



AN AGENDA FOR A MEETING OF THE ARMED FORCES WORKING GROUP

Date:- Tuesday, 8th October, 2019
Time:- 10.00 am
Venue:- Committee Room 1, The Council Offices, Clydach Vale

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

1. WELCOME & APOLOGIES

2. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

To receive disclosures of personal interests from Members in accordance with the Code of Conduct:

1. Members are requested to identify the item number and subject that their interest relates to and signify the nature of the personal interest; and
2. Where Members withdraw from a meeting as a consequence of the disclosure of prejudicial interest they must notify the Chairman when they leave.

3. MINUTES

To receive as an accurate record the minutes of the Armed Forces Working Group meeting held on the 12th June 2019.

(Pages 3 - 6)

4. ARMED FORCES EVENTS

To receive details of future Armed Forces events.

5. ARMED FORCES COVENANT

To receive a report providing an update in respect of the Armed Forces Covenant.

(Pages 7 - 10)

6. VETERAN ADVICE SERVICE

To receive a report detailing the Veteran Advice Service.

(Pages 11 - 14)

7. URGENT BUSINESS

To consider any items which the Chair, by reason of special circumstances, is of the opinion should be considered as a matter of urgency.

Membership: M Webber (Chair), J Harries (Vice-Chair), S Bradwick, G Caple and M Tegg

Officers:

Mr C Hanagan – Service Director, Democratic Services & Communication.

Ms M Warburton - Equality And Diversity Adviser/Armed Forces Covenant Lead Officer

Mr J Maddison - Armed Forces Covenant Liaison Officer

Mr J Ireland - Veteran Advice Officer

Working Group Terms of Reference (as outlined within the Leaders Scheme of Delegation):

To provide strategic guidance to ensure the needs of Armed Forces personal living in Rhondda Cynon Taff are delivered by the Council and its partners in the public and third sector.



RHONDDA CYNON TAF

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL ARMED FORCES WORKING GROUP

Minutes of the meeting of the Armed Forces Working Group meeting held on Wednesday, 12 June 2019 at 10.00 am at the Committee Room, Block A, The Pavilions, Clydach Vale, CF40 2XX.

County Borough Councillors - Armed Forces Working Group Members in attendance:-

Councillor M Webber – **Chair**

Councillor J Harries Councillor S Bradwick

Councillor G Caple

Officers in attendance

Mr C Hanagan, Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication

Ms M Warburton, HR Advisor, Equality & Diversity Team

Mr J Maddison – Armed Forces Covenant Liaison Officer

Mr J Ireland - Veteran Advice Officer

Mr J Hurford - HM Forces Engagement Support Officer

Mr C Phillips - Contact Centre Manager

Ms N Cornwall - Youth Engagement and Participation Team Leader

1 WELCOME & APOLOGIES

The Chair welcomed all Members and officers to the inaugural meeting of the working group and for the benefit of all, introductions were made.

Apologies on behalf of County Borough Councillor M Tegg were also noted.

2 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, there were no declaration of interest pertaining to the agenda.

3 ARMED FORCES COVENANT AND COMMUNITY

The Equality and Diversity Adviser and Armed Forces Covenant Lead Officer, together with colleagues provided Members with an overview of the work undertaken to fulfil the Council's commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant, as well as providing details on the Covenant Panel and Welsh Governments strategic direction.

Members were provided with details of the three dedicated officers Jason Hurford, Jeff Maddison and Jamie Ireland working with the Council in respect of the Armed Forces Covenant, which is a promise by the nation ensuring that those who serve or who have served in the Armed Forces, and their families, are treated fairly. Members were advised that the focus was that the Armed Forces Community should not face disadvantage compared to other citizens in the provision of public services.

The Officer advised that Rhondda Cynon Taf Council was one of the first local authorities in Wales to sign up to the Armed Forces Covenant in 2012, a commitment that was reaffirmed in 2018. RCT also remains to be the only Welsh Local Authority to be in receipt of the Ministry of Defence's prestigious Gold Award in recognition of the Council's approach to supporting the Armed Forces community locally.

Within the overview, Members were provided with detailed presentations in relation to:

- The Armed Forces Covenant,
- Supporting Service Children in Education across Rhondda Cynon Taf
- Veteran Advice Service

Following the presentations, Members of the group raised queries in respect of the work and role of the women's land army and the Bevin boys and queried whether they were recognised as veterans, to which officers confirmed.

Members commented on the commemorative plaques across the County Borough and it was agreed that a monitoring of the memorials needed to be undertaken, with one Member commenting on commemorative plaques, to recognise the role and contributions that animals had within the world wars.

Members spoke positively of the work of the officers and the positive feedback received in respect of the Veteran Advice Service and the positive impact already being recognised by veterans living within the County Borough.

