



## Norfolk Armed Forces Covenant Board Minutes of the meeting held on 16 March 2023

Virtual meeting held on Microsoft Teams

### Present:

Air Cdre Kevin Pellatt (KP)	Norfolk Armed Forces Commissioner (Chairman)
Vanessa Plumley (VP)	RAF Families' Federation
Wg Cdr Rachel Portlock (RP)	RAF Marham
Craig Chalmers (CC)	Norfolk County Council
Tim Allen (TA)	Reserve Forces' and Cadets' Association Norfolk
Frank Hughes (FH)	SSAFA
Dr Andrew Hayward (AH)	NHS
Maj Ben Matthews (BM)	1 <sup>st</sup> The Queen's Dragoon Guards
Sqn Ldr Stew Geary (SG)	Reserve Forces' and Cadets' Association Norfolk
Dr Frankie Swords (FS)	NHS - Norfolk and Waveney ICB
Jocelyne Newman (JN)	RAF Marham
Chris Haystead (CH)	Norwich City Council
Stephen Heard (SH)	Veterans' Advisory & Pensions Cttee
Andrew Stewart (AS)	Norfolk County Council
Merry Halliday (MH)	Norfolk County Council
Bev Herron (BH)	Norfolk County Council

### Apologies:

Cdr Andy Swain (AS)	Royal Navy
Maj Gavin Rushmere (GR)	3rd Battalion, The Royal Anglian Regiment
Cllr Keith Kiddie (KK)	Norfolk County Council
Wayne Farrow (WF)	DWP
Andy Tovell (AT)	Norfolk County Council
Paul Smith (PS)	RBL
Capt John Davies (JD)	1 <sup>st</sup> The Queen's Dragoon Guard

### 1. Welcome, introductions and apologies

- 1.1. KP welcomed everyone attending and listed the apologies.
- 1.2. KP apologised the minutes of the previous meeting in September had not been included in the agenda pack but thanked those who had made comments. On behalf of the Board, he agreed the minutes.

## **2. Update on the current budget and the Health and Wellbeing Fund**

- 2.1 BH updated Board on the current budget and the Health and Wellbeing Fund.
- 2.2 RAF Marham sought agreement from the Board to use the underspend from the Health and Wellbeing Fund, of £362.45, to support families separated from their serving person for a long time when not operational ie, when training. JN explained, these families cannot claim an allowance from the Family Welfare Grant. The Board agreed to support the request from the RAF Marham.
- 2.3 BM asked how the funding awarded to RAF Marham might apply in the QDG's circumstances with extensive deployments forecast over the next two years. BH explained the QDG could apply for funding whenever they wish to.
- 2.4 Board noted the deadline for comments on RAF Marham's request for £3.5k for their Friends and Families Day was Monday 20/03/23.
- 2.5 Considering the Health and Wellbeing Fund, Board agreed to fund Year 2 requests totalling £20k – this will be made up of £10k to The Bridge for Heroes and £10k to The Forces Employment Charity (formerly RFEA). The Board agreed it should be made clear to both organisations that funding was for a continuation to the projects the Board funded during Year 1 and not for use for other purposes or by third parties.

## **3. Update on the Veterans' Workshop**

- 3.1. MH informed Board the Veterans' Workshop will take place on Monday 10 July at Dereham Memorial Hall. She thanked AS for the work undertaken by the Insight and Analytics Team at NCC to produce the Norfolk Armed Forces Community Needs Assessment. Comments were sought on the draft programme for the day.
- 3.2. RP asked for assurance the event would produce concrete actions. KP confirmed it would.
- 3.3. AH said the Board needed to look at how it engages veterans, especially younger ones who may prefer social media – this is to encourage people who are not engaging with the system to attend. He also asked the Board to consider transport needs to enable attendance.
- 3.4. FS suggested enabling organisations to have a stall and to provide information and support on the day – eg., Citizens' Advice and local councils, not just military charities. She suggested separating out the case studies between the morning and afternoon sessions so table discussions can focus on specific topics. It would avoid overloading people with information. FS also recommended having active feedback which includes a full group discussion to agree what actions arise for the Board.
- 3.5. Board members were asked to identify if they were unable to attend or unwilling to take an active role such as chairing a table – please decline the invite or notify MH / BH if you can't support the workshop. The Board undertake this type of event every 5 years, so it is important and helpful for it to be fully supported.

