

**Cross-Party Group in the Scottish Parliament on
The Armed Forces and Veterans Community**

Meeting 17 April 2018

Minutes

1. **Introductions and Opening Remarks:** The Convenor welcomed the Group and thanked everyone for attending; in particular he welcomed serving members of the Armed Forces who will present an update. He reiterated the progress that has been made with the group, recognising the benefit of now including the Serving, Served and Families therefore representing the interests of the wider Armed Forces Community.

2. **Attendance:**

MSPs		
1	Maurice	Corry MSP (Convenor)
1	Tom	Arthur MSP
1	Michelle	Ballantyne MSP
1	Bill	Bowman MSP
1	Richard	Lothead MSP
1	Edward	Mountain MSP
6	Total MSP attending	

Members

1	Adam Strachura	Age Scotland
1	Aileen Hill	Lothian Armed Forces & Veterans Project
1	Alan Cameron	Stand Easy
1	Alan Dalziel	Action on Hearing Loss Scotland
1	Alistair Ferrier	Skills Development Scotland
1	Ally Gemmell	ASAP
1	Annabel Ingram	Army Families Federation
1	Barry Henderson	SACRO
1	Ben Shaw	Lothian Veterans Centre
1	Bruce Smith	Lothian Veterans Centre
1	Carolyn MacLeod	Association of Directors of Education Scotland
1	Col Charlie Wallace	HQ 51 Infantry Brigade & HQ Scotland
1	David McNeill	Help for Heroes
1	Donna McSwiggan	Action on Hearing Loss Scotland
1	Emma Gratin	DMWS
1	Gp Capt Clive Coombes	Air Officer Scotland
1	Ian Stewart	Veterans Café
1	Jim Castle	GCU
1	Jim Wilson	Veterans Scotland & Secretary
1	Karen Elliot	Association of Wrens & Royal Naval Association
1	Karen McArthur	SACRO
1	Keith Mackenzie	Veterans Community Café

1	Kenny Warren	Scottish Government DPU
1	Lt Cdr Garth Atkinson RN	Royal Navy
1	Mary-Clare MacFarlane	OAS
1	Maurice Walsh	RASC & TCR Association
1	Michelle Ferguson	Scotland's Bravest Manufacturing Company
1	Natalie Cutler	Lothian Armed Forces & Veterans Project
1	Richard Baker	Scottish War Blinded
1	Robbie Gibson	Lowland RFCA
1	Rupert Forrest	Give us Time
1	Ryan Gordon	DMWS
1	Sharon Higgins	Poppyscotland
1	Shaun Cauvin	Veterans Scotland
1	Stephen Elliot	Legion Scotland
1	Tony Carruthers	Housing Options Scotland
36	Total Members attending	

Apologies had been received from the MSPs Alexander Stewart, Liam Kerr and Jacque Baillie. Capt Chris Smith RN, Eric Fraser Scottish Veterans Commissioner and Chris Hughes Executive Chairman and various other members had also intimated their apologies.

3. **Previous Minutes:** The minutes of the previous meeting, which had taken place on 17 January 2018, were agreed as an accurate record of that meeting and approved by the members.
4. **Matters arising.** There were no matters arising from the previous minutes.
5. **Briefings:** There were two topics presented,
 - A Service Update: Col Charlie Wallace, Gp Capt Clive Coombes and Lt Cdr Garth Atkinson provided a tri-Service brief. Key aspects that were discussed included:
 - i. Service in the Armed Forces is a very positive experience for the clear majority of personnel.
 - ii. Service personnel work within an environmental context that ranges from Simple, through Complicated and Complex to Chaotic.
 - iii. The three Services working very closely together.
 - iv. Operational and training deployment of the three Services worldwide and base locations within Scotland.
 - v. Support provided by the Services within Scotland to local authorities, Other Government Departments and other statutory organisations.
 - vi. Details of recent MSP visits to Bases.
 - vii. An overview of Reserves in Scotland.
 - viii. The Future Accommodation Model.
 - ix. Links to industry in Scotland.
 - x. Size and structure of the Services in Scotland.
 - xi. Links with the civilian community.

The Convenor thanked those presenting on behalf of the Services.

- Give Us Time: Rupert Forrest provided an insight into this charity, of which he is Managing Director, that provides respite holidays for members of the Armed Forces Community, enabling families to spend time together. The important benefits that accrue from such activities should not be underestimated and in many cases promote and support family life.

The Convenor thanked Rupert Forrest for his enlightening presentation.

- There followed some discussion on the Firm Base structure across Scotland that sought to bring together representation, at a local level, from local authorities, NHS, Police, DWP, SDS, SPS, ASAP, Education departments and others to consider matters relating to the Armed Forces Communities across Scotland. It was noted that recommendations for good practice are contained in the Forces in Mind Trust report 'Our Communities – Our Covenant' and that it may be worth involving local Universities and Colleges in such a group.

6. **Other Business:**

- The group had a discussion in relation to the work with veterans that Glasgow Caledonian University and Edinburgh Napier University were doing; it also discussed volunteering opportunities as Special Constables that are currently available across Scotland.

7. **AOB:** No additional business had been suggested

8. **Dates of Next Meetings:**

- 26 June – Health and Well-Being
- 19 September – AGM, and Families Transition (subject TBC)