

**MINUTES OF THE WEST OF SCOTLAND WPC MEETING HELD ON
WEDNESDAY 14TH FEBRUARY 2007 AT WEST REGENT HOUSE,
GLASGOW**

Present:

**Derek Evans (Chairman}
Stewart Robb (Regional Welfare Manager)
Scott Gillon
Peter Newlove
David McAllister
Alan Tapp
Dougie Moir
Barry Acons
Alistair Marshall
Kate Nicol**

In Attendance:

**Dudley Walker (Welfare Manager}
John Costello (WPC Clerk**

Derek opened the meeting by welcoming Dudley back to work after his recovery period following a knee operation. He extended a warm welcome to Stewart Robb from the War Pensioners' Welfare Service in Edinburgh as this was his first WPC meeting as Regional Welfare Manager for Scotland & the North East of England and finally to Alistair Marshall who missed the last meeting due to family commitments.

Derek asked Scott Gillon to take over the role of chairman after lunch as he had to travel to London for a training session on the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme.

Dougie Moir gave the committee an update on John Porter who had gone through an operation last month and Dougie confirmed that John's health is not too good at present, this lead Derek to say that Ken McLachlan's condition is improving and that his speech has returned but he has an eye problem to contend with.

1. Attendance & Apologies

Apologies received from Ken McLachlan, John Porter & Sheena Glass

2. Minutes of the Last Meeting

Agreed by David McAllister and seconded by Kate Nicol.

David took this opportunity to gave an overview on his joint visit with Irene Robinson from the War Pensioners' Welfare Service in Glasgow , to Shotts Prison in Lanarkshire under the Prison in Reach scheme. Following the visit David ascertained that there is currently 58 prisoners from the West of Scotland who are ex-service and 43 from the East. Dudley asked how useful the visit had been and David confirmed that the main objective is the contact with prisoners and informing them of how the Welfare Service can help when they are released and where applicable, their dependants who would appreciate the contact even more whilst the prisoners are still serving their sentence.

3. Matters Arising

Derek asked which committee members have still to send in photographs for their new ID cards and the WPC clerk made them aware that their cards need to be authorised by the chairman once completed.

Sandra Lloyd will authorise the ID cards for all committee chairmen.

The committee was advised by Derek that the information contained in WPC sheets can be distributed to area members as well as pensioners.

After liaising with Sandra Lloyd, Derek felt there was a lack of progress as well as a negative response to the request for funding the production of an A5 size guide to the responsibilities of the War Pensions Committee.

Derek pointed out that in a letter to the Chief Executive Tim Taylor he expressed his dismay that the Veterans Agency would not meet the £400.00 cost of producing an A5 size guide and factsheets. He said that if the support from the Veterans Agency to help the committees carry out their role did not improve, then there maybe one or two resignations being handed in. Dougie Moir expressed his disappointment at the apparent lack of help from the Veterans Agency regarding the production of factsheets and financial support in general.

Under the Data Protection Act , names and addresses of customers to send the WPC factsheets to could not be supplied to the WPC, therefore Dudley asked if the Welfare Managers could be supplied with the factsheets and they would be passed on during visits to pensioners & widows.

On the matter of visiting and qualifications required, Derek confirmed he has 7 SSAFA caseworkers of which 2 have enhanced clearance, 3 are ex-policemen of which 2 are SSAFA Trained caseworkers. Alan Tapp queried the requirements for accompanied visits e.g stature & ability to visit the elderly, he was advised that reference requirements maybe asked for by Sue Turner and Alan Mayers. Peter Newlove commented that members were allowed to do accompanied visits in the past without any problems but Derek feels this matter needs to be resolved by Sue and Alan at Norcross.

Dougie Moir pointed out that the factsheets about the committees need to be issued direct to our customers or else the effectiveness is lost and this led Scott Gillon to ask the chairman what he would like done with the leaflets currently available. Derek informed the members that as result of Dougie's advertising in 80 newspapers and 20 churches, the Welfare Service had received 120 phone calls although Dougie strongly commented on the lack of publicity material coming from the Veterans Agency at Norcross.

Kate Nicol advised the members that Mr Bob King (ex-army) has replaced Dave Hilton as the new RBL Scotland Pensions Officer.

Derek confirmed that AFCS Updates and Benefits training has been put back to the 9th May to coincide with the next WPC meeting. Peter Newlove made a few points regarding the new rates of pay from April being made to Service Personnel on medical discharge.

4. Correspondence

Stewart Robb and Derek have both reached an agreement on the way they see the WPC and WPWS going.

Tim Usher from the East of Scotland WPC has expressed his feelings in a letter regarding the reconstitution cock up. He said the whole business was sheer nonsense and not conjusive with providing an effective service to pensioners and widows. Tim spoke about the strain on the Welfare Service that may come about as a result of having the reconstitution on a tri-annual basis and this led Scott Gillon to ask about any subsequent costs involved in this type of exercise.

