

Cross-Party Group on The Armed Forces and Veterans Community

18 September 2024

Minute

Present

MSPs

Maurice Golden MSP and Douglas Lumsden MSP.

Invited guests

Louise Briggs and Mark McCulloch; MOD Veterans Services

Non-MSP Group Members

An attendance list is attached

Apologies

Apologies had been received in advance of the meeting from a number of members of the group. In addition to notification that they would not be attending, a number of out of office notifications had been received stating that the subject individual was unavailable.

Item 1

Introductions and Opening Remarks

Maurice Golden MSP (Convenor) welcomed everyone to the meeting. With 2 MSP members attending and a further 28 non-MSP members attending, the Convenor was pleased to confirm that the meeting was quorate.

He then passed control of the meeting to Maurice Corry as Chair.

Agenda item 2

The Minute from the previous meeting, which had taken place on 19 June 24, had been distributed for consideration by the members.

It was agreed that the minute provided an accurate record of the meeting; there were no matters arising although the secretary confirmed that the Annual Return for 2023 – 24 had been submitted and that it was now available on line.

Agenda item 3

Louise Briggs and Mark McCulloch from the MOD Veterans Services Team gave a presentation on the work they currently carry out in Scotland and how it is evolving. A copy of their presentation is attached.

The aim is to streamline the services that are currently provided by Defence Transition Services, Veterans Welfare Service and IPC4V. A name for this service was yet to be confirmed, however they are likely to create a National level Triage team for referrals through a single phone number and/or web connection.

They are developing a team of nine members of staff who will become field teams to support members of the Armed Forces and Veterans Community across Scotland. Whilst the details are work in progress, it is likely that the field teams will cover defined geographic areas but will have sufficient flexibility to support veterans outwith their areas if necessary. It is hoped that the service is in place by April 2025.

Item 4

Susie Hamilton, the Scottish Veterans Commissioner, had published her annual progress update report. This is an annual update and identifies the progress on recommendations that have been made in Commissioner's reports. She highlighted that:

- **Insufficient progress had been made in relation to recommendations on Housing.** The Veterans Homelessness Pathway was published in January 2022 and the 24 recommendations were accepted by Scottish Government at that time. Various veterans' charities are taking forward those recommendations that they can influence, however there appears to be insufficient progress from the statutory side.
- **Progress on delivering a Mental Health plan has not progressed sufficiently.** Despite this being 'work in progress' since 2019, a clear plan for the delivery of consistent mental health support for veterans has yet to be implemented.

On the positive side, she highlighted the good work being carried out by Skills Development Scotland, the skills discovery tool, progress on the NHS Talent programme, and with physical health and the GP recognition scheme.

A link to the full recommendations can be found at:

[Progress | Scottish Veterans Commissioner](#)

Item 5

Prof Gerri Matthews Smith from Edinburgh Napier University provided an update on the Scottish Armed Forces Evidence Research Hub International Conference which had taken place at the end of August. The theme was Identity, Purpose and Belonging and had been attended by academics, researchers, veterans and charities that support them from across the world.

The Conference highlighted the value that the Third Sector brings to the way that support is provided for veterans.

It is hoped that another, similar, conference will take place in future and consideration will be given to how and where this might be delivered, and how frequently such events should take place. Gerri concluded by thanking all those that had contributed to the conference, whether it was through supporting the funding of it, through presentations and encouraging attendance, or by attending and contributing to the discussions.

Item 6

Jim Wilson from Veterans Scotland, led the discussion on Census 2022 as it relates to veterans. Specific data relating to the veterans' community in Scotland was released on 13 June and is available at:

[Scotland's Census 2022 - UK Armed Forces veterans | Scotland's Census](#)

This data can be interrogated by Sex, Age, Type of Service (ie Regular, Reserve or both) and by a variety of Geographic Areas. For example, not only can you now identify the numbers of veterans living in each local authority area, this can be broken down to see how many are male and aged between 50 and 55, what proportion were Reservists and how many were Regular. The Geographic Area can be further broken down to Electoral Ward area.

The Census data highlights some interesting facts that will be useful when planning services. For example: some 9% of the population of Moray are veterans, Fife has 17,217 veterans, whilst Glasgow and Highland have 10,676 and 10,418 respectively.

Further tranches of data will be issued towards the end of the year, at which stage a Flexible Table Builder will be available.

Agenda item 6

Open Forum

- Topics for Future Meetings were discussed (see below).

Date of next meetings:

- Future meetings are confirmed as:
 - 27 November

Further topics that have been suggested for future meetings include: Data following Census 2022; Employment; Female Veterans' Issues; Health; Housing; Improving Collaboration; and the Role of Drop in Centres. Any further suggestions that members feel should be considered would be welcomed.

**CPG Attendance 18 Sep
2024**

On Line Attendance

Alan Hamilton MBE TD VR	VAPC Scotland	1
Cllr Stewart MacDonald	East Dunbartonshire AF&V Champion	1
Elaine Edwards	Commonwealth War Graves Commission	1
Ian Maxwell	Shared Parenting Scotland	1
Karen Elliot BEM	RNA/WRNS Association	1
Kari Magee	NHS Highland	1
Leanne Bonner	Forces Employment Charity	1
Liza Jarvis	WRAC Association	1
Meg Thomas	Forces Children Scotland	1
Michelle Alston	Forces in Mind Trust	1
Morevain Martin	Garelochhead Station Trust	1
Paul Barrett	Royal Marines Association	1
Ryan MacDonald	Glasgow's Helping Heroes	1
Shaun Cauvin	Veterans Scotland	1
Stephen Elliot	Veterans Housing Scotland	1
William Sinclair	Argyll & Bute AF&V Champion	1
Wendy Brown	SSAFA	1
Total On-Line		17

In Person Attendance

Alethea McHardy	Glasgow University Veterans Research Group	1
Alistair Ferrier	Skills Development Scotland	1
Douglas Lumsden MSP	MSP; Member	1
Fiona Maxwell	Reading Force	1
Gavin Davey	RAF Benevolent Fund	1
Jim Wilson	Veterans Scotland	1
Julie McIlroy	Office of Scottish Veterans Commissioner	1
Louise Briggs	MOD Veterans Services	1
Mark McCulloch	MOD Veterans Services	1
Maurice Corry	Chair	1
Maurice Golden MSP	MSP; CPG Convenor	1
Mo Torau	Commonwealth Veterans Organisation	1
Prof Gerri Matthews-Smith	Edinburgh Napier University	1
Susie Hamilton	Scottish Veterans Commissioner	1
Tony Carruthers	Housing Options Scotland	1
Total in Person		15

Total Attending 32