

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

21<sup>st</sup> January 2015 at the Scottish Parliament

## Minutes

### CROSS PARTY GROUP 21 JAN 2015 - ATTENDANCE

#### MSP Attending

First Name	Surname	Organisation
Jackson	Carlaw	MSP
Alex	Fergusson	MSP; Convenor
Hugh	Henry	MSP
Jim	Hume	MSP
Stuart	Maxwell	MSP
Nanette	Milne	MSP

#### Others Attending

First Name	Surname	Organisation
Gayle	Adnyana	Skillforce
Stephen	Baird	Legion Scotland
Tony	Carruthers	Housing Options Scotland
Dave	Carson	Veterans 1st Point
Marianne	Donaldson	Veterans UK
Sharon	Fegan	Veterans 1st Point
John	Fotheringham	HQ 51 Bde
Eric	Fraser	Scottish Veterans Commissioner
Ally	Gemmell	ASAP
Gary	Gray	Poppyscotland
John	Greenwell	Scottish Borders Veterans Champion
Paul	Hayllor	Lothian Veterans Centre
Barry	Henderson	Glasgow's Helping Heroes
Carrol	Herbertson	Veterans Commissioner's Office
Tony	Huggins-Haig	member
Yvonne	Huggins-Haig	member
Watty	Logan	SPS
Gene	Maxwell	HQ 51 Bde
David	McAllister	SSAFA
Johanna	McGhee	Glasgow's Helping Heroes
Dave	McGrath	East Scotland VAPC
Ian	McGregor	Poppyscotland
Neil	Morrison	Veterans Scotland
Scott	Muir	SACRO
Aiveen	Ryan	Aye Different
Bruce	Smith	Lothian Veterans Centre
Maurice	Stuart Corry	Veterans Champion Argyll & Bute
Ross	Swinton	Veteran
Jason	Wallace	SACRO

Jim	Wilson	Veterans Scotland
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**Apologies had been received in advance**

Jackie	Baillie	MSP
Martin	Gibson	Executive Chairman Veterans Scotland

1. **Introduction:** Mr Alex Fergusson MSP, Convenor AFV Cross Party Group, welcomed all those attending and indicated that the main focus for the meeting was a brief by Mr Ian McGregor, Chief Executive of Poppyscotland, who would present the findings of their recent report into the 'Health and Welfare of the ex-service community in Scotland 2014' which had recently been published. He invited all attending to briefly introduce themselves.
  2. **Minutes of Previous meeting:** The minutes of the previous Cross Party Group AGM meeting, held on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2014, were approved as an accurate record of the meeting.
  3. **Matters Arising:** There were no matters arising from the previous meeting.
  4. **Other Topics for Consideration:** Mr Fergusson asked if there were any other topics that should be considered at the meeting, none were forthcoming and it was felt that many issues may be discussed following Mr McGregor's presentation.
  5. **A Report into the Health and Welfare of the ex-Service Community:** A copy of the slides of Mr McGregor's presentation is attached. Key points that were brought out in the presentation were:
    - a. The ex-service community is declining rapidly; this is an expected consequence of the reduction in the size of the Services following the Second World War and National Service. As a result there are less individuals in Scotland with first-hand experience of the Services, less family connections with the Services
    - b. The average age of veterans across Scotland is 67 years, the ex-service community represents about 46% of the Scottish population over 75 years.
    - c. There is some evidence that 'donor fatigue' and an ageing population will reduce charitable donations and as a consequence some charities will become unsustainable. This situation may result in greater collaboration between third sector organisations and improved services.
    - d. Some of the health and welfare needs of the ex-service community in Scotland are proportionally worse than other parts of the UK, this may be down to a higher proportion of 'teeth arm' personnel coming from Scotland.
- Subsequent Discussion:** The presentation acted as an excellent catalyst for subsequent discussion parts of which included:

7. **Subsequent Discussion:** The presentation acted as an excellent catalyst for subsequent discussions which focussed on, in no specific order:

- a. It was felt that the sample size of the survey made the findings statistically valid.
- b. It was noted that SSAFA are dealing with increasing numbers of requests from older clients – many more are being helped directly through the NHS.
- c. Some 2000 service leavers return to Scotland each year, the majority of whom have no significant issues. Some focus should be placed on promoting the benefits of employing the service leaver.
- d. The viability of the current range of ex-service charities was considered, and options may be looked at through the Charities Act, however the consensus was that there are benefits in having a range of services and means of delivery available.
- e. Consideration could be given to ‘kite-marking’ ex-service charities, although the administration required may outweigh the benefits and curb the enthusiasm of some elements of the sector. Some examples of good practice can be found in SSAFA, Glasgow’s Helping Heroes, Lothian Veterans Centre, SACRO and Veterans 1<sup>st</sup> Point (not an exclusive or exhaustive list).
- f. It was felt important to take care not to thwart the enthusiasm of third sector organisations. This could be done through greater collaboration, with other ex-service and non-service organisations which could also result in greater clout and staying power.
- g. Pride within a veteran can be a stumbling block to seeking support and assistance until later when the issue(s) can become more intense.
- h. The lack of Veterans Champions within the Social Services was reflected upon and it was felt that such appointments would bring value for the community.
- i. The fact that Transition is about Reintegration of individuals into society was reflected upon.
- j. It was suggested that Ian McGregor and Jim Wilson considered these matters and reported back at the next meeting.

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

Wednesday 29 April 2015 – Housing  
Wednesday 17 June 2015 – Support and Employment  
Wednesday 30 September 2015 – AGM