Stewart Robb gave the committee an assurance that he would take forward any legitimate concerns they have with both Sue Turner and Alan Mayers. He then gave an insight into his background prior to his appointment as RWM for Scotland & North East England and how he sees the relationship between the War Pension Committees, WPWS and other ex-service organisations developing. Stewart also talked briefly about Raising Awareness, marketing ideas inc. costs plus the recruitment of another Welfare Manager in the Edinburgh office. He emphasised to the members that he would be more than happy to speak to them and visit them if necessary.

Scott Gillon commented that the staff in Glasgow always go the extra mile to help their customers and Mary Bell received praise in particular from Kate Nicol.

5. Recruitment

Derek gave WPC expenditure figures for last year which included £41.00 spent on meals and £1100.00 on travel. He anticipates costs this year to be in the region of £1000.00 for travel and £150.00 on meals plus he has set a committee member target of 14.

Derek would like one of the WPC meetings to be held in the Stirlingshire area this year as it now comes under the remit of the West of Scotland.

£1000 has been earmarked for advertising as the committee needs to move forward and this involves talking to the press in the West of Scotland, recruiting certain types of individuals e.g Doctors. Peter Newlove put some names forward for consideration as he thinks that their applications from a previous recruitment may have been lost and he used Mr Pat Reid from Falkirk as an example.

Derek asked the members if any of them would like to form part of a sub-committee to deal specifically with recruitment, this led to Kate Nicol and Barry Acons putting themselves forward with the rest of the committee being made up of the chairman and the committee clerk.

Action Point 1/07 Derek ,Barry, Kate & John to hold a meeting to report back to the rest of the committee on the way forward regarding recruitment.

6. Committee Chairman's Report

Derek attended the service in a private capacity for the 14 Kinloss personnel who were killed in Afghanistan and this led Kate Nicol to ask how the bereaved families were coping and if the bodies had been repatriated to RAF Kinloss instead of Brize Norton. Derek explained that due to regulations the bodies of service personnel killed in action are flown to RAF Brize Norton on arrival in the UK.

One committee member suggested asking the Scottish Parliament about the possibility of service personnel from Scotland who are killed whilst in service abroad being brought directly back to their own country.

Derek will speak to the relevant people on the James Dyer case and due to the fact he met the gentleman at a recent Customer Forum there will be no need to attend Mr Dyer's committee meeting.

Derek gave an overview of the Brian Henderson case which is the subject of a complaints panel due to be held in March. Alongside a legal representative will be Colonel Russ Holland & Peter Poole (Midlands Branch Chairman). There is the possibility that this case may go all the way to Ministerial Level.

7. WM Report

Dudley thanked the members for all their best wishes sent whilst he was off work following an operation. He then went on to welcome Alan Tapp & Peter Newlove as new members of the West of Scotland WPC and advised them that he was now the Welfare Manager for some of their areas as far as visiting was concerned.

Dudley gave a brief talk on the Glasgow Old Peoples Welfare Association and the services they provide eg. An advocacy service, information and at Xmas & New Year are known to provide a dinner for pensioners which also includes transport home and monetary gifts. He spoke about the problems ex-service people face in obtaining secure accommodation once they have left the forces and that the Scottish Parliament have been contacted to obtain their position on the matter.

Dudley advised the committee that the Widows contact exercise was on course to be completed by the end of March and that overall the widows appreciated the time the Welfare Service had taken to contact them. He then read out a letter from a widow in Johnstone expressing her sincere thanks regarding the help she had received and that the Welfare Service took the time to talk to widows and be there for them.

On the matter of Raising Awareness, Dudley reiterated to Derek that the Welfare Service is constantly on to Norcross about the lack of funds and that they expect everything to be obtained for free.

Dudley asked for the thoughts of the committee members on organising an event for pensioners & widows to be held in the Glasgow City Hall with catering thrown in to coincide with Veterans Day in June. Peter Newlove spoke about possible help from the Not Forgotten Association.

David McAllister asked if Dudley was aware of any organisation that provides funds for servicemen who wish to revisit the Falklands, as he knew someone who would like to go back to Mount Tumbledown. Dudley confirmed that he will make the necessary enquiries although there is the possibility of the trip being funded under the Heroes Return Scheme.

Dudley asked the committee if they would consider arranging advice days under their various hats and they would receive support from the WPWS. Peter Newlove said that the response from putting up posters was minimal and on the back this, Dudley said that the Mobile Information Unit would be back on the road this year.

Dudley briefly spoke about the services that would be provided following the merger between the Veterans Agency & AFPAA on the 4th April 2007.

Kate Nicol asked Dudley if he had heard of any cases where the blue badge scheme was being abused namely when it came to car parking spaces. Her local MSP Jackie Baillie has taken this matter to the Scottish Parliament and is trying to get legislation through to stamp it out. Kate asked Derek if the committee were in a position to offer support on this matter if necessary and he agreed to write to Jackie Baillie .

Dudley explained the criteria on WPMS eligibility to the committee as Peter Newlove thought that eligibility was based on the loss of limbs rather than walking ability.

