

## Scottish Parliament Cross-Party Group on Armed Forces Veterans Meeting

30<sup>th</sup> September 2014 at the Scottish Parliament

### Minutes

<b>Attending</b>	
<b>Name</b>	<b>Organisation</b>
Mr Alex Fergusson MSP	Scottish Parliament - Convenor
Ms Annabelle Ewing MSP	Scottish Parliament
Willie Rennie MSP	Scottish Parliament
Nanette Milne MSP	Scottish Parliament
Jamie McGrigor MSP	Scottish Parliament
Keith Brown MSP	Scottish Parliament
Stewart Maxwell MSP	Scottish Parliament
Hugh Henry MSP	Scottish Parliament
Eric Fraser CBE	Scottish Veterans Commissioner
Allister Murphy	Scottish Government, Defence Policy Unit
Anita Poppelston	Scottish Government, Defence Policy Unit
David Cowin	Veterans Scotland (Secretary)
Watty Logan	Scottish Prison Services / Veterans in Custody
Sheila Stickland	Skillforce
David McAlister	SSAFA
Pat McKinnon	Thistle Foundation
Keith McKenzie	Thistle Foundation
Jane Lorimer	VFSN
Alison McCronie	Shelter Scotland
Barry Henderson	Glasgow's Helping Heroes
Maj Gene Maxwell	SO2 Transition HQ 51 Bde
Gary Gray	PoppyScotland
Dr Louise Richards	Division of Clinical Psychology Scotland
Maurice Stuart Corrie	Argyll & Bute Council
Michelle McKearnon	Forth Valley Chambers of Commerce
Tony Carruthers	Housing Options Scotland
Ally Gemmell	ASAP
Steve Conway	CEO Erskine
Aiveen Ryan	AYE Different
Ross Swinton	Veteran
Steven Williams	The Mark Wright Project
Neil Robinson	RBLS
<b>Apologies</b>	
Bruce Crawford MSP	Jim Wilson, Veterans Scotland
Jackson Carlaw MSP	
George Adam MSP	
Col Martin Gibson, Veterans Scotland	

1. **Introduction:** Mr Alex Fergusson MSP, Convenor AFV Cross Party Group, welcomed those attending and indicated that the main focus for consideration at this meeting was to be an update from the Scottish Veterans Commissioner Mr Eric Fraser CBE and an update from Mr Keith Brown MSP, Veterans Minister.
2. **Minutes of Previous meeting:** The minutes of the previous Cross Party Group AGM meeting, held on 11<sup>th</sup> June 2014, were approved as an accurate record of the meeting.
3. **Matters Arising:** There were no matters arising from the previous meeting.
4. **Topics for Consideration:** Mr Fergusson indicated that, as this was the first time that the Scottish Veterans Commissioner had attended the Cross Party Group, it would be appropriate for each of the individuals present to give a brief introduction on who they were and the organisation they represent.
5. **Introduction and Update:** Mr Fraser then gave an overview of his background having served in the Royal Navy for over 37 years. He then explained that at this stage his work plan and priorities are still to be set in conjunction with both Mr Keith Brown MSP and the scoping of the landscape that he is currently engaged on. It was emphasised by Mr Fraser that his appointment is an independent role from Scottish Parliament; however he is still answerable to ministers. Mr Fraser also commented on the need for discussion between himself and both the 3<sup>rd</sup> sector and statutory bodies. Mr Fergusson then thanked the Commissioner for his attendance and asked if there were any questions at this early stage that the group wished to ask of the Veterans Commissioner. A discussion then followed by the members present on the following areas for consideration by the commissioner:
  - a. NHS Priority Treatment for service related injuries.
  - b. Scottish Prison Service – Doctrine and stats.
  - c. Employment streams for veterans and promotion of the benefits of employing Ex Service personnel.
6. **Update from the Veterans Minister:** Mr Keith Brown MSP then joined the meeting and thanked all those present for their attendance. Mr Brown then spoke on the appointment of Mr Eric Fraser as the newly appointed Scottish Veterans Commissioner. He pointed out that Scotland was the first to appoint a veterans commissioner and as such were leading the way in this area. He also covered Transition and Lord Ashcroft review, which is one of the areas to be considered by the Scottish Veterans Commissioner. Mr Brown also commented that while the majority of service personnel transition well, we still have a small number who require assistance. The engagement of the Scottish Veterans Commissioner with veterans was also highlighted as he will be the figurehead for the veteran community in Scotland. Mr Brown also spoke on the Scottish Veterans Fund and that the fund had seen a rise to £120,000 over the last period. The importance of the various Local Authority Champion, NHS Champions, and Police Scotland Champion were also covered. Mr Brown spoke on the numerous events that had taken place in Scotland during the last few months which included a very successful Armed Forces Day in Stirling, the gifting of a number of tickets for veterans to attend sporting events including the Commonwealth Games and Ryder Cup. He also mentioned the ongoing World

War One events and the commemorative panel which had been setup and were dealing with these future events. An open discussion then took place and the following areas were covered:

- a. MOD Firm Base.
- b. Veterans Champions.
- c. Request for Stats on housing and health availability.
- d. The role of the Scottish Veterans Commissioner.
- e. Health and Wellbeing (including alternative therapies).
- f. NHS provision for veterans in prison.

7. **Dates of future meetings:** Future meeting dates and topics were agreed as shown below:

Wednesday 21 January 2015 – Health and Wellbeing  
Wednesday 29 April 2015 – Housing  
Wednesday 17 June 2015 – Support and Employment  
Wednesday 30 September 2015 – AGM

Before the Convenor closed the meeting, at approximately 19:35pm, he thanked those attending and contributing to the discussions, he also thanked Gillian Gillies for drawing together the administrative arrangements for the meeting.