Partnership working with the Ministry of Defence was also raised and officers confirmed that although the MoD were very supportive with current partnership working with the launch of the MoD's strategy this would only be further strengthened.

The Armed Forces Lead Officer concluded her report by advising that whilst the Council is already proactive and successful in supporting the Armed Forces Covenant, due to the launch of the MoD's strategy and the Welsh Government veteran's consultation the strategic direction is likely to change, with the following areas of work are likely to become a priority:

- Improvement to data collection to better understand the Armed Forces community in Rhondda Cynon Taf.
- Specific work on recruitment, specifically referring to Welsh Government's Employers Guide to employing veterans and reservists .

Following discussions Members **RESOLVED** to note the contents of the report.

(N.B Due to the overlap with the contents all three agenda items were presented under the one agenda item.)

4 FUTURE MEETINGS

Members spoke of the importance of the group and its role going forward and it was **AGREED** that the working group would meet biannually, unless a further meeting was called by the Chair and that publication of the agenda and reports be taken forward on the Council website.

The Chair took the opportunity to remind Members of the Armed Forces Day celebrations on the 22nd June, in Ynysangharad War Memorial Park.

This meeting closed at 11.50 am

**M Webber
Chairman.**

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RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

ARMED FORCES WORKING GROUP

8 OCTOBER 2019

ARMED FORCES COVENANT UPDATE

REPORT OF HUMAN RESOURCES IN DISCUSSIONS WITH THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER CLLR MAUREEN WEBBER, DEPUTY LEADER

Author(s): Melanie Warburton, Equality and Diversity Adviser / Armed Forces Covenant Lead Officer, Telephone 01443 444531

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide information on the work undertaken to fulfil the Council's commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant.

2. FUNDING UPDATE

- 2.1 The Council's Armed Forces Covenant Liaison Officer (AFLO) post is currently funded by the Armed Forces Covenant grant fund.
- 2.2 The Welsh Government (WG) have confirmed they will fund the Armed Forces Covenant Liaison Officer posts for a further 2 years.

3. SUPPORTING THE ARMED FORCES COVENANT

The Council supports the Armed Forces Covenant in a number of ways. Outlined below are updates since the last Armed Forces Working Group was held in June 2019.

3.1 Armed Forces Officer Network

This internal network meet twice a year to discuss activity in relation to the Armed Forces across the Council. Notes of this meeting are taken and a verbal update will be provided at the Armed Forces Working Group.

3.2 Reserves Day

On 1 July 2019 we held two Reserves Day events along with 'Wear Your Uniform to Work Day'. The first of these tri service events were held in Ty Trevithick, which was well attended by Council staff. The second was held in Abercynon Leisure Centre where we engaged with the public. Both events were successful in showing support for Council employees who are also reservists but also raising awareness of recruitment opportunities for the reserve forces.

3.3 Engagement and Networking

Officers continue to regularly engage with veteran groups across Rhondda Cynon Taf. This is extremely important as their views are vital in developing future initiatives.

3.4 Cinema Night

On 5 November, 2019 the Park and Dare Theatre will be hosting a special showing of Zulu, specifically for Armed Forces families. This initiative has been developed following discussions with veterans concerning how fireworks can be a trigger of PTSD symptoms.

3.5 Tickets for Troops

The charity Tickets for Troops offers free tickets to events for those who serve in the Armed Forces, those medically discharged post 2001 and the next of kin of those who have passed as a result of their service. RCT theatres have agreed to reserve an allocation of 10 family tickets for the December panto as a trial.

3.6 Armed Forces Covenant Newsletter

A newsletter has been produced to highlight the Council's commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant. It will also raise awareness of commemoration events and initiatives. This newsletter will be circulated widely to Armed Forces networks.

4. **WELSH GOVERNMENT ARMED FORCES COVENANT CONFERENCE**

- 4.1 The Council's AFLO will attend WG's Armed Forces Covenant Conference on 3 October, 2019 in North Wales, where he will be providing a presentation on the partnership's progress to date.

5. **ARMED FORCES IN WALES AWARDS NOMINATIONS**

5.1. This annual event organised by the Ministry of Defence recognises those who have made outstanding contributions to the Armed Forces Community.

5.2 This year the Council has made 2 nominations:

5.2.1 The Armed Forces in Wales Award

Paul Bromwell, organiser of Ton Pentre based 'Valley Veterans'. Paul's passion and commitment has made a huge contribution to the lives of veterans throughout the valley.

5.2.2 The Armed Forces Covenant Award

Friends of Ynysangharad War Memorial Park and Julie Edwards, RCT Project Co-ordinator for the 'Poppies in the Park' project which attracted more than 900 participants.

6. GUARANTEED INTERVIEW SCHEME FOR VETERANS

The Council is currently evaluating whether to adopt a guaranteed interview scheme for veterans. The scheme is being promoted by the Minister following discussions at the WG Cross Party Group on Armed Forces.

7. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

An Equality Impact Assessment is not needed because the content of the report is for information purposes only.

8. CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT

Consultation is not needed because the content of the report is for information purposes only.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

There are no financial implications aligned to this report.

10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

There are no legal implications as the report is for information only.

11. LINKS TO THE CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT.

Supporting our Armed Forces Community contributes to UK and Welsh Government priorities and all well-being goals.

12. CONCLUSION

The Council has a strong commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant and this is evidenced by cross-cutting work by a number of service areas to support its pledge.

Veterans Advice Service Cwm Taf
Position Statement: January 2019 – 30th September 2019

- **VAO Recruitment**

- Veteran Advice Officer been in post since 7th January, supporting 2 LA's RCTCBC and MTCBC.
- Officer recruited from RCT Contact Centre – so experienced background in Council services etc
- 2 year Armed Forces Covenant Funded position

- **Armed Forces Community**

- The Veteran Advice Service is now going to be promoted through the RCT Leisure for Life App
- The VAO actively attends Veteran groups within Cwm Taf – 62% of referrals received from groups
- Access timetable has been updated for drop-in Advice Surgeries in RCT – Updated due to Veteran Feedback
- Relationships have been developed with key organisations (Help for Heroes, SAFA, Royal British Legion, and Change Step.)
- Quartely meetings between 4 LAs – To Share good practices and Ideas.

- **VOA Service Awareness/Promotion**

- The Veteran Advice Service is now going to be promoted through the RCT Leisure for Life App
- Social Media has been used to promote the VA service e.g. Council Twitter and Facebook accounts
- Communications and Marketing leaflets have been printed, we are currently looking into Cinema and Transport advertisements
- Veteran Advice webpage is live (440 views / updated 31.08.19) www.rctcbc.gov.uk/veteranadvice
- This enable Veterans/Customers to refer in to the Veteran Advice Service 24/7 (9 online forms received)
- VAO have attended local events to promote and will continue to have a presence at key events.

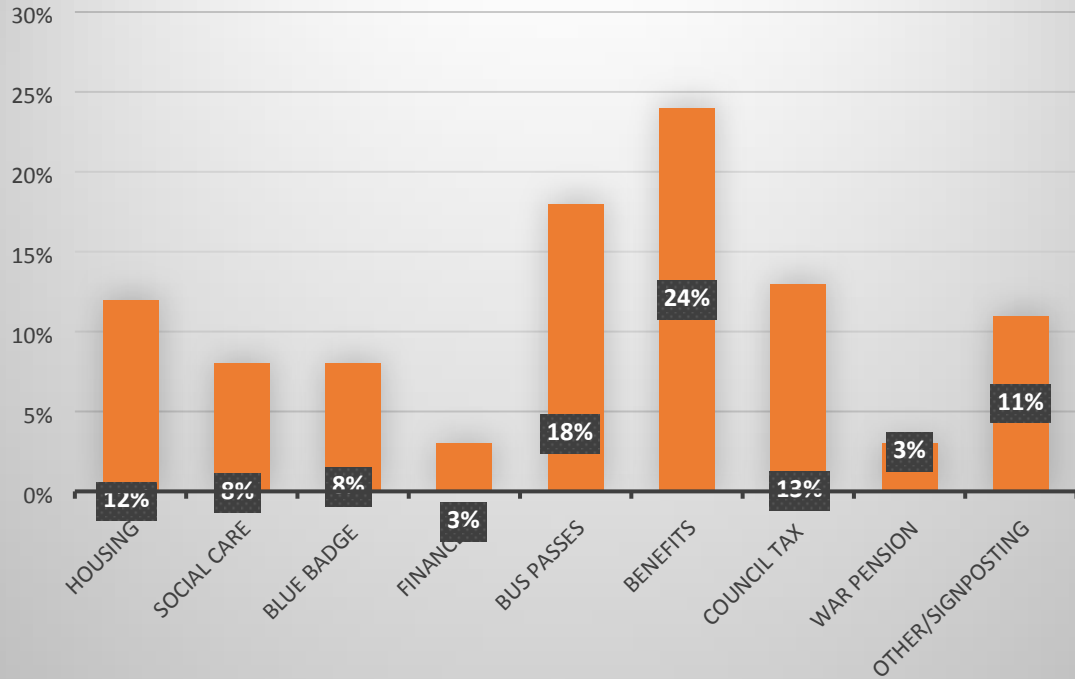
- **VOA Referrals and Case Studies** (Received, allocated and monitored)

- To date, 160 referrals received for RCT/Merthyr (105 RCT/55 MTCBC)
- Key client data is captured on CRM (address/, location, age, sex, branch of armed service) as well as the main enquiry type (see Appendix 1)
- Majority of veterans accessing our service are male (94%), (68%) were in the Army and (62%) are aged 51 to 70 years old
- 4 Compliments have been received across the region for RCT and are included in the case studies (see Appendix 2)

