan Taylor said if folk are asking questions at least they know about the committee and its work.

Mike conveyed the committees thanks to Harold and his sub group for their funding work.

7. TREASURER'S REPORT

All action has now been completed to change signatories.

	£
Previous Balance	1437.50
Income	1318.00
Army Ben Fund	£1000.00
RAF Ben Fund	£300.00
Lunches at Alrewas	£18.00
Balance	2755.50

Margaret Britton presented the committee with a cheque for £100. A donation from the Queen Alexandra's Association Midlands Branch.

Mike Burrows gave verbal thanks to the Association. He will follow this up with a written response.

**AP2 11/06
Chair**

It was agreed that a written response would be sent to all who have made donations to the West Midlands Committee, to confirm how the funding has been spent.

**AP3 11/06
Treasurer**

The expected expenditure for the Christmas Lunch will be £2000.00. Mike advised that each member should pay for his or her meal at the Motor Cycle Museum and claim back expenses accordingly.

8. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

A Desk Aid has been produced giving details of the War Pensions Committees and their roles. These were handed to all members present.

Chairman's Conference - Full minutes distributed.

Integration of AFPAA/VA - A copy of the minutes of the Inaugural Meeting of VA/AFPAA Integration Customer Group distributed to all members. The proposed new name for the agency is Service Personnel and Veterans Agency. This is subject to agreement.

Reconstitution – Interviews have taken place and three new members will be joining the committee. Gerald Fairbrace, Dewsbury, Brian Lenthall, Coventry, Mike Morris CFO for RBL Birmingham.

To help the new comers will current members please provide a quick pen-picture of themselves for the next meeting?

**AP4 11/06
Members**

Complaints Panel Cases – Mike still has two very detailed cases that are ongoing.

9. BIRMINGHAM PUBLICITY CAMPAIGN -FEEDBACK

Pat Cox said that many people had been involved in the preparation for the two-week event. Thanks to be extended to all members who helped or came along. Also to Sue Rivington and Barry Miller for preparing databases and issuing letters from the Nottingham Office.

A meeting had been held in Norcross to assess any increase in phone calls to the Help line. There had been no increase but this has been put down to the excellent job that the VA and WPC do in the area.

It had been a worthwhile exercise and good contacts have been established with VA Communications Team.

The most successful places for contacting the public were outside the Council House, the Rag Market the second week, Heartland Hospital and High Street, Solihull. Requests from veterans about the Veterans Badges was a good way of introducing our services and finding out if they could be helped further.

Despite the contentious issues at the time concerning Selly Oak hospital, the Welfare staff had been able to pin information postcards on all notice boards. This led to a veteran contacting the WPWO about a claim under the AFCS scheme.

Edward Drake said that the local staff and WPC members had done a fantastic job during that fortnight.

10. VA/WELFARE REPORT

Veterans Badges can now be issued for service until 31 December 1969. It is hoped that by March 2007 the date will be extended to 31/12/79. The Welfare Office is still receiving lots of requests, as are Norcross. A stock of badges is still held in the local office.

Pre 73 Widows Exercise is still continuing. The area is a little behind but is confident that they will pull back soon. This exercise is due to finish in March 2007. Those widows who do not have a telephone number will be sent contact letters shortly.

Resources- some changes have been made in the Region. Diane Paget has retired but her successor will not be in place until January 2007. Jayne Delaney is a new Admin Officer who has started work in the Birmingham Office. She will be working to Leigh Peplow and Sandra Price. A new Welfare Manager has started in Nottingham who will be covering the Sheffield area. Teresa Quinn will then have responsibility for the Office Pool and be the peripatetic officer for Nottingham.

Reconstitution – Papers for the three new members will be sent to Norcross during w/c 27/11/06. The letters of appointment will be sent from the Chief Executive on behalf of the Secretary of State. The complicated procedure put in place during this recruitment exercise will be streamlined for the future. Chairs are looking at producing a better set of documents for applicants.

Remembrance Weekend – staff from both Birmingham and Nottingham offices were in attendance at Alrewas Arboretum over the weekend. Lots of contacts were made and again the Veterans Badge was the main interest. Birmingham staff manned the Mobile Information Unit (MIU) on Remembrance Sunday between 10am and 2pm. They too had a busy day raising awareness.

Pat Cox then thanked everyone for their help and support over the past six years. The work undertaken has been invaluable and the people she has worked with have been totally committed. Grateful thanks too to Sue Rivington who will also no longer be involved with WPC administration.

11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Edward Drake was concerned that priority treatment is not always given to War Pensioners when visiting hospital. Mike

Burrows pointed out that the final decision about priority falls to the consultant. Derek Johnson felt that it is the secretary not the consultant who could be the stumbling block.

Margaret Britton advised about the Lord Kitchener Memorial Holiday Centre. It is a wonderful place. £104 per week for full board. Lifts available to all floors.

Mike Burrows, on behalf of the West Midlands Committee, thanked Sue Rivington for all her hard work over the years, and wished her well for the future.

A reminder to all to give Bob Belding a cheque for £20.00 for the Christmas lunch and claim back £10.00 from the Veterans Agency.

The dates proposed for 2007 are:

20 February
22 May
21 August
20 November

All are Tuesday dates.

12. GUEST SPEAKER – MRS AUDREY MALLEY, INLAND REVENUE

Audrey Malley gave an extremely interesting and informative presentation on her work as a home visitor for the Works Service Side of the Inland Revenue based at the HMRC Enquiry Office, Union Street, Birmingham. She is the 'home visits team' and gives priority to pensioners and disabled clients. She does not handle queries regarding inheritance tax, as a specialist department within Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs deals with these issues.

All members were given a list of contact telephone numbers and useful information on taxable and non-taxable benefits.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 14.45.