

Scottish Parliament Cross-Party Group on Armed Forces Veterans Meeting

3rd September 2013 at the Scottish Parliament

Minutes

| Attending | |
|------------------------|--|
| Name | Organisation |
| Mr Alex Fergusson MSP | Scottish Parliament - Convenor |
| Ms Annabelle Ewing MSP | Scottish Parliament |
| Mr Richard Lyle MSP | |
| Ms Nanette Milne MSP | |
| Mr Jamie McGregor MSP | |
| Jim Wilson | Veterans Scotland |
| Jane Lorimer | Veterans & Families Support Network |
| Watty Logan | Scottish Prison Services / Veterans in Custody |
| James Trolland | Veteran |
| Pat McKinnon | Thistle Foundation |
| Barry Henderson | Glasgow's Helping Heroes |
| Maj Gene Maxwell | SO2 Transition HQ 51 Bde |
| Ian McGregor | CEO PoppyScotland |
| Ally Gemmell | ASAP |
| Steve Conway | CEO Erskine |
| Ross Swinton | Thistle Foundation |
| Margaret J Miller | The Mark Wright Project |
| Neil Robinson | RBLS |
| Apologies | |
| Mr Bruce Crawford MSP | Mr Ian Ballantyne SVR |
| Mr Willie Rennie MSP | Col Martin Gibson, Veterans Scotland |
| Mr Stewart Maxwell MSP | Mr Graham Dunlop RMA |
| Mr Jackson Carlaw MSP | Mr David McGrath ESVAPC |

1. **Introduction:** Mr Alex Fergusson MSP, Convenor AFV Cross Party Group, welcomed those attending and indicated that the main focus for consideration at this meeting was to be the Annual Report and update and to consider topics to be considered in the forthcoming year.
2. **Minutes of Previous meeting:** The minutes of the previous Cross Party Group meeting, held on 12th June 1013, were approved as an accurate record of the meeting.
3. **Matters Arising:** There were no matters arising from the previous meeting.
4. **Topics for Consideration:** Mr Fergusson indicated that, as this was the AGM of the Cross Party Group it would be appropriate to review attendance and activity carried out during the year and to consider topics for next year. He noted that the Annual Return had been submitted and provided a brief synopsis of it. The matter of office bearers was discussed and a vote was taken; it was agreed by unanimous vote that office bearers should be re-elected en-block.

5. **Annual Report:** Mr Jim Wilson, General Secretary Veterans Scotland, provided a report on activities carried out within the Cross Party Group, a copy is attached.

6. **Recap and Look Forward:** The question was raised regarding whether it would be appropriate to reduce the frequency of meetings from Quarterly to Half-Yearly; following some discussion it was agreed that the Group should continue to meet Quarterly. This was followed by some consideration of the topics for discussion at future meetings and it was agreed that these should include: Veterans in Custody, Veterans Housing, Mental Health and a review of the Scottish Government's 'Our Commitments' paper. It was agreed that a selection of key players in specific matters should be invited to be present for appropriate meetings, some of whom should be invited to present.

There followed some discussion regarding who should be invited to attend and it was agreed that the final decision should rest with the Convenor and Secretary but may include:

- a. Veterans in Custody: APEX, Police Scotland, SACRO, SPS, the Judiciary and Rehabilitation Organisations.
- b. Housing: COSLA, the Federation of Housing Associations, MOD and Veterans Housing Charities.
- c. Mental Health: Combat Stress, DWP, Veterans First Point and COSLA.
- d. Our Commitments: Representation from the Scottish Government.

7. AOCB: There was a brief discussion regarding veterans in custody, there are currently 200 veterans in prison in Scotland, out of a total prison population of 7926, this represents approximately 2.5% of the prison population.

The Convenor indicated that the Group had been invited to host a British Attitudes Survey event within the parliament building, it was unanimously agreed not to accept this invitation.

8. Dates of future meetings: Future meeting dates were agreed as shown below, the main topic for discussion is shown in brackets:

| | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 19 th November 2014 | (Veterans in Custody) |
| 5 th February 2014 | (Housing) |
| 23 rd April 2014 | (Mental Health) |
| 11 th June | (Our Commitments) |

Before the Convenor closed the meeting, at approximately 8:00pm, he thanked those attending and contributing to the discussions, he also thanked Gillian Gillies for drawing together the administrative arrangements for the meeting.