

Triennial Review Report: Veterans Advisory & Pensions Committees

Reviewing the function, form and efficiency and governance of the Veterans Advisory & Pensions Committees (VAPC) as a Non-Departmental Public Body

3 March 2016

Executive Summary

1. Following the last Quinquennial Review in 2010 it was agreed to pilot a wider remit for the existing War Pensions Committees (WPC). The pilot was implemented in 2011 and the WPC became the Veterans Advisory and Pensions Committee (VAPC). The VAPC is an Advisory Non-Departmental Public Body (ANDPB) which operates voluntarily on a regional basis as 13 Committees, each one led by its own Chairman. The ANDPB itself is headed by a Chair of Chairs. The purpose of each Committee is to help enhance the local services delivered to ex-service personnel and their families. They also provide independent advice to both central and local government, health authorities and service providers in local communities. They give local support in promoting the Armed Forces' Covenant and are actively involved in the development of local Community Covenants. Importantly, the VAPCs provide an independent 'Litmus Test' of the veracity and suitability of both MOD veterans policy and its implementation through MOD as the sponsor department, with Veterans UK (an MoD organisation responsible for the administration of the War Pension Scheme, Armed Forces Compensation Scheme and Armed Forces Pension Scheme) providing the sponsor team support. The VAPCs also provide a vital regional footprint from which the MOD and Veterans UK can draw evidence and conditions to shape service delivery and focus on individual veterans cases as required.
2. The VAPC Chairmen have 2 nominated representatives on the membership of the Central Advisory Committee (CAC), chaired by Min DPV, on Pensions and Compensation which meets every six months. Min DPV meets with all 13 Chairs periodically at the six monthly VAPC conferences when possible. Of note, however, the Armed Forces Act does not include full reference to the VAPC and this lack of statutory recognition generated some disquiet from the VAPC Chairs in recent years as to the legitimacy of their role – but this has now been resolved with the recognition of VAPC within the current Armed Forces Bill, which at the time of writing is continuing its passage through Parliament. Minister for Defence Personnel and Veterans stated that “we have amended the Bill so that it expands the statutory remit of the VAPC. This is good news for both the Committees and the veterans they so ably support”
3. Lord Ashcroft's Veterans' Transition Review covered veterans' issues extensively and made reference to the 'Mobilisation of VAPCs'¹. Notwithstanding The Lord Ashcroft Report, the Cabinet Office requires Departments to review the function, controls and governance arrangements of their non-departmental public bodies (NDPBs) triennially. Accordingly, I have proceeded with this review, albeit with a light touch in order not to repeat ground covered by Lord Ashcroft.
4. I have conducted the review in two stages. The first stage has been to examine the key functions of the VAPCs and whether it remains appropriate for those functions to continue. Given the ever changing nature of local public services, I also considered whether it remained appropriate for those functions to be delivered by Government and specifically by a NDPB. Once I established that the VAPC should continue, I proceeded with the second stage of the Review which has been to ensure that the body is operating in line with the recognised principles of good corporate governance.
5. My recommendations will point to the conclusion that the VAPCs continue to provide valuable impartial advice to both Min DPV and Veterans UK. In addition, the VAPCs

¹ Lord Ashcroft Veterans' Transition Review February 2014

continue to play an important role in furthering the interests and needs of veterans, not least of which is the result of the establishment of fora under the Armed Forces and Community Covenants, which continue to generate significant contribution from the public sector, local authorities and military units. Thus the VAPCs are able to sustain clear and relevant value for a range of stakeholders, including those who apply to become members on a voluntary basis.

6. I have considered whether or not other bodies within the public sector could be drawn in to take over some of the functions of the VAPCs. It is clear though that very few would be able to contextualize potential future delivery options in the way VAPCs can due to members' experience of life in the military. However, if we judge this experience to be vital then recruitment of chairs, member selection and training needs to be focused accordingly. That said, there needs to be a balance of experience and skills within the VAPCs. On the one hand the VAPCs will always need a core of ex military members who instinctively understand military life. They need to be able to talk the language and relate to the nature, friction and rigour of service life and thus empathise both as and with veterans. On the other, the VAPCs also need a broad and diverse range of experience such as that drawn from industry, the commercial sector as well as the professions to ensure that commercial best practice is embraced whenever it is presented and that process and output is constantly challenged and improved. Indeed, there are some notable examples of southern regional initiatives with VAPCs partnering with Barclays, Marks and Spencer and RBS, and others where they have networked most effectively with local authorities and the NHS. Such initiatives are laudable, but we must also be cognisant that they are not necessarily easily transportable to other areas due to different geographic and economic characteristics. Thus for now - and whilst all initiatives that further the interests of veterans should be strongly encouraged - they should not be mandated. I do believe, however, that the best performing VAPCs should be used as referencing teams for others to garner best practice.
7. In terms of standards and performance across all 13 VAPCs, there is variance. To improve upon this, the VAPCS should be asked to provide an annual forward plan of action, based upon evidence of the needs of their members and local community services and provision. The plan should be validated by Veterans UK and throughout the year each VAPC Chair should report progress against the plan. Appraisals on the Chair and members can then be more objective. This evidence based planning will drive standardisation, the sharing of best practice and importantly identify skill gaps, training needs and additional resources as required.
8. Financial resource was raised a number of times by the Chairs. Without doubt there are occasions when the VAPCs might need to accept, hold and distribute funds in the pursuit of their terms of reference. There is also a view that the VAPCs should become charities or have lodged funds within larger charities. My opinion is that if VAPCs became charities, they would potentially be swamped by the larger military charities or seen to be yet another of the plethora of 3rd sector organisations seeking to compete to raise funds for veterans. Equally if VAPC lodge funds with larger charities, they might become involved in the competition for dispersal of monies. This in turn would undermine the current status of VAPC and their unbiased departmental regionally-based advocacy for veterans. My recommendation, therefore, is that the issue of fund holding should be taken forward as a separate work stream lead by the MOD Sponsor Team (Veterans UK) to include relevant chairs and expert bodies to advise and agree a way forward.
9. I should highlight in this summary that, given the voluntary nature of the VAPCs, we need to be careful as to how much we load upon them and expect in terms of output.

Because they are voluntary and regionally based, the VAPCs currently represent excellent value for money, with little further scope for efficiencies without jeopardising the key benefit of their regionalisation and thus ability to provide local advocacy and intelligence. Indeed, against a background of two recent major conflicts, the VAPCs have continued to prove their worth as NDPB operating on behalf of Veterans UK and veterans. VAPCs, partnered through the Armed Forces Covenant with local authorities and guided by public sector bodies including those of HMG, remain the most appropriate and cost effective option for the provision of independent advice and support to veterans and stakeholders across the UK. Accordingly we do need to publicly recognise this effort and their VFM.

10. In sum, the VAPC should continue as an ANDPB. The VAPC should continue to carry out the majority of functions as now, but be subject to more rigorous planning, reporting and control. There must also be improved communication including more effective consultation between VAPC Chairs, stakeholders and the sponsor department (MOD). However, I have established that with some reinforcement of the principles of good corporate governance, standardisation, the sharing of best practice and improved training, we can make the VAPC even more effective.

