



## ***AN AGENDA FOR A MEETING OF THE ARMED FORCES WORKING GROUP***

**Date:- Thursday, 30th September, 2021  
Time:- 9.30 am  
Venue:- Virtual**

### **ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION**

**1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

**2. MINUTES**

To receive as an accurate record the minutes of the Armed Forces Working Group meeting held on the 8<sup>th</sup> October 2019.

**(Pages 3 - 6)**

**3. UPDATE FROM THE ARMED FORCES LIAISON OFFICER**

To receive a presentation from the Armed Forces Liaison Officer for Rhondda Cynon Taf and Merthyr Tydfil, including an update on the Veteran Advice Service.

**4. GUARANTEED INTERVIEW SCHEME DRAFT CABINET REPORT**

To receive a report from the Armed Forces Covenant Lead in respect of a proposal to introduce a Guaranteed Interview Scheme.

**(Pages 7 - 18)**

**5. LET'S TALK ARMED FORCES**

To receive a presentation from the Armed Forces Covenant Lead.

**6. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

**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.

Mr C Davies - Armed Forces Covenant Lead 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 COUNCIL ARMED FORCES WORKING GROUP**

Minutes of the meeting of the Armed Forces Working Group held on Tuesday, 8 October 2019 at 10.00 am at the Committee Room 1, The Council Offices, Clydach Vale.

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

Councillor M Webber (Chair)

Councillor S Bradwick    Councillor G Caple  
Councillor M Tegg

### **Officers in attendance**

Mr C Hanagan, Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication  
Ms M Warburton, HR Advisor, Equality & Diversity Team  
Mr J Ireland, Veteran Advice Officer  
Mr J Maddison, Armed Forces Covenant Liaison Officer  
Mr I Christopher, Strategic Manager

## **5 WELCOME**

The Chair welcomed all Members and officers to the inaugural meeting of the working group.

## **6 DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

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

## **7 MINUTES**

**RESOLVED** to approve as an accurate record, the minutes of the meeting of the Armed Forces Working Group held on 12<sup>th</sup> June 2019.

## **8 ARMED FORCES EVENTS**

The Strategic Manager provided Members with an update on the future Armed Forces Events for 2019-20.

Members were provided with details of events that were remaining in 2019, namely the Festival of Remembrance and Pontypridd Remembrance Sunday Service and Parade.

Members thanked the Officers for their continuing support and hard work with the organisation of Events over the past year, it has been greatly appreciated.

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

## **9 ARMED FORCES COVENANT**

The Equality and Diversity Adviser, Armed Forces Covenant Liaison Officer and the Veteran Advice Officer, together with colleagues provided Members with an overview on the work undertaken to fulfil the Council's commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant.

The Equality and Diversity Adviser updated Members with regard to funding for the Armed Forces Covenant Liaison Officer which is currently funded by the Armed Forces Covenant grant fund, Welsh Government have confirmed they will fund this post for a further 2 years.

Members were provided with an update in relation to supporting the Armed Forces Covenant, since the previous meeting of the Armed Forces Working Group.

Members were informed that the Armed Forces Officer Network met on 18<sup>th</sup> September 2019, to discuss activity, in relation to the Armed Forces across the Council and were provided with a presentation by the Veteran Advice Officer.

Members were advised that they would be provided with an update following the next meeting in December 2019.

It was noted that two Reserve Day events took place in July, and were both successful and positive feedback had been received.

Members were informed that Officers have continued to engage with veteran groups across the Authority to develop future initiatives.

Members were advised that the Park and Dare Theatre would be hosting a special showing of Zulu, specifically for Armed Forces families, and were welcomed along in support of the event. Also, the charity 'Tickets for Troops' were now available to order on the website.

The Equality and Diversity Adviser circulated the draft Armed Forces Covenant Newsletter, which had been produced to highlight Council's commitment to the Armed forces and to raise awareness of commemoration events initiatives, and asked Members to feedback any comments to her.

The Armed Forces Covenant Liaison Officer informed the Group that he attended the Armed Forces Covenant Conference provided by Welsh Government on 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2019 and facilitated a presentation on the partnership's progress to date. Further information would be provided at the next meeting.

Members were advised of the two nominations for the Armed Forces in

Wales Awards, which is organised by the Ministry of Defence recognises those who have made outstanding contributions to the Armed Forces Community.

The Equality and Diversity Adviser commented that there is still a need to appoint a War Memorial Officer, sometime in the near future.

Members commented on the commemorative plaques across the County Borough and felt that they are relatively difficult to differentiate from other plaques that are not retained by the Authority, which had caused some confusion amongst local residents.

It was noted that 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.

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

## **10 VETERAN ADVICE SERVICE**

The Veteran Advice Officer presented his report, which detailed the Veterans Advice Service Cwm Taf position Statement from January 2019 – 30<sup>th</sup> September 2019.

Members were informed that the Veteran Advise Officer has been in post since January 2019, and the post is a 2-year Armed Forces Covenant Funded position.

Within the report, Members were provided with updates in relation to:

- Armed Forces Community.
- VOA Service Awareness/Promotion
- VOA Referrals and Case Studies

Members thanked the officers for the exceptional work they have undertaken and succeeding in providing an excellent service to veterans living within the County Borough.

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

**This meeting closed at 11.15 am**

**Cllr M Webber  
Chair.**

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## RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

### ARMED FORCES WORKING GROUP

30th SEPTEMBER 2021

### IMPROVING THE COUNCIL'S RECRUITMENT PROCESS FOR THE ARMED FORCES COMMUNITY.

### REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF HUMAN RESOURCES RICHARD EVANS & SERVICE DIRECTOR DEMOCRATIC SERVICES & COMMUNICATIONS CHRISTIAN HANAGAN IN DISCUSSION WITH THE CABINET'S ARMED FORCES CHAMPION (COUNCILLOR MAUREEN WEBBER)

#### 1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To advise Members of the report being presented to Cabinet on the 4<sup>th</sup> October in respect of options that could improve the Council's recruitment process, so as to make it easier for the Armed Forces Community and veterans to overcome barriers to civilian employment. The main proposal outlined in the report is for the introduction of a Guaranteed Interview Scheme for Armed Forces service leavers, reservists and veterans if they meet the vacancy essential criteria. and to feedback any comments of the Working Group in relation to the intended scheme.

#### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Working Group:

- 2.1 Consider the report provided in appendix A and provide comment as appropriate on the intended scheme.
- 2.2 That Members feedback is presented to the Cabinet prior to their consideration of the item.

#### 3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The scheme would benefit veterans and armed forces leavers by helping them overcome the barriers to employment post service and helping to reduce the potential health and wellbeing impacts of long-term unemployment.

- 3.2 The Council would benefit from a wider selection of candidates who meet the essential criteria and who may have a large number of transferrable skills.
- 3.3 It would further demonstrate the Council's support for the Armed Forces Community and honour the spirit of the Armed Forces Covenant to which RCTCBC is a signatory.
- 3.4 The Council would also be able to demonstrate its continuing commitment to the Armed Forces Community when reapplying for the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme Gold Award in 2022. Though not an essential requirement, the implementation of the Guaranteed Interview Scheme for the Armed Forces Community is seen as an important supportive measure.
- 3.5 The other recruitment options proposed would ensure that Council jobs are promoted in the right places to encourage applications from the armed forces community and veterans.

#### **4. BACKGROUND**

- 4.1 The Armed Forces Covenant was enshrