

Cross-Party Group on The Armed Forces and Veterans Community

Held in the Scottish Parliament and on-line

Thursday 30 March 2023 at 1:00pm

Minute

Agenda item 1

Introductions and Opening Remarks Maurice Golden MSP (Convenor) and Maurice Corry (Chair). The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, and explained the reasoning behind the revised time, he indicated that MSP attendance at the meeting was being affected by earlier announcements in the chamber. Despite some initial IT teething issues, a connection to the on-line members was established at about 1:15pm. It was agreed that Jim Wilson would relay any questions or points on behalf of those attending on-line.

Agenda item 2

Confirmation of attendance. Four MSPs and 40 other members attended; the attendance list is copied below. The meeting was quorate.

Agenda item 3

Minutes of the previous meeting, 25 Jan 2023. The minute of the previous meeting had been circulated and was accepted as an accurate record of the meeting. The only matter arising was from the open forum at Item 6, Joyce MacMillan indicated that the project to identify which hospitals and GP's employed veterans was taking longer than anticipated; it was agreed that she could bring these forward at the next meeting.

Agenda item 4

Ongoing Impact of Cost of Living Crisis. The cost of living crisis was still having an impact on some veterans and on charities. Updates indicated that those matters identified at previous meetings remained extant although the reliance on warm hubs will reduce as the weather becomes warmer. Organisations reported increased demand for their services and requests for additional funding.

A number of organisations confirmed that they had extended their services and were able to engage with a wider community. Providing a Warm, Food, a Hot Meal, Hot Drinks and Company were highlighted as significant steps to helping people who were having difficulty managing their budgets. Similarly, small grants and one-off payment towards the costs of, for example, warm clothing, fuel bills and telephones were very well received.

There followed a discussion about a veteran's health related issues and a number of steps that were being carried out to alleviate them.

Agenda item 5

Promoting the Employability and Employment of Veterans. Regrettably the time available for the meeting was restricted and two of the planned speakers had to leave. It was therefore agreed that this topic would be revisited at future meetings.

Agenda item 6

Collecting Data about Veterans. Jim Wilson, the Secretary, briefly highlighted that collecting accurate information and data about the veterans' population in Scotland is difficult. Often such information is skewed by information coming from restricted groups who are being supported; information about those veterans who may not need such support and are just part of the rest of the population is harder to come by. It is anticipated that this will be improved as data from the 2022 Census becomes available.

Agenda item 7

Open Forum: A number of organisations had been asked to provide brief updates on the work they are carrying out. These were provided by:

- Glasgow Helping Heroes,
- Military Matters
- Fares for Free

Agenda item 8

Date of next meetings:

June 21st (Wed) at 5:00pm including AGM
October 18th (Wed)

Topics for consideration that have been suggested for future meetings include: Employment; Health, Housing, Female Veterans Issues; it has also been suggested that we invite the Scottish Veterans Commissioner and The Scottish Government Minister for Veterans to provide updates. I would welcome any further suggestions for consideration.