Chris Bray
03 March 2016

Introduction

Aims of the Review

1. It is Government policy that a non-departmental public body (NDPB) should only be set up, or remain in existence, where the model can be clearly evidenced as the most appropriate and cost effective way of delivering the functions of that body.
2. In April 2011, Cabinet Office announced that all NDPBs still in existence following the first stage of public bodies' reform would have to undergo a substantive review every three years. Triennial Reviews have two principal aims, represented by two stages:
 - a. Stage 1 aims to provide a robust challenge of the continuing need for individual NDPBs – both their functions and their form; and where it is agreed that a body remain as an NDPB, to review its capacity for delivering more effectively and efficiently, including identifying potential for efficiency savings and its ability to contribute to economic growth; and
 - b. Stage 2 aims to review the control and governance arrangements in place to ensure that the public body and the sponsoring department are complying with recognised principles of good corporate governance. This should also include an assessment of the body's performance.
3. This Review has been carried out in line with Cabinet Office guidance "Guidance on Reviews of Non Departmental Public Bodies", revised in 2014. This guidance states that all reviews should be conducted in line with the following principles:
 - a. **"Challenge:** *Reviews must be challenging. They should take a first principles approach to whether the function of a body is still needed, and if it is what the best form for delivery of that function is. Reviews should not just seek to evidence the status quo. They should be robust and rigorous and provide evidence for all recommendations. They must consider issues of efficiency, including the potential for efficiency savings, and make relevant recommendations. They should consider the performance of the body, and whether it could provide better value for money, including in terms of the body's contribution to economic growth. A description of how the review will be structured to meet this aim should be set out clearly in the Terms of Reference, which will be agreed between the department and the Cabinet Office.*
 - b. **"Proportionality:** *Reviews must not be overly bureaucratic and should be appropriate for the size and nature of the NDPB being reviewed. Where appropriate, reviews of similar bodies should be combined or clustered to ensure the maximum benefit in terms of streamlining the review process, identifying synergies across departments and NDPBs, and considering efficiency."*
 - c. **"Contextual:** *Reviews should not be undertaken in silos, but should wherever possible be integrated with other departmental policy initiatives, efficiency reviews, landscape reviews, and seek to look across departmental boundaries to cluster reviews of bodies to further enable informed discussions about potential efficiencies. Departments should consider the potential for integration when building their Triennial Review timetable, and the Cabinet Office will assist departments in doing this. More guidance on clustering reviews is given in the annexes to this document."*
 - d. **"Pace:** *Reviews must be completed quickly to minimise the disruption to the NDPB's business and reduce uncertainty about its future. Reviews should*

normally take no more than six months. Timetables, including start and completion dates, for individual review will be agreed with Cabinet Office at the beginning of each review.”

- e. ***“Inclusivity:*** *Reviews must be open and inclusive. The NDPB being reviewed must be engaged and consulted at both an Executive and a Non-Executive level. Users and stakeholders must have the opportunity to comment and contribute. Parliament must be informed about the commencement and conclusions of reviews. Departmental Select Committees must be given the opportunity to input.”*
- f. ***“Transparency:*** *All reviews must be announced formally, both to Parliament and to the public. All review reports must be published once clearance has been given by the Minister for the Cabinet Office. The results of reviews must be announced to Parliament.”*

Background

4. The VAPCs are an Advisory Non Departmental Public Body (ANDPB) made up of unpaid volunteers appointed by Minister Defence Personnel and Veterans to provide help for veterans and their families in accessing vital welfare support. This is achieved by 13 regional committees across England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales each one having between 12 and 20 members.
5. The Committees were formerly known as War Pensions Committees (WPC) dating back to 1921, when members undertook adjudication and administration of grants to disabled ex-servicemen, care for their families and monitoring of the Ministry of Pensions War Disablement Pensions Scheme. The Committees have already undergone considerable reductions. In the past there were as many as 155 War Pensions Committees (WPCs). Numbers reduced over the years to 29 (following the 1990 quinquennial review), down to the current 13, with nine committees for England replicating the geographical boundaries of the English Regions and one committee each for Wales and Northern Ireland and two committees for Scotland. A full breakdown of regions can be found at Annex E.
6. The previous reviews identified that their regional expertise would be essential in ensuring that the nation’s commitment to cross government support to veterans could be monitored. For this reason it is important to maintain the regional support across 13 regional Committees, (currently under the umbrella of 1 ANDPB) to ensure that this is effectively managed. The MOD recognises that (for historic reasons) the Cabinet Office (‘CO’) has treated each of the 13 VAPCs as individual ANDPBs and not, as should be the case, a single ANDPB.
7. *It is recommended that MOD officials address this matter with CO officials to ensure this is rectified, so that CO treats the VAPCs as a single ANDPB.* This review is satisfied that the governance protocols for the 13 VAPCs are sufficiently robust for them to be treated as a single ANDPB.
8. Following the last Quinquennial Review in 2010 it was agreed to pilot a wider remit for the WPC, allowing them to act as advocates for veterans in support of the Armed Forces Covenant. The pilot was implemented in 2011 and the former WPC became the VAPC. The Statutory Instrument is to be revised following very recent legislative provision in the form of the Armed Forces Bill 2015.

Role of the VAPC

9. The role of the Committees is to:

(a) Raise awareness

Raise awareness, especially at local level of:

- i) The War Pensions Scheme,
- ii) Armed Forces Compensation Scheme,
- iii) The Veterans UK Welfare Service
- iv) The availability of cross government support to the Armed Forces, their families and Veterans.
- v) Act as advocates for implementing the Armed Forces Covenant and associated measures at a local level.

(b) Provide Support

Support the Ministry of Defence by acting as advocates for the implementation of cross government support to injured personnel, their dependants and veterans. Highlighting gaps or issues in provision and feeding these back initially through Veterans UK or any mechanism put in place by the service provider.

Understand the Welfare Provision Network in the local areas and assist Veterans and dependants in accessing local services as envisaged under the Armed Forces Covenant, where individuals are unable to obtain the required support – i.e. work with all parties to act as advocates for individuals experiencing difficulty in accessing services. The committees do not provide welfare support themselves but can support individuals and should refer cases for Veterans UK Welfare assessment where appropriate.

Support Veterans UK by monitoring its welfare service and liaising with other organisations with a view to ensuring the welfare needs of veterans and their dependants are addressed.

(c) Advising and representing

Assist individuals with any problems or complaints they have regarding the war pensions or AFCS claims process, where there is no formal recourse to an independent body, liaising closely with Veterans UK.

Offer an independent explanation of the War Pensions and AFCS scheme(s) as they relate to individuals, assessing issues in response to specific complaints.

Provide a formal independent review of complaints.

(d) Consultation

To act as a conduit for local consultation based on their involvement in the wider process and their contact with individuals in the local areas, with Ministers, the Ministry of Defence and Veterans UK on issues affecting recipients of pension from the War Pensions Scheme and Armed Forces Compensation Scheme.

The Review: Stage One

Process

10. The VAPC Triennial Review was announced in Parliament by written ministerial statement on 24 March 2015.

11. The Lead Reviewer is Air Commodore Chris Bray OBE (Ret'd), Deputy Head Defence Business Services Military Personnel in the Ministry of Defence. He is

independent of the VAPC and of the MoD team which supports and sponsors the VAPC. He undertook the Review without the need for a challenge group - this was considered to be a proportionate approach given the small size of the NDPB under review, its purely advisory function, and the small burden it places on public sector resources.

12. The formal terms of reference of the Review are attached at Annex A.
13. Stage 1 identified and examined the key functions of the VAPC, and considered whether these were still necessary. Since the functions were considered necessary, a range of alternative options for delivery was reviewed. Finally, the Review assessed whether the VAPC passed one or more of the Government's "three tests" for remaining as an NDPB:
 - a. Does the VAPC perform a technical function which requires expertise external to government?
 - b. Does the VAPC need to have, and demonstrate, absolute political impartiality?
 - c. Does the VAPC need to act independently of Ministers?

Evidence and Stakeholder Engagement

14. The VAPC are appointed by the Minister for Defence Personnel and Veterans to effectively be the independent eyes and ears on the ground on veterans' matters. It was decided that open public consultation would be disproportionate and a narrower, targeted stakeholder engagement was carried out. The stakeholders who were consulted included representatives of veterans' charities, MoD civil servants and members of the Armed Forces and are listed in Annex B.
15. The Lead Reviewer also engaged directly with the VAPC Chairs by questionnaire. He also attended regional Committee meetings as an observer and attended their Chairs' conference in October 2015 to discuss their functions and remit. Informal telephone conversations and meetings to follow up specific issues have also taken place.
16. Unfortunately, due to the timing of this Review, the Defence Select Committee was not sitting during the time of the stakeholder engagement, although the clerk was contacted via the MoD Parliamentary Branch. No substantive engagement was possible and it was agreed that DBS Secretariat Team would write to the Defence Select Committee Chairman out of courtesy once the report was published.

Are the functions of the body still required?

17. Support for veterans and their families is a vast and complex area with adherence to the Armed Forces Covenant remaining high on the Government's agenda. The administration of the Covenant and welfare policy along with delivery of pay, pensions and compensation to serving personnel and veterans remains a fundamental part of MoD's business.
18. As part of The Veterans Transition Review undertaken by Lord Ashcroft in 2014, under the heading of 'The Armed Forces Covenant & Veterans' Advocacy', one of the (accepted) recommendations was to 'mobilise the VAPCs to help local authorities and practitioners pursue best practice and ensure more consistent performance in delivering the Community Covenant.'

19. This review concludes that the VAPCs are a good candidate for this work, alongside their existing roles which Lord Ashcroft identified as including “advising and representing those with problems or complaints about pensions and compensation.
20. The Lead Reviewer is satisfied that the VAPC members are respected members of local communities who bring a wealth of experience, knowledge and commitment to their unique function. Also the fact that the VAPC provides a body which is impartial and therefore not influenced by governmental policy factors is important to the veterans, the stakeholder community and the MOD.
21. Stakeholders were unanimously of the opinion that there is a continued need for the provision of this independent ‘unofficial Ombudsman’ role to support the Minister for Defence Personnel and Veterans and the MOD. The following comments were among those received:

“...perhaps better recognition could be achieved by making them an integral part of the Covenant Reference Group – surely their regional perspective would provide better clarity about effectiveness of veterans initiatives.”

“We are able to ensure that there is a link between Welsh Government and UK-- we ensure that information is provided in both Welsh and English-- a legal requirement in Wales. We attend all the AFCC meetings in Wales and offer advice as to the best way forward. We can also help where there are differences in reality between England and Wales.”

“MoD could improve their sponsorship by one simple expedient: providing a mechanism to collate all cross cutting issues that might affect the Armed Forces Community and ensuring VAPCs, and Veterans UK who are also often omitted as well, receive such information quickly and before regional stakeholders. Only then can they interpret and ensure it is applied evenly across the UK and without being misinterpreted or misrepresented, thus effectively managing expectations better.”

“The Review needs to acknowledge the considerable difficulties involved in Northern Ireland, firstly in relation to veterans’ concerns about their personal security and also the ‘perceived’ clear need for a ‘secure centre’, where veterans and their families can go to obtain ‘one stop shop’ advice and a limited range of medical support services, in particular for mental health issues (including PTSD and counselling), which is not available in a ‘safe’ location at present.

“The work of VAPCs needs to be promoted in the highest level of Government...”

“I fully support the Ashcroft Veterans Review recommendation that the VAPCs should have their remit widened.”

22. The Review concludes that the VAPC has met its objectives and there is an ongoing need for the function that the VAPC currently provides. Annex C lists achievements of the VAPCs against their functions as stated in the Statutory Instruments 2000 No. 3180 with the addition of their commitment to raising awareness within their local community of the Armed Forces Covenant.

Is there an appropriate alternative delivery model?

23. The Cabinet Office Triennial Review guidance sets out a checklist of delivery options that departments should consider when reviewing the functions of an

ANDPB. The list is not exhaustive, but as a minimum, departments must evidence that they have considered all of the options set out in this checklist. The Review considered each of these options as set out below:

- a. **Abolish** – The Ashcroft recommendation has effectively secured the future of the VAPCs by enhancing and restating how the VAPCs can assist transition. Therefore, as the functions remain necessary, if the VAPC were abolished, another body would be required to fulfil this recommendation.
- b. **Move out of central government** – If the VAPC functions were moved out of central government, they would have to be performed by local government, the voluntary or charity sector, or by a private sector entity. The VAPCs function independently in support of veterans. Their local collaborative working in the regions with NHS Trusts, Local Authorities etc. works well and there is a level of confidence associated within these relationships. There is no existing body offering such independence in local government or voluntary and charity sectors. Putting together such a body would result in something looking very much like the VAPC already looks, but without the independence of operation.
- c. **Commercial models** - If the VAPC functions were to be outsourced to a commercial entity questions might be raised about the independence of that entity. There may also be potential for reputational risk for Government as the sponsor entity would need not to have any controversy or historical background associated with it given the level of sensitivity needed in the veterans' arena. In addition, it seems likely that the costs of such an outsource would be considerable, because a private sector entity would presumably have to fund the provision of service, and would almost certainly charge a management fee in addition. Compared to the current provision, where the Committees operate on a wholly voluntary basis, a commercial outsource arrangement would be a significant expense to the public purse.
- d. **Bring in-house** – If the VAPC functions were to be brought in-house and delivered by MoD, the independence of the body (and the perception thereof) would be lost. Defence Ministers would be receiving advice from within their own departments, which could lead to the perception that the advice being provided is coloured by other government pressures and agendas, such as cost-cutting. This, in turn could lead to a possible loss of confidence in the deliverables of the AF Covenant. In addition, part of the value of the VAPC is the diversity of its members backgrounds e.g. ex-service, NHS, government, private industry etc. and have outside interests which enrich what they bring to the VAPC activities. If the VAPC functions were to be performed by crown servants the perspective could become too introspective and MoD-centric.
- e. **Merge with another body** – There are no other wholly independent advisory committees which fulfil a similar role to the VAPC. Merging with another body which does not share the same skill set and area of expertise would be counter-productive in terms of efficiency.
- f. **Less formal structure** – It is not possible to fully consider a less formal structure at the present time as the VAPC operate under a legislative framework which is currently under review. Any amendments made to the current constitution would fall outside of the current Statutory Instrument.

The Lead Reviewer has decided that the structure should not be deliberated on any further for this section of the review's findings. There is scope however, for further consideration to be given to structural change under the new Cabinet Office guidance on Reclassification of ANDPBs. The guidance was not mature enough for this to be considered fully as an option by the Lead Reviewer however, it is recognised that reclassification is likely to result in a more proportionate governance approach for this ANDPB.

It is recommended that an exercise to consider the transfer of this ANDPB's status to that of Expert Committee is carried during the coming year as a priority, once comprehensive guidance is issued. This will of course be done in full consultation with stakeholders, starting with a briefing at the forthcoming chairs conference in April 2016, with a view to implementing recommendations fully by the time of the next Chairs Conference around October 2016. Any decisions will be subject to Min DPV approval.

- g. **Delivery via a new Executive Agency** – It is hard to see how any efficiency or other benefits could be realised by transferring the functions of the VAPC to a new Executive Agency. The VAPC is made up of members who voluntarily give their time, supported by MoD civil servants; there are no employees of the VAPC, and no need for any.
- h. **Continued delivery by an ANDPB** – The Review concludes that this is the preferred approach. This model would see the VAPC continue to deliver its functions as it does now (subject to the recommendations within this Review).

The Three Tests

24. As set out above, the preferred option of the Review is that the VAPC functions should continue to be delivered by an NDPB, which means that the Review must include consideration of whether the body passes at least one of the Government's "three tests" for an NDPB:

- a. **Is this a technical function for which external expertise is needed?**
Not applicable; the VAPC do not perform a technical function for which external expertise is needed.
- b. **Is this a function which needs to be, and be seen to be, delivered with absolute political impartiality?**
The VAPC operate uniquely as appointed by Minister Defence Personnel & Veterans to further the interests of veterans with a wholly independent approach, whilst adhering to Corporate Governance standards and the Seven Principles of Public Life. The VAPC meets this test. Annex D provides details of compliance with Corporate Governance controls.
- c. **Is this a function which needs to be delivered independently of Ministers to establish facts and/or figures with integrity?**
It is a valued attribute that the VAPCs operate with independence and can advise Minister and the Sponsor Department impartially. In order to do so it is imperative that the facts are established particularly in relation to policy issues. The VAPC therefore partially meet this test.

Conclusions of Stage One

25. The Review has concluded that it is necessary for the VAPC's functions to continue within their regions to influence and nurture the aspirations and implementation of the AF Covenant, support veterans issues and to enact the Ashcroft recommendation. The continuation of the VAPC as an NDPB remains the most efficient and effective way to ensure these functions are delivered. The VAPC passes one of the three tests required to retain its NDPB status, and also partially meets a second test. It offers excellent value for money and should continue to exist as an ANDPB, subject to the recommendations in this report.

The Review: Stage Two

26. The recommendation of Stage 1 is that the VAPC's functions are still required and that the VAPC should be maintained as an ANDPB.

27. The Review then moved on to Stage 2 to consider the body's adherence with the principles of good corporate governance. Specifically, the Review considered:

- a. the VAPC's compliance with principles of good corporate governance as an ANDPB;
- b. its efficiency.

Compliance with the Principles of Good Corporate Governance for Advisory NDPBs

28. The Review followed Cabinet Office's standard "comply or explain" approach when assessing the VAPC's compliance with the principles of good corporate governance.

29. The assessment of the "comply or explain" approach for the principles of good corporate governance are set out in the table at Annex D, on a principle by principle basis, and it is considered that the VAPC is in compliance with almost all of the principles, and for the principles where it is not in compliance, it has a good explanation.

30. The Review however does recommend improvements to the governance of the VAPC. These recommendations are tabled at Annex F and will be taken forward using the Cabinet Office ANDPB corporate governance guidance

31. **The Committee's Role and Remit** – The VAPC's overarching role is clear and is steeped in history. However over time it has become evident that there is a need for more clearly defined Terms of Reference (ToRs) which should be developed to complement the legislative remit (when defined post review) and the day-to-day governance aspects of the Committees. Once developed the ToRs should be published on the VAPC area of the gov.uk website. The VAPC reports formally to the Minister for Defence Personnel and Veterans, and on a day-to-day basis through the MOD sponsor team in Veterans UK. Responsibilities of the Chairs include (this list is not exhaustive) representation of the VAPC in any discussion with Ministers, ensuring that members are properly inducted and understand their roles, carrying out VAPC business effectively and efficiently and taking all relevant factors into account when making decisions.

32. **Balance of Expertise** – The VAPC members represent a good balance of expertise, knowledge and commitment. Members volunteer with a view of what

they can offer in their local regions, which covers a broad spectrum including networking opportunities with private and/or Third sector, secretarial skills, event management, health and welfare etc.

33. Each Committee is led by a Chair (appointed by Minister Defence Personnel & Veterans) and meetings are held at least 3 times per year. The Chair facilitates the open discussions and allocates specific tasks to sub-committees as appropriate to make best use of skills.
34. Chairs and the sponsor team agree that the current balance of areas of expertise appears to meet the VAPC's current needs however it is noted that membership is lower on some Committees than others. Targeted recruitment campaigns to redress the balance of numbers are scheduled once the outcome of this Triennial Review is published. Appointments are made for an initial period of 3 years and recruitment exercises are usually conducted annually for members and on an as and when required basis for the role of Chairman.
35. The members are generally well-respected in their local communities and have other professional roles and their wider experience is beneficial to their VAPC work.
36. **Independence and Objectivity** – The roles of the Chairs and members are advertised and appointments are made in accordance with the Code of Practice for Public Appointments, using a transparent process.
37. The VAPC demonstrates its commitment to openness and transparency by the very nature of the role. There is an open approach in local regions and with the sponsor team. The VAPC also comply with all but one aspect of the Cabinet Office's Transparency Agenda as it is not deemed appropriate to list the personal details of its members on the gov.uk web pages.
38. **Members' rights and responsibilities** – The Chairs and members are made aware of the seven principles of public life during the appointment process, and the type and extent of their roles and responsibilities if they are appointed. The roles and responsibilities however could be more clearly defined on appointment.
39. The Chair and the members induction training is provided by their own Committee and also arranged by the sponsor team.
40. **Committee Support and Departmental Relationships** – The MoD Sponsor Team is provided by Veterans UK by a small team of civil servants (1 x SEO and 1 x EO). Day to day support is provided in the following areas: organisation and facilitation of bi-annual conferences, recruitment, casework, arranging and facilitating training, issuing communications, payment of expenses, general advice, completion of Cabinet Office returns etc. The overall responsibility sits with the Head of Veterans UK (SCS1). The functions are not provided by a dedicated team but form part of the Key Work Objectives for members of his team and account for approximately 25% of their duties at an estimated cost to the Department of around £20k per annum.
41. The sponsor team has a good working relationship with all Chairs and regular meetings are held between the Head of Veterans UK, the Chair of Chairs and the Vice Chair.

42. **Open meetings** – The regular VAPC meetings are not held in open forum, however representatives can be invited and members can be co-opted to join to fulfil a specific need. Minutes of meetings are published on the VAPC webpages on gov.uk.
43. **Public consultation** –The fairly narrow range of stakeholders in relation to the VAPC work means that public consultations are not particularly helpful in this context. However, if that position were to change, public consultations would be considered.
44. **Peer review** – Due to the nature of the VAPC functions, relevant subject matter experts are consulted as needed and their input is referenced accordingly.
45. **Information exchange** – The VAPCs gather information in their regions using their established professional networks and forums. This information is shared with the MOD and Veterans UK, working collaboratively, to draw evidence to shape service delivery and focus on specific veterans issues.
46. **Dealing with confidential information** – The VAPC remit includes working closely with the Veterans Welfare Service. This usually takes the form of approved accompanied visits. Any involvement in specific veterans' casework is subject to full permission being granted by the veteran. The sponsor team also provides regular assurance to MOD on data outflow.
47. **Handling disagreement with sponsoring body or Ministers** – Both parties understand that the VAPC role is ultimately an advisory one.
48. **Publication of documents – general** – The VAPC publishes minutes and agendas on their gov.uk pages. Work is underway to enhance and make the publishing consistent across all Committees.
49. **Communication with the media** – In the event that there was any media interest in the VAPC's work, the Chair of Chairs (or Vice Chair would act as the spokesperson; however in the case of a specific regional matter it may be appropriate to delegate to the relevant Regional Chair.
50. **Efficiency** – This is a key driver in the Triennial Review programme. A consideration of the potential for efficiency improvements in the VAPC has been set out below, in a way which is proportionate to their size, role and remit. The VAPC Chairs and members are unpaid volunteers and cost the Department in the region of £30k per annum for meetings, training events and out of pocket expenses. This figure is spread between approximately 200 Members and consequently demonstrates value for money when balanced with their achievements and benefits to the Ministry of Defence and Veterans community and is met from MoD operating costs. These costs are relatively low given the services they provide. It is likely that the effective co-ordination of regional services that the VAPCs are already delivering to veterans are having a positive benefit to the taxpayer in real terms.
51. Each Committee already covers a considerable square mileage with some Members facing especially long or difficult journeys. This applies particularly to Members living in remote areas where the use of public transport is not an option. If the number of Committees were reduced even further the Members would face even longer and more frequent journeys as they become more thinly spread and have to deal with a larger customer base spread over a wider area. This coupled

with the impending expenses reduction would cause considerable dissatisfaction and a possible breakdown of this voluntary network as their goodwill is eroded.

Efficiency driver	Assessment of the VAPC
Reported savings	The VAPC does not have a budget of its own but has funding allocated out of MoD resources. Claims, conference and training events are all critically scrutinized to ensure vfm.
Digital by default	The VAPC publishes its documents online on the gov.uk website.
Commercial models	The delivery of the VAPC's functions via a commercial model has been considered and is not likely to bring any efficiency savings.
Property	The VAPC does not own any property therefore there is no scope for efficiency savings in this context.
Shared Services	The VAPC are a large (in number) advisory body. The Sponsor Team has already reviewed their support and as the work is shared across Subject Matter Experts there is limited scope to make efficiency savings in this context.
Procurement of Common Goods and Services	The VAPC does not procure common goods or services.
Areas subject to Cabinet Office Spending Controls	Advertising/recruitment is subject to Cabinet Office spending controls. This is done in accordance with MoD policy and is kept to a minimum while balancing the need to ensure adequate membership levels.
Major Projects	The VAPC does not currently carry out any work which would fall within this category.
Workforce	All of the VAPC members are unpaid and only receive reimbursement for travel and subsistence costs; therefore there is no scope for efficiency savings in this context.
Commercial Relationships / Technology infrastructure / Construction / Fraud, Error and Debt	Technology infrastructure, construction and fraud are not relevant in respect of the VAPCs. However some private sector companies have engaged with VAPCs in the regions to cover their Corporate Social Responsibility aims. This extends to provision of locations or loan of admin resources. Additionally joint fora have been established in respect of Veterans Employment (which supports Ashcroft and Covenant aspirations). There is therefore no scope for efficiency savings but there are some cost avoidance options in this context, e.g. use of admin resources or provision of facilities

Overall Conclusions

52. Stage 1 of the Review concluded that it remains necessary for the VAPC functions to continue. The continuation of the VAPC as an ANDPB remains the most effective and efficient way to deliver these functions given the options that were available to, and have been examined within, this review. The VAPC passes at least one of the three tests required to retain its NDPB status. It is noted that

subsequent to this review, the Cabinet Office has begun work on establishing Expert Committees as a viable alternative to ANDPBs.

53. *It is recommended that, as soon as guidance has been issued on this matter, MOD officials engage as a matter of priority with CO officials to ensure the VAPCs are included in this process to establish if they would benefit from reconstitution as Expert Committees.*

54. Stage 2 of the Review has considered :

- a. The VAPC compliance with the principles of good corporate governance as an NDPB
- b. The efficiency as an NDPB

55. The Review concludes that the VAPC complies with the principles of good corporate governance. In taking into consideration the information gathered during the course of the Review, the Lead Reviewer has made some recommendations to reinforce the overall governance model and sponsorship relationship.

56. The Review concludes that The VAPC is an efficient body representing excellent value for money, with little scope for further efficiencies without jeopardising the benefits gained from their regional based working or their goodwill, given their voluntary status.

57. Following the completion of this Triennial Review, the Lead Reviewer's conclusions are:

- a. The VAPC should continue to carry out its functions
- b. The VAPC should continue as an NDPB
- c. The VAPC should work with the Sponsor Team to review the table of recommendations at Annex F of this report.

Annex A: Terms of Reference of the Review

Terms of Reference – Veterans Advisory & Pensions Committee Triennial Review

Objective:

All Non Departmental Public Bodies (NDPBs) are required to be reviewed every three years. In accordance with Cabinet Office guidelines Triennial Review: Guidance of Non Departmental Public Bodies (Revised in 2014), the Veterans Advisory & Pensions Committee (VAPC) review will cover all 13 regional committees and will have two principal aims, represented by two stages:

- To provide a robust challenge of the continuing need for the VAPCs – both their functions and their form; and
- Where it is agreed that the VAPCs remain as an NDPB, to review:
 - Their capacity for delivering more effectively and efficiently, including identifying potential for efficiency savings and ability to contribute to economic growth; and
 - The control and governance arrangements in place to ensure that the VAPCs and sponsoring department are complying with recognised principles of good corporate governance. This should also include an assessment of the body's performance.

Scope:

Within this context the review will consider:

- Whether the function is still required;
 - Whether delivery of the functions continue to contribute to wider Government policy (including economic growth);
 - Whether the VAPC governance structure effectively supports the delivery of these functions or whether an alternative delivery model is more suitable
 - Whether commercial opportunities are being maximised and what can be done to increase commercial functions in the future;
 - The 'counterfactual', i.e. the effects of not delivering the functions
 - Whether the VAPC corporate governance and management arrangements are sufficiently robust and transparent and meet their best practice guidance (handbook/SI/protocol);
 - What the VAPCs admin costs are and what options there may be for savings;
 - Whether the VAPCs services are digital by default as set out in the Government's Digital Strategy;
 - How the VAPC contributes to the transparency agenda and the Department's Open Data Strategy, assessing whether further steps could be taken;
 - Whether the services are subject to spending controls;
 - Whether the accountability, governance and sponsorship arrangements are appropriate following recommendations at Stage 1;
 - A review of the Sponsorship relationship, ensuring it is appropriate and fit for purpose
-

Annex B: List of Stakeholders Consulted

VAPC Chairmen and members:

Paul Kingham	North East (Chair of Chairs)
Tony Phillips	Yorks & Humber (Vice Chair of Chairs)
Lynn Verity	London
Peter Poole	East Mids
Lloyd Davies	West Mids
Johnny Lighten	North West
Chris Downward	Wales
Ed McGrachan	West Scotland
David McGrath	East Scotland
Jonathan Jelley	Eastern
Michael Mates	South East
Julian Francis	South West
Adrian Donaldson	Northern Ireland
Jock Drysdale	East Scotland
Alex Baxter	Yorks & Humber
Alex Jablonowski	London
Brian De La Haye	North East
Paul Clabburn	London
Jules Eaton	London

MOD:

Jon Parkin	Head of Veterans UK
Rob Rowntree	Veterans UK Deputy Head Welfare & Support
Carole Corbett	Veterans UK Chief of Staff
Charlotte Helsby	Veterans UK Business & Partnerships Manager
Wendy Rothery	Head of Welfare Policy
Andrew Bates	Assistant Head AFC

Annex C: Examples of VAPC Achievements Against Objectives

Raise awareness especially at local level of the War Pensions Scheme, Armed Forces Compensation Scheme, Veterans Welfare Service and the availability of cross government support to the Armed Forces, their families and Veterans.

Attended 4 x large regional events with a stand to promote VAPCs role and Veterans UK.

Assisting VWS with their home visits and at events to promote the VWS and VAPC roles/services

Sign posting veterans and their families to the correct; central/local govt depts, MoD and its agencies and third party orgs

We have a good understanding of the welfare provision network in the region and support individuals by referring cases to the VWS welfare services or where appropriate help with access to other local services.

Assisting individuals with any problems or complaints they have regarding the war pensions or AFCS claims process, where there is no formal recourse to an independent body, liaising closely with Veterans UK. Offering an independent explanation of the scheme as it relates to an individual, assessing issues in response to specific complaints.

