

Cross-Party Group on The Armed Forces and Veterans Community

7 November 2023

Minute

Item 1

Introductions and Opening Remarks

Maurice Golden MSP (Convenor) and Maurice Corry (Chair) welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Agenda item 2 5 minutes

MSP Attendance included Maurice Golden, Graeme Dey and Paul Sweeney. A further 15 members of the Cross Party Group were in attendance on site and 30 attended online.

Agenda item 3 5 minutes

The Minute from the previous meeting, 21 June 2023, had been distributed and was agreed as an accurate record.

Agenda item 4

Mr Graeme Dey MSP Minister for Higher and Further Education; and Minister for Veterans provided and update on the work of the Scottish Government over the past year on its support for Veterans and the Armed forces Community.

He highlighted the fact that the vast majority of individuals leaving the services to settle in Scotland transition well. It is important that all coming out of the Services register with GP practices, and he recognised the efforts being made in developing the GP Recognition scheme. He indicated that he would be writing to all GPs encouraging their participation as this would benefit not just veterans but the wider Armed Forces and Veterans Community.

Securing suitable housing remains a significant priority for most service leavers, this continues to be difficult for some depending on their circumstances although it is recognised that many move into their own homes on discharge. It was noted that as pressure increases on housing generally, so it increases for veterans seeking housing.

He noted the importance of ensuring that an understanding of the obligations to the Armed Forces Covenant extends across statutory organisations and does not remain the preserve of those who are identified as Armed Forces Champions.

There followed a short discussion in which a number of matters were considered. These included:

Possible increase in security risk to Remembrance events.
Awareness of the importance of raising the profile of the Armed Forces Covenant.
Availability of Armed Forces Covenant Trust funding.
Recognising the number of cemeteries in Scotland with links to the Commonwealth War Grave Commission.

The Chair thanked Mr Dey for his continued work on behalf of the Armed Forces and Veterans Community across Scotland.

Agenda item 5

A number of presentations were provided, with the focus on issues that are faced by female veterans:

Robert Gordon University Report: Dr Moira Bailey has led a team that has conducted a UK wide study into issues that may be faced by female veterans when seeking to access services. A copy of her briefing slide is attached, which includes a link to the report.

Female Veterans Health: Prof Beverly Bergman University of Glasgow University provided an update on the Trends in Scottish Veterans Health with particular emphasis on the matters relating to female veterans. A copy of her presentation is attached.

Transition from the Services: Prof Gerri Matthews-Smith from Edinburgh Napier University identified the salient points from the ENU 'You're in your own time now' study into transition from the services. She indicated that some 16% of respondents included in the report were female.

Female Veterans Transformational Project: Liza Jarvis the project lead for the FVTP provided an update on the work that they are doing. A copy of her presentation is attached.

Following the presentations there followed a discussion on the topics discussed.

Agenda item 6

Open Forum

Working with the Community – David Devenney Community Veterans was due to give a briefing on the work of Community Veterans Support, however it was agreed that this could be provided at the next meeting due to the lack of time remaining. Public Petition PE2032 of 6th Oct and Response. The CPG was updated on the response to this petition.

Topics for Future Meetings (see below).

Date of next meetings:

Future meetings are confirmed as:

21 February

19 June

18 September

27 November

Further topics that have been suggested for future meetings include: Data following Census 2022; Health; Housing and Employment. Any further suggestions that members feel should be considered would be welcomed.