

# Cross-Party Group in the Scottish Parliament on Armed Forces Veterans

## Meeting 5 Feb 2014 1800hrs at the Scottish Parliament

### Minutes

#### Attendance

Alex Fergusson MSP	Scottish Parliament
Alex Johnstone MSP	Scottish Parliament
Annabelle Ewing MSP	Scottish Parliament
Alistair Gemmell	Armed Services Advice Project
Barry Henderson	Glasgow's Helping Heroes
Claire Birch	Housing Options Scotland
David Cowin	Veterans Scotland
Gary Gray	Poppy Scotland
Gary Wallace	WDRG Heritage Charity
George Corbett	Scottish Veterans Housing Association
James Trolland	Scottish Democratic Alliance
Jane Lorimer	Veterans Families Network
Jim Wilson	Veterans Scotland
Maj Gene Maxwell	HQ 51 (Scottish) Brigade
Margaret Miller	Mark Wright Project
Mark Bibby	Venture Trust
Martin Gibson	Veterans Scotland
Neil Robinson	Royal British Legion Scotland
Peter Minshall	Scottish Veterans Garden City Association
Ross Swinton	Veteran
Ryan MacDonald	Housing Options Scotland
Sara Hench	Veterans First Point
Stephen Baird	Royal British Legion Scotland
Watty Logan	Scottish Prison Service
WO2 Dougie Graham	HQ 51 (Scottish) Brigade

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 on Housing for veterans in Scotland.
2. **Minutes of Previous meeting:** The minutes of the previous Cross Party Group meeting, held on 19<sup>th</sup> November 2013, 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:** The Convenor welcomed the speakers who came from a variety of organisations bringing with them a range of experience and knowledge. Each speaker was given the opportunity to

provide the group with an overview of their work and their experience. Speakers and topics on which they focussed included:

- a. Housing Challenges during Transition: Maj Gene Maxwell HQ 51 (Scottish) Brigade.
- b. Scottish Veterans Residences: George Corbett
- c. Scottish Veterans Garden City Association: Peter Minshell
- d. Housing Options Scotland (Military matters): Claire Birch and Ryan MacDonald

Following each speaker there was an opportunity to discuss the matters raised and to quiz them on the issue. The broad range of experience of the speakers encapsulated a range of experience and opportunity for veterans who may have quite differing accommodation requirements.

5. AOB: Martin Gibson, Executive Chairman of Veterans Scotland provided brief overview on the forthcoming appointment of a Scottish Veterans Commissioner.

The Convenor thanked all of the speakers for their contributions in particular emphasising how important it appears for vulnerable veterans to be given a pathway of accommodation that will suit them at different stages. The subsequent discussions had been stimulating and relevant, demonstrating the nature and range of issues facing veterans and their families regarding accommodation and how important it is to get this right during transition from the Services. Many local authorities and other organisations have good policies regarding the support provided for veterans however it was clear that there are considerable inconsistencies across Scotland in terms of the level of support available.

The Convenor took the opportunity to highlight a number of events relating to veterans that are due to take place within the Scottish Parliament in the near future:

- |           |  |
|-----------|--|
| 12 March: | Report on the findings of the British Attitudes Survey |
| 2 June:   | RBLS Seminar on Veterans                               |
| 25 June:  | Money Force Reception                                  |

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

- |                             |                   |
|-----------------------------|-------------------|
| 23 <sup>rd</sup> April 2014 | (Mental Health)   |
| 11 <sup>th</sup> 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.