#### **4. Updates from members of the Board**

- 4.1. KP / AH have continued work with GPs encouraging them to become Veteran Friendly surgeries. They recently spoke to Theatre Royal Surgery in Dereham and were well received. Where the practice manager is ex-serving, KP / AH tend to get better reception. They plan to continue with this work.
- 4.2. KP is meeting with Air Commodore Andrew Dickens, the RAF's newly appointed Regional Air Officer, and with the Leader of NCC, Cllr Andrew Proctor and Tom McCabe to discuss and strengthen regional engagement.
- 4.3. FS – congratulated KP / AH on their work with GP practices because Norfolk is the only county in England which is above the 40% target.
- 4.4. FS has put AH in touch with two Primary Care Networks which are looking to engage in the Veteran Friendly GP Scheme. She added, there will be a GP Veteran Friendly practice special in next GP Bulletin.
- 4.5. Board discussed the difficulties arising with the transfer of service leavers' medical records from Defence Medical Services to the NHS. FS suggested that Board should consider how to communicate with service leavers that they need to request a copy of their records early as this takes time. She noted there are delays with the MOD / NHS national Project Cortisone in resolving these problems which she spoken to Richard Swarbrick, Head of Partnerships and Engagement at NHS England, about. FS requested that any Board members who hear of cases where service leavers are having problems to let her know.
- 4.6. FS reported that the NHS's national Elective Recovery Boards now receive regular reports identifying veterans – this will help to monitor whether veterans are experiencing disadvantage. More GPs need to tick the "veteran" box on electronic forms to improve the data.
- 4.7. SH said as well as his role on the Veterans' Advisory and Pension Committee, he is working part time role to increase the number of GP surgeries becoming accredited as Veteran Friendly. The Royal College of GPs is sharing veterans' stories.
- 4.8. FH asked if the Board could speak to the armed forces minister about medical records. SH said the VAPC are doing so.
- 4.9. AS commented the take up of information about the transfer of medical records during the transition period in the lower ranks was poor, people don't want to listen sometimes.
- 4.10. SG updated Board there will be an Employer Engagement breakfast at the Royal Norfolk Show. He requested Board members let him know of any companies seeking to sign the Covenant Pledge and / or support reservists and adult cadet leaders. FH to send SG contact details for CITB who are running a project getting veterans into jobs in the construction sector.

- 4.11. SG informed Board RAFA are offering funding for events focusing on targeting veterans who served in Afghanistan and Iraq by looking at ways in which people can improve their health and wellbeing. The application deadline is currently end of May.
- 4.12. RP said RAF Marham's Friends & Families Day (F&FD) will be 31<sup>st</sup> Aug. Rachel thanked the Board for their support and for funding for the event. Marham will be involved in the Royal Norfolk Show.
- 4.13. JN asked Board members who want a stall in the community area at RAF Marham's F&FD to contact MH / BH who will be given contact details at Marham.
- 4.14. SG commented there will be a RAFA cycle ride event at RAF Marham in June.
- 4.15. MH updated Board NCC is working on implementing the new duty of due regard. KP thanked NCC for its ongoing support funding and staffing the Covenant.
- 4.16. CC reminded Board NCC's Norfolk Assistance Scheme is a good scheme to help with the cost of living crisis. There is a rise in homelessness and NCC would like to reach people earlier to prevent them becoming homeless.
- 4.17. BM said the Army is currently experiencing a 'generation' of joiners that came into the Army during the pandemic and have had a very different experience to pre-pandemic joiners. Some should not have joined and are therefore leaving early, and others are leaving early due to it not being the experience they expected. It is believed this could mean an uptick in mental health concerns with service leavers.

## **5. Any other business**

- 5.1. KP reported that he is now entering his last year as Armed Forces Commissioner and is keen to tie-up some loose ends before departing.

## **6. Dates of next meeting**

The next Board meeting will be on 27 September 10-12pm. [This was amended to 14 September after the Board meeting closed.]