Action Point 2/07 Dudley to make enquiries regarding funds available for trip to the Falklands on behalf of David McAllister.

Action Point 03/07 Derek Evans to write to Jackie Baillie to offer WPC support regarding the abuse of the blue badge scheme and subsequent legislation through the Scottish Parliament to stamp it out.

8. Sub-Committee Updates

Scott Gillon and Dougie Moir will hold their own sub-committee to discuss the preparation of letters for Radio & Television iro the 25th Anniversary of the Falklands War.

Publicity ideas discussed included adverts in various magazines eg. Peoples Friend and Dudley mentioned using his contact at the Daily Record plus he spoke about other organisations which maybe of use in spreading the word about the services offered by the War Pension Committees.

Kate Nicol recommended using the Big Issue and the New Pensions Officer in Edinburgh as useful contacts for publicising and Alan Tapp mentioned the RBL, Poppy Scotland and SSAFA as other avenues to explore.

Stewart Robb came up with the idea of using a famous person as the face of Veterans Scotland and he questioned the committee as to why this had not been put forward before. Dudley suggested using actors such as Jack & Victor, the pensioners from the BBC Scotland series 'Still Game' to do a short presentation on the services available to ex-servicemen and women via the War Pensions Committee & the Veterans Agency.

Barry Acons suggested using established musicians such as Wet Wet Wet and Deacon Blue as possible publicity figures and the committee agreed the more faces they can get on board the better.

Action Point 04/07 Dougie Moir to contact the actors who play Jack & Victor with a view to arranging a publicity slot.

9. Any Other Committee Business

Kate Nicol gave an update on the monitoring of content and layout on the VA Website and she confirmed that correspondence from Paul Kingham to her on this matter had gone astray. She then spoke about how during her time as a Naval Visiting Officer customers felt uncomfortable being seen by ex-officers who insisted on using their rank even though they were no longer in the forces. Alan Tapp said that the relationship a caseworker builds up with a client and what is done for them, is more important than how the caseworker is addressed. Kate asked why there are no pen pictures of WPC committee members on the VA Website apart from the chairmen and can this be looked into.

During the meeting there was a mention of the 75th anniversary celebrations of the work of BLESMA which is to be held in Litchfield on the 5th July 2007.

Alan Tapp offered his apologies as he is unable to attend the next WPC meeting in May.

The meeting closed at 2.05pm.

Action Point 05/07 John to check with the Veterans Agency as to why there are no pen pictures of WPC members on their website.

Action Point 06/07 John to check the availability of using Erskine as the venue for the next WPC meeting in May.

Action Point 07/07 Kate to check that the minutes once they are approved, appear on the VA Website.

10. Date of next meeting

The next WPC meeting will be held on 9th May 2007 in the Reid McEwan Centre, Erskine Home, Bishopton at 11am with lunch provided.

A Benefits update will be provided after the main meeting.

Post Meeting Notes

Since the last meeting Derek has written to Sandra Lloyd on the subjects of advertising and recruitment, below is a summary of what has happened:

Sandra Lloyd has been requested to send 100 WPC Cards to David McAllister following the excellent progress made on the distribution of these by WM's from Glasgow WPWO.

A further 100 cards have been issued to the chairman.

Derek has asked Sandra Lloyd for guidance on recruiting paperwork & budgets.

Sandra has suggested to Derek to engage the services of the MOD Press Officer regarding advertising as he/she can ensure wide distribution and subsequent press release.

Derek has written to Tom Frizzel regarding the updating of application forms for new members since the last ones were unacceptable. Tom Frizzel has replied to say that no modifications have been carried out therefore Derek has asked Sandra Lloyd where do we go from here.

Derek confirmed by email dated 22.2.07 to John Costello that the advert used in the previous recruitment campaign needs to be resurrected with the dates modified and a note added to say that anyone who applied back in September 2006, needs to reapply if still interested.

Derek emailed his fellow WPC Chairmen on 22.2.07 with his thoughts on WPC Awareness and Visiting eg. WPC Card distribution, Recruiting Campaign, WPC Client Visiting,

**ACTION POINTS FROM THE WEST OF SCOTLAND WPC MEETING
HELD ON 14.2.07 AT WEST REGENT HOUSE, GLASGOW**

AP 1/07. Derek , Kate, Barry & John to hold a meeting to report back to the committee on the way forward regarding recruitment.

AP 2/07. Dudley to make enquiries regarding funds available for trip to the Falklands on behalf of David McAllister.

AP 3/07. Derek Evans to write to Jackie Baillie to offer WPC support regarding the abuse of the Blue Badge scheme and subsequent legislation through the Scottish Parliament to stamp it out.

AP 04/07. Dougie Moir to contact the actors who play Jack & Victor with a view to arranging a publicity slot.

AP 05/07. John to check with the Veterans Agency as to why there are no pen pictures of WPC Members on their website.

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AP 07/07. Kate to check that the minutes once they are approved, appear on the VA website.