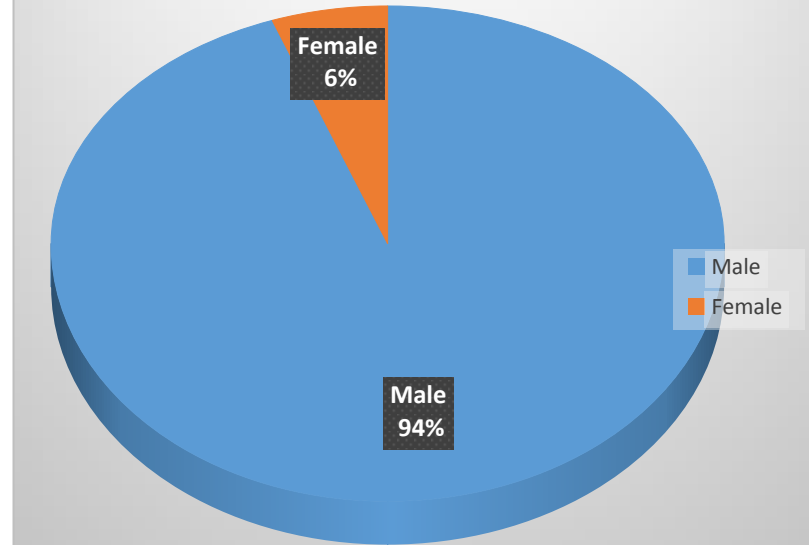
- **Appendices**

- Appendix 1 – What we know so far - Referral Type, Age range, Gender and Armed Forces Branch.
- Appendix 2 – Case Studies and Feedback

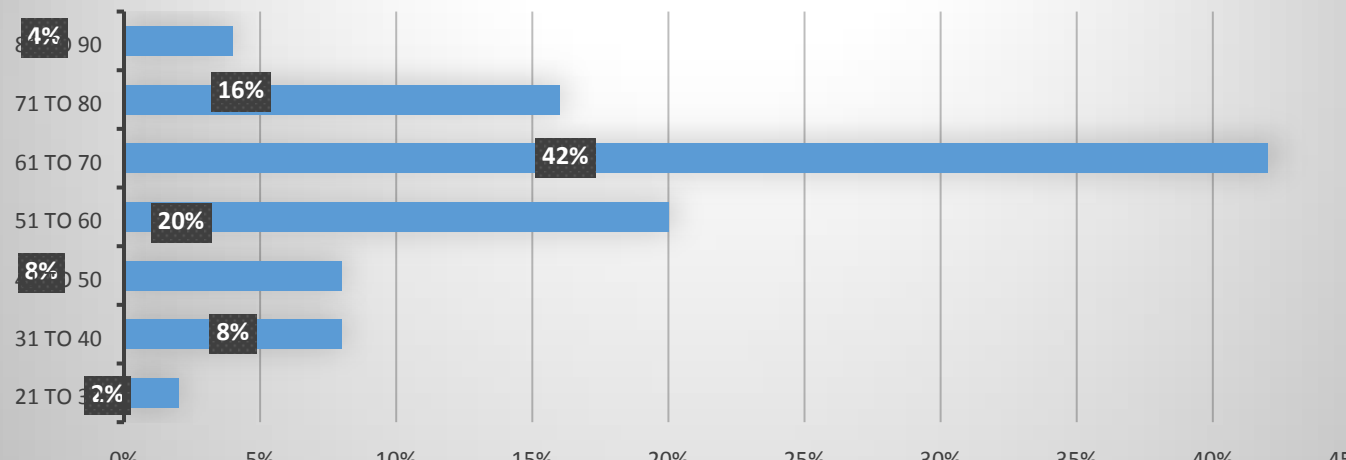
Referral Totals



Gender



Veteran Age Range



Renewal of Bus Pass – RCT

Mr W is in his 70's, Served in the Army, has received a letter to renew his Bus Pass online.

Mr W Contacted the Veteran Advice Service for support in applying for his new Bus Pass.

Mr W has never used a computer in his life.

The Veteran Advice Officer met with Mr W at a convenient location that suited the Mr W.

The Veteran Advice officer completed the Application for Mr W using his work laptop.

Mr W and his wife thanked the Veteran Advice Officer and were Very Happy with the Service they received.

Feedback example 1 – RCT:

“Jamie Ireland comes to the Veteran Meeting – He has Taken the time/effort to obtain and deliver carpet for his flat – This has made him extremely happy as he was really struggling with moving into the flat – He has gone above and beyond – He does not think Jamie is a Veteran but you could not have picked a better person for the Job”

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