

Cross-Party Group on The Armed Forces and Veterans Community

30 June 2021 at 6:00pm

Minute

Present

MSPs

Jackie Baillie
Jackson Carlaw
Katy Clark
Maurice Golden
Mark Griffin
Stephen Kerr
Douglas Lumsden
Gordon MacDonald
Edward Mountain
Paul Sweeney

Invited guests

There were no invited guests at the meeting

Non-MSP Group Members

Aileen Hill
Alison Howard
Alistair Ferrier
Allana Kerr
Army Families Federation
Ally Gemmell
Beverly Bergman
Caroline Cooke
Carolyn MacLeod
Fiona Maxwell
Gary Gray
Ian Cumming
Ian Stewart
Jim Wilson
Joe Stanfield
Karen Elliot
Kat Cary
Leanne Bonner
Maj Lee Baines
Mark Horsham
Martin Nadin
Maurice Corry
Rhona Dubery
Sandra Cheyne
Sophie Mifsud
Steven Elliot

Steve Burton
Tony Carruthers
Vanessa Plumley
Wendy Quinn

Apologies

No Apologies had been received

Agenda item 1: Welcome and Introductions.

Jackie Baillie MSP introduced the meeting by welcoming all attending. She gave all those attending the opportunity to introduce themselves and state which organisation they represented. It was agreed that there should be no change to the purpose of the Group and that membership continues to be open to MSP's and others with an interest in the Armed Forces and Veterans Community in Scotland.

The main purpose of the meeting was to reconvene the Group for the duration of the new Parliamentary session.

Agenda item 2: Election of Office Bearers:

The rules on composition of Cross Party Groups have been relaxed and now require at least 5 MSPs and representation from a minimum of 3 parties.

10 MSP members, representing 3 parties, as well as one Individual Member and some 50 Organisational members have been identified to be included in the Group.

MSP Members elected Maurice Golden MSP as Convenor of the Group; with Jackie Baillie MSP and Gordon MacDonald MSP as Deputy Convenors. It was agreed that Mr Maurice Corry TD MBA would Chair the Group and that Jim Wilson, General Secretary of Veterans Scotland, should continue as Secretary and Treasurer.

It was agreed that details should be forwarded to the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee for formal registration.

Agenda item 3: Future Topics for Discussion

It was agreed that topics to be discussed at future meetings should include:

- Employment;
- Education;
- Housing;
- Health & Well Being;
- A Strategy for Our Veterans;
- Historic Hurt;
- Data Collection;
- The impact of Covid on the AFVC;
- Covenant into Law Legislation;

- The Contribution to Society made by the AFVC;

Other topics identified during meetings and which the Group felt were appropriate should also be included.

Recognising the significant contribution that the Veterans Sector makes collectively to Care Delivery, it was suggested that the Group should have discrete engagement with the National Care Service consultation. It was felt that it would be appropriate for Humza Yousaf and/or Kevin Stewart to be invited to the next meeting to discuss the NCS consultation.

Agenda item 4: Covid Update:

Cobseo and FiMT have sponsored a third survey into the impact of the pandemic on charities, there were 30 responses from organisations that are members of VS, representing over a third of our membership. Results are not yet available as the research is not yet complete, however our understanding is that funding for veterans' charities has typically reduced by about 25%.

The Scottish Government has put some £1M into the Armed Forces Third Sector Resilience Fund which is open for applications until 16th July. The aim of the fund is to provide grants of up to £75k for Armed Forces Charities that have been adversely affected by the pandemic.

Social Isolation and Loneliness continue to be seen as having a significant impact on many veterans, although all charities have altered the way they 'do business' to accommodate this – the importance of staying in touch cannot be over emphasised. That said, Personal Finances are also being affected and enquiries about debt support are on the increase.

Agenda item 5: Any Other Business

No other business had been identified or was raised during the meeting.

The Convenor, Maurice Golden MSP, then thanked everyone for attending and indicated that the Group should look forward to a busy Parliamentary session. He then closed the meeting at approximately 6:45pm.

Dates of future meetings:

Dates for future meetings were identified as:

- **22 Sep 21**
- **25 Jan 22**
- **13 Apr 22**
- **22 Jun 22**
- **20 Sep 22**

It is hoped that such meetings will take place within the Scottish Parliament building, however this is subject to pandemic restrictions.