We have assisted 3 x individuals with preparing appeals and in one case with securing an improved award.

We have provided help to a number of individuals who were in conflict with Veterans UK.

We have actively engaged with some 40 veterans and their families to provide a Christmas lunch within their own areas,

We were the key advisor to Hull City Council and NHS Hospital Trust regarding 3 x MPs queries regarding Veterans Support after constituents critical claims; they sought our advice particularly as independent agents and our advice was pivotal to providing all 3 MPs with a realistic perception and so manage expectations appropriately.

Based on their involvement in the wider process and their contact with individuals in the local areas, act as a conduit for local consultation by Ministers, the MOD and the Veterans UK on issues affecting recipients of pension from the War Pensions Scheme and Armed Forces Compensation Scheme.

I pull together regional input for consultation by Ministers, the MOD and Veterans UK as required. I also raise issues which come to my attention with Veterans UK /other chairmen on a regional or national basis as required.

Attended and contributed to quarterly meetings of Cross-Party Group in the Scottish Parliament on Armed Forces Veterans

More widely we have contributed to: Armed Forces Covenant Next Steps, Cabinet Office Communications Review, NHS Constitution Review, NHS Crisis Concordant Consultation, Forces in Mind Trust Families and Veterans Reviews, Independent Medical Group Triennial Review.

In Scotland we have the added advantage of a Commissionaire for Veterans appointed by the Scottish Parliament which provides a channel to influence Scottish government policy which affects veterans on devolved issues. Our committee has engaged with the Commissionaire to provide input to issues which affect veterans.

Act as advocates for implementing the Armed Forces Covenant and associated measures at a local level.

We have engaged the NHS widely In addition to advising all Local Authorities on their formal Armed Forces Forums we have also visited each and every one of them independently to assess their strengths and weaknesses against Armed forces Covenant intent across health, wellbeing and welfare issues and will continue as below (planned activity).

We have worked effectively in 5 x Local Authority areas to support development of the Corporate

Covenant and developed links with 3 x Chambers of Commerce and the Regional Office of the CBI, whose President accepted to become a co-opted member of Y&H VAPC to be called on when necessary as an expert business advisor. Through his link we also briefed the Armed Forces Covenant intent to a Regional CBI meeting.

We are highly active in all our regional Armed Forces Covenant, Community Covenant and Armed Forces Forums. From our previous work with our local authorities to establish a formal agreement and buy in from all for a regional covenant with an action plan to deliver improvement for veterans and the AF community we were well situated when the National AF Covenant came along and indeed are original signatories on several AF Covenants.

Played role as key advisor to Sheffield, Bradford and Rotherham to assist in the development of specific Armed Forces Covenant led planning as well as develop Corporate Covenant.

The committee decided to raise the profile of veterans with employers in London by arranging and funding employment seminars, invitees included Barclays Bank, Career Transition Partnership Lloyds Bank, the CBI, Telefonica, London Borough of Ealing, The AA. The Second Seminar was held and jointly led by the Committee and Barclays Bank at the latter's Canary Wharf headquarters. Those present included Jaguar/Land Rover, Tesco, M&S, Deloitte. This has led to the employers developing a programme for working with veterans including job placement/CV writing /employment search/mentoring. The formal launch of the scheme will occur in November 2015. This is an example of the Committee working to promote the Corporate Covenant.

Assist serving personnel, veterans and their families in accessing local support services e.g. housing, provide assistance.

We have identified and promoted Armed Forces Champions (leads for supporting veterans) in Citizens Advice Bureaus, CCG Groups, Job Centre Plus', Local Authorities and other health and wellbeing providers.

One of our great successes in the last 12 months was to get the budget allocated to veterans mental health increased in Wales.

We have enabled various local authorities to access funds to build accommodation for homeless veterans.

The committee is now leading research into veteran's homelessness in London. This work is being undertaken by the University Of Kent and funding for the initial study is in place. Contact has been made with all 32 London Boroughs and the Mayor of London.

Annex D: Compliance with the Principles of Good Corporate Governance Summary and detail

<p>Statutory Accountability</p> <p><i>Principle: The public body complies with all applicable statutes and regulations, and other relevant statements of best practice.</i></p>	<p>Findings of Review</p> <p>The VAPC is compliant overall.</p>
<p>Provision 1</p> <p><i>The public body must comply with all statutory and administrative requirements on the use of public funds. This includes the principles and policies set out in the HMT publication “Managing Public Money”² and Cabinet Office/HM Treasury spending controls. The public body must operate within the limits of its statutory authority and in accordance with any delegated authorities agreed with the sponsoring department³.</i></p>	<p>The VAPC is fully compliant. The VAPC operates within current statutory authority as appointed by Minister Defence Personnel & Veterans.</p>
<p>Provision 2</p> <p><i>The public body should operate in line with the statutory requirements and spirit of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. It should have a comprehensive Publication Scheme. It should proactively release information that is of legitimate public interest where this is consistent with the provisions of the Act.</i></p>	<p>The VAPC is fully compliant in respect of FOI and there is a comprehensive publication scheme in place. All 13 Committees have direct publishing rights to gov.uk. The VAPC meets all but one aspect of the Cabinet Office Transparency agenda i.e. publication of full membership data. This is not deemed appropriate for reasons of personal data security as many Members operate from their home address</p>
<p>Provision 3</p> <p><i>The public body must be compliant with Data Protection legislation.</i></p>	<p>The VAPC is fully compliant and is dealt with via the sponsor team.</p>
<p>Provision 4</p> <p><i>The public body should be subject to the Public Records Acts 1958 and 1967.</i></p>	<p>The VAPC is fully compliant.</p>

² http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/psr_mpm_index.htm

³ For NDPBs established as companies, or which have charitable status, departments should also ensure that the public body is fully compliant with relevant statutory and administrative requirements.

REQUIREMENT	COMMENTS	COMPLIANCE ASSESSMENT
<p><i>Principle: Accountability</i> <i>The Minister is ultimately accountable to Parliament and the public for the overall performance, and continued existence, of the VAPC</i></p>		
<p><i>Accountability: Supporting Provisions</i></p>		
<p>The Minister and sponsoring Department should exercise appropriate scrutiny and oversight over the VAPC. This includes oversight of any monies spent by, or on behalf of the VAPC.</p>	<p>The VAPC does not have a budget of its own but has funding allocated out of MoD resources. Scrutiny of the VAPC's expenses is undertaken by MoD through the MOD Sponsor Team in Defence Business Services (DBS) Veterans UK. MoD also exercises routine oversight of the VAPC's governance arrangements including by routine oversight by the Sponsor Team.</p>	<p>Compliant</p>
<p>Appointments to the VAPC should be made in line with any statutory requirements and, where appropriate, with the Code of Practice issued by the Commissioner for Public Appointments.</p>	<p>The Chair and the other members' roles are advertised appropriately and appointments are made in accordance with the Code of Practice for Ministerial Appointments and the MoD Statement of Civilian Personnel Policy on Making Public Appointments.</p>	<p>Compliant</p>
<p>The Minister will normally appoint the Chair and all board members of the VAPC and be able to remove individuals whose performance or conduct is unsatisfactory.</p>	<p>Chair posts are advertised regionally as and when vacancies arise in any of the 13 regions covered by the VAPC and are appointed by a transparent process. The panel of 3 is chaired by an Independent from the Commissioner for Public Appointments with the MOD Sponsor Team SCS 1 and an Independent member.</p> <p>Members' roles are advertised and members are appointed by a transparent process, in which the Chair plays a pivotal role (chairing the application sift and the interviews).</p> <p>The final decision on appointments rests with Minister for Defence Personnel & Veterans (DPV). The Chairs and the Minister DPV have the ability to terminate members' appointments for failure to perform duties to the expected standard.</p>	<p>Compliant</p>
<p>The Minister should meet the Chair on a regular basis.</p>	<p>Minister for Defence Personnel and Veterans meets with the Chairs at their biannual Conference on an annual basis or more often when possible. The VAPC also have 2 representatives on the MOD Central Advisory Committee which is chaired by Minister for Defence Personnel & Veterans twice yearly.</p>	<p>Compliant</p>

