

**Cross-Party Group in the Scottish Parliament on
The Armed Forces and Veterans Community
Meeting 11 June 2019 Minutes**

Attending:

MSP's: Edward Mountain, Gordon Adam, Gordon Lindhurst, Gordon MacDonald, Graeme Dey, Jackie Bailie, Maurice Corry (Convenor) and Michelle Ballantyne; a total of 8 MSP's.

Other Organisations Represented:

Alan Cameron	Stand Easy	Kenny Warren	Scottish Government DPU
Alison Howard	SVC Office	Laura Cameron	Garelohead Station Trust
Alistair Ferrier	SDS	Laura Cox	HQ 51 Bde & HQ Scotland
Amelia Morgan	Venture Trust	Lisa Thipthorp	RAFF
Andrew Weir	Veterans First Point	Mark Horsham	South Lanarkshire Council
Annabel Ingram	AFF	Martin Nadin	SVR
Anne Lamb	SSAFA Edinburgh	Michelle Ferguson	SBMC
Beverly Bergman	University of Glasgow	Mike Parker	MSP Staff
Carole Spencer	Garelohead Station Trust	Morevain Martin	Garelohead Station Trust
Caroline Cooke	FiMT	Nina Collins	RCET
Claire Biggar	Edinburgh Napier University	Paul Coffey	RBLs and BC's
Colin Flinn	RCET	Ray Lock	FiMT
Eddie Devlin	Veterans UK	Richard Baker	Scottish War Blinded
Fiona Maxwell	Reading Force	Robbie Gibson	Lowland RFCA
Gary Gray	Poppyscotland	Sara Baade	AFF
Gavin Davey	RAF Benevolent Fund	Sophie Mifsud	DTS
Gerard MacCoy	Action on Hearing Loss Scotland	Stephen Elliot	RNA
Glen MacDonald	Poppyscotland	Steve Burton	BLESMA
Graham Clark	CTP	Sue Caw	War Widows Association
Heather McVey	OAS	Tony Carruthers	Housing Options Scotland
Ian Ball	East of Scotland VAPC	Trish Mullen	CTP
Jack White	MSP Staff	Victoria Ferguson	University of Glasgow
Jim Castle	Glasgow Caledonian University	Vivienne McColl	Scottish Government DPU
Jim Wilson	Veterans Scotland	Wendy Quinn	NFF
Karen Elliot	AOW and RNA	A total of 49 Other Attendees	

1. Introductions and Opening Remarks; the Convenor welcomed all present, indicating that there was a large attendance, demonstrating the value that people are putting on the group and reflecting widespread support for veterans. He had recently returned from a trip to Shetland and the Orkney Islands, recognising the cost and time that could be taken if they were to be represented at the CPG, he was taking the opportunities provided by CPG to them.

2. Approval of the minutes of the meeting of 24 April 2019. The minutes of the meeting of 24 April were approved as an accurate record.
3. Matters arising. There were no specific matters arising from the minutes.
4. Briefings:
 - a. A Strategy for Our Veterans: Graham Dey MSP Minister for Veterans updated the CPG on the Scottish Veterans Commissioner's (SVC) report on the progress of recommendations in his predecessors reports and on the Scottish Government's response to A Strategy for Veterans.

Many of the SVC's recommendations were met, or were well underway; the Minister had welcomed the Commissioner's analysis of progress and recognised that there was still work to be done.

On the Strategy for Our Veterans, the Minister provided an update on the areas identified thus far. He indicated that, whilst the strategy was focussed on developing work over a 10 year period, there was much that could be done in the short term, emphasising his intent to achieve this. Transition support is delivered at a consistent level across all UK nations, however could benefit from being more holistic and to include the transition of families. It is important that those leaving the Services reach their potential, and that Education is an integral part of this.

The consultation recognised the importance of seeking to 'mainstream' armed forces and veterans issues, ie to deliver services that affect them through mainstream service providers whilst seeking to recognise particular issues that they may face. Particular areas that had been identified include social isolation of early service leavers and how this may be reduced when it occurs and to consider families – in many cases those families within the serving community could benefit from a greater understanding of and engagement with mainstream services.

He wishes to ensure that Scottish Government continues to work effectively with UK Government, in particular as its strategy develops.

Following his brief, there were a number of questions in relation to:

- **Enhanced Learning Credits:** The discussions suggested that Colleges and Universities should be encouraged to provide courses that can be partially paid for by ELC's, that the Career Transition Partnership are encouraged to promote the benefits of Higher and Further Education, and that children from Service families are encouraged to take up the opportunities as well. It was recognised that Colleges and Universities and Colleges should develop their understanding of the impact that service life has on the community and should be encouraged to allow for this as part of their widening access work.
- **On Housing and Accommodation,** there was some discussion on Service Leavers being given 93 days notice to quit their

quarters prior to discharge, and the Minister agreed to take up the discussion; there was also some discussion on the possibility of using vacant quarters for veterans, which would be part of those subsequent discussions.

- b. The Unforgotten Forces Consortium: Gary Gray Head of Welfare Poppyscotland provided an update on the Unforgotten Forces Consortium, which was a good example of collaborative working between organisations. A PDF of his presentation is attached.
 - c. Forces Families Jobs: Sara Baade and Lisa Thipthorp from the RAF Families Federation gave a presentation on Forces Families Jobs, in which employers were engaged in order to provide employment opportunities for the spouses of serving personnel. A copy of their presentation is attached.
5. Open Forum: The Convenor opened the floor to further matters; discussion included an update on the work of the Garelochhead Station Trust, a proposal to hold a 'Great Scottish Breakfast' at some point in October – promoting the work of Breakfast Clubs, focus on the Scottish Parliamentary Debate on Veterans on 18th June. There was discussion on the recent prosecution of veterans from Northern Ireland, clearly an emotionally charged topic, which generated strong feelings across the group.
 6. AOB: There was no other business identified and the meeting closed just after 8:00pm
 7. DONM: Tuesday 10 September – to include AGM of the Cross Party Group.