There should be a requirement to inform Parliament and the public of the work of the VAPC in an annual report (or equivalent publication) proportionate to its role.	The VAPC provides its advice to the Minister for Defence Personnel and Veterans by annual reporting to the MOD Sponsor Team and by consultation on relevant departmental issues as requested by the Minister. The VAPC has its own landing page on Gov.uk and publishes details of its work regularly on this forum. It is recognised that a more structured reporting process to Minister should be formalised which will be taken forward as a recommendation of this Review.	Compliant
The VAPC must be compliant with Data Protection legislation.	Data Protection legislation compliance is dealt with by the MOD Sponsor Team on behalf of the VAPC.	Compliant
The VAPC should be subject to the Public Records Acts 1958 and 1967.	Public Records Acts compliance is dealt with by the mod Sponsor Team on behalf of the VAPC.	Compliant
<p><i>Principle: Roles and Responsibilities</i> <i>The Departmental Board ensures that there are appropriate governance arrangements in place with the VAPC.</i> <i>There is a sponsor team within the Department that provides appropriate oversight and scrutiny of, and support and assistance to the VAPC.</i></p>		
<p><i>Roles and Responsibilities: Supporting Provisions</i></p>		
The Departmental Board's agenda should include scrutiny of the performance of the VAPC proportionate to its size and role.	The VAPC is recognised as an ANDPB by the MOD, but given the size and role appropriate governance arrangements are delegated to the Corporate Team (HO�F-BSG) and the Sponsor Team (DBS Veterans UK)	Partially compliant
There should be a document in place which sets out clearly the terms of reference of the VAPC. It should be accessible and understood by the sponsoring department and by the Chair and by members of the VAPC. It should be regularly reviewed and updated.	The VAPC operate under a Statutory Instrument (SI) and their terms of reference are clearly set out in an operating handbook which is published on their page on gov.uk which is accessible to the public. Work is currently underway to revise the SI to reflect the inclusion of the VAPC in Armed Forces Bill 2015 and terms of reference are being developed to support this.	Compliant
There should be a dedicated sponsor team within the sponsor department. The role of the sponsor team should be clearly defined.	There is a dedicated sponsor team within the Ministry of Defence which comprises 2 MoD civil servants led by an SCS 1*. The team members have other responsibilities which complement the work of the VAPC.	Compliant
There should be regular and ongoing dialogue	There is regular, ongoing and constructive dialogue between the VAPC and the sponsor	Compliant

between the sponsoring department and the VAPC.	team. There is an open and good working relationship and any relevant issues are escalated within the Department and to Ministerial level if necessary.	
There should be an annual evaluation of the performance of the VAPC Chairs and individual members.	The Sponsor Team evaluates Chairs performance annually and briefs the Minister for Defence Personnel and Veterans accordingly. Chairs have responsibility for evaluating Members performance during their 3 year appointment period and at re-appointment.	Compliant
<p><i>Principle: Role of the Chair</i> <i>The Chairs are responsible for leadership of the VAPC in each of their regions to ensure overall effectiveness.</i></p>		
<p><i>Role of the Chair: Supporting Provisions</i></p>		
The VAPC should be led by a non-executive Chair.	The VAPC is led by a non-executive Chair, nominally the Chair of Chairs. The VAPCs operate as a single ANDPB, following the same remit and governed by the same Statutory Instrument. This is administered as 13 regional committees. Each Committee has its own Ministerially appointed (non-Executive) Chair to lead the work as relevant in that area. The 'Chair of Chairs' is selected by fellow Chairs to be the nominated spokesperson for consultative and administrative purposes.	Compliant
There should be a formal, rigorous and transparent process for the appointment of the Chair. This should be compliant with the Code of Practice issued by the Commissioner for Public Appointments. The Chair should have a clearly defined role in the appointment of non-executive board members.	<p>Chair posts are advertised regionally as unpaid voluntary Ministerial appointments as and when vacancies arise in any of the 13 regions covered by the VAPC. Appointments are by a transparent process using panel of 3 led by an Independent Chair from the Commissioner for Public Appointments, along with the MOD Sponsor Team SCS1* and an Independent member. The appointments are made in accordance with the Code of Practice for Ministerial Appointments. The Chair of Chairs is nominated and selected from within the existing Chair cohort by fellow Chairs. <i>It is recommended that future Chair of Chairs appointments are notified formally to Min DPV by submission from the Sponsor Team.</i></p> <p>Member posts are advertised as unpaid voluntary Ministerial appointments and appointments made by a transparent process. The Chair of the regional Committee, chairing the application sift and the interviews along with an Independent Panel Member.</p>	Compliant

<p>The duties, role and responsibilities, terms of office and remuneration (if only expenses) of the Chair should be set out clearly and formally defined in writing. Terms and conditions must be in line with Cabinet Office guidance and with any statutory requirements.</p>	<p>The Chairs are made aware of the seven principles of public life during the appointment process. Each Chair receives a letter confirming their appointment from Minister Defence Personnel & Veterans. Roles and responsibilities are set out in the VAPC Handbook in accordance with CO guidance.</p> <p>The Handbook clearly sets out the remuneration policy and the need to avoid or declare conflicts of interest. Roles and responsibilities of Chairs, members and the sponsor Team are also defined. <i>It is recommended to ensure compliance that the Handbook is reviewed at least at 3 yearly intervals.</i></p>	<p>Compliant</p>
<p>Principle: Role of Other Members The members should provide independent, expert advice</p>		
<p>Role of Other Members: Supporting Provisions</p>		
<p>There should be a formal, rigorous and transparent process for the appointment of members to the VAPC. This should be compliant with the Code of Practice issued by the Commissioner for Public Appointments.</p>	<p>The Chair and the other members' roles are advertised appropriately and the appointments made in accordance with the Code of Practice for Ministerial Appointments and the MoD Statement of Civilian Personnel Policy on Making Public Appointments.</p>	<p>Compliant</p>
<p>Members should be properly independent of the department and of any vested interest (unless serving in an ex-officio or representative capacity).</p>	<p>The VAPC Chairs and members are required to declare any relevant interests and record them in a register of interests.</p>	<p>Compliant</p>
<p>Members should be drawn from a wide range of diverse backgrounds, but should have knowledge and expertise in the field within which the body has been set up to advise Ministers. The VAPC as a whole should have an appropriate balance of skills, experience, independence and knowledge.</p>	<p>VAPC members' posts are advertised appropriately so that as many potential candidates as possible are aware of the opportunities and appointments are made to ensure that each region has an appropriate balance of skills, experience and knowledge.</p>	<p>Compliant</p>
<p>The duties, role and responsibilities, terms of office and remuneration of members should be set out</p>	<p>Members are made aware of the seven principles of public life during the appointment process. Each Member receives a letter confirming their appointment from Minister Defence Personnel &</p>	<p>Compliant</p>

clearly and formally defined in writing. Terms and conditions must be in line with Cabinet Office guidance and with any statutory requirements.	<p>Veterans. Roles and responsibilities are set out in the VAPC Notes for Chairs and Members Handbook in accordance with CO guidance.</p> <p>The VAPCs membership are unpaid volunteers. The Handbook clearly sets out the remuneration policy (limited to out-of-pocket expenses) and the need to avoid or declare conflicts of interest. Roles and responsibilities of Chairs, members and the Sponsor Team are also defined all in accordance with CO guidance.</p>	
All members must allocate sufficient time to the VAPC to discharge their responsibilities effectively.	The VAPC appointments are voluntary and the Department is grateful for the level of continued commitment and goodwill. No concerns have been raised about the time allocated by any of the VAPC members to their duties.	Compliant
There should be a proper induction process for new members. This should be led by the Chair. There should be regular reviews by the Chair of individual members' training and development needs.	<p>Induction is provided by Chairs for new members to their Committee and the Sponsor Team arranges national Induction training events to familiarise new starters with the work of the Department and the Sponsor Team.</p> <p>Members' performance is reviewed by the Chairs during their initial three year appointment and prior to any re-appointments.</p>	Compliant
All members should ensure that high standards of corporate governance are observed at all times. This should include ensuring that the VAPC operates in an open, accountable and responsive way.	All VAPC appointees are made aware of the principles of good corporate governance and the remit of the VAPC, and their responsibility to ensure compliance in accordance with CO guidance.	Compliant
<p>Principle: Communications The VAPC should be open, transparent, accountable and responsive.</p>		
<p>Communications: Supporting Provisions</p>		
The VAPC should operate in line with the statutory requirements and spirit of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.	The VAPC, supported by the Sponsor Team, operate in line with the statutory requirements and the spirit of the Freedom of Information Act (FOI).	Compliant
The VAPC should make an explicit commitment to openness in all its activities. Where appropriate, it should establish clear and effective channels of communication with key stakeholders. It should engage and consult with the public on issues of real	The VAPC holds a number of meetings with stakeholders in their regions. Details are contained in their annual reports and minutes are published on their gov.uk page.	Compliant

public interest or concern. This might include holding open meetings or annual public meetings. The results of reviews or inquiries should be published.		
The VAPC should proactively publish agendas and minutes of its meetings.	The VAPC publishes meeting agendas and minutes on their gov.uk page.	Compliant
There should be robust and effective systems in place to ensure that the VAPC is not, and is not perceived to be, engaging in political lobbying. There should also be restrictions on members attending Party Conferences in a professional capacity.	The VAPC do not engage in political lobbying, nor is there any perception that they do so. The terms of appointment reference restrictions on political engagement.	Compliant
<p><i>Principle: Conduct and Behaviour</i> <i>Members should work to the highest personal and professional standards. They should promote the values of the VAPC and of good governance through their conduct and behaviour.</i></p>		
<p><i>Conduct and behaviour: Supporting Provisions</i></p>		
A Code of Conduct must be in place setting out the standards of personal and professional behaviour expected of all members. This should follow the Cabinet Office Code. All members should be aware of the Code. The Code should form part of the terms and conditions of appointment.	All Chairs and Members are made aware of the seven principles of public life and the code of conduct expected of them. Each Member receives a letter confirming their appointment from Minister Defence Personnel & Veterans. Roles and responsibilities are set out in the Notes for Chairs & Members Handbook in accordance with the Cabinet Office guidance.	Compliant
There are clear rules and procedures in place for managing conflicts of interest. There is a publicly available Register of Interests for members. This is regularly updated.	During the recruitment process all appointees to the VAPC are required to declare any relevant interests which must be fully documented and publicly justified if challenged. Any conflicts would be declared to the sponsor department and published on the VAPC web pages on gov.uk.	Compliant.

<p>There must be clear rules in place governing the claiming of expenses. These should be published. Effective systems should be put in place to ensure compliance with these rules.</p>	<p>Scrutiny of the VAPC expenses claims is undertaken by the MoD Sponsor Team. The rules are in line with MoD rules for claiming expense and are detailed in the VAPC Notes for Chairs and Members Handbook which is published on the VAPC gov.uk page.</p>	<p>Compliant</p>
<p>There are clear rules and guidelines in place on political activity for members and there are effective systems in place to ensure compliance with any restrictions.</p>	<p>VAPC Notes for Chairs and Members Handbook contains the relevant guidance.</p>	<p>Compliant</p>
<p>There are rules in place for members on the acceptance of appointments or employment after resignation or retirement. These are enforced effectively.</p>	<p>The VAPC Notes for Chairs and Members contains the relevant guidance on Public Service values and the seven principles of public life.</p>	<p>Compliant</p>

Annex E: VAPC Structure and Membership

City of Aberdeen, Aberdeenshire, Angus, The Borders, Clackmannan, City of Dundee, City of Edinburgh, Falkirk, Fife, East Lothian, Midlothian, West Lothian, Moray, Orkney Islands, Perthshire and Kinross, Shetland Islands, Stirling. 18 Members	East Scotland
Argyll and Bute, East Ayrshire, North Ayrshire, South Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway, Dumbarton and Clydebank, East Dunbartonshire, City of Glasgow, Inverclyde, North Lanarkshire, South Lanarkshire, Renfrewshire, East Renfrewshire, Western Isles, Highlands. 17 Members	West Scotland
The counties of Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Norfolk and Suffolk 16 Members	Eastern
Greater London 11 Members	London
The counties of Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire and Nottinghamshire 18 Members	East Midlands
The counties of Herefordshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire and Worcestershire; and the metropolitan county of West Midlands 14 Members	West Midlands
The counties of Cleveland, Durham and Northumberland; and the metropolitan county of Tyne and Wear 16 Members	North East
The counties of Cheshire, Cumbria and Lancashire; and the metropolitan counties of Greater Manchester and Merseyside 13 Members	North West
The counties of Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, East Sussex, Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Kent, Oxfordshire, Surrey and West Sussex 13 Members	South East
The counties of Avon, Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, Gloucestershire, Somerset and Wiltshire; and the Isles of Scilly 16 Members	South West
The counties of Humberside and North Yorkshire; and the metropolitan counties of South Yorkshire and West Yorkshire 18 Members	Yorkshire and Humber
9 Members	Wales
18 Members	Northern Ireland

Annex F: Table of recommendations

No	Recommendation	Lead
1	Resolution of Statutory and legislative requirements.	MOD in consultation with VAPC
2	Reinforce Lord Ashcroft's recommendation to mobilise the VAPC by development of defined Terms of Reference to underpin the legislative framework.	MOD (Veterans UK) in consultation with VAPC
3	Establish best practice from across the regions and identify the most effective way to share. (acknowledging regional differences).	VAPC
4	Establish an annual Action Plan for each region, supported by Veterans UK and to inform annual reporting.	VAPC/MOD (Veterans UK)
5	Fund holding is an outstanding concern that should be explored as a separate work stream with a view to prompt resolution.	Veterans UK/MOD/Chairs
6	Define annual reporting to Minister DPV.	Veterans UK/Min DPV PS
7	Maintain annual recruitment round, targeting as appropriate and ensuring that follow up training is available as a priority	Veterans UK
8	Confirmation of the procedures for the election and tenure of Chair of Chairs to be formalised.	Veterans UK/ Chairs
9	Review Sponsor Team support to ensure compliance with Civil Service guidelines in terms of good Sponsorship guidance and future Cabinet Office requirements.	Veterans UK
10	Review the role of the VAPC in the Independent Complaints Panel process.	Veterans UK/VAPC
11	Review of the VAPC Handbook .	Veterans UK/MOD/Chairs
12	As soon as guidance has been issued by the Cabinet Office on establishing Expert Committees as a viable alternative to ANDPBs, MOD officials to engage as a matter of priority with CO officials, to ensure the VAPCs are included in this process and establish if they would benefit from reconstitution as Expert Committees.	Veterans UK/MOD/CO/Chairs/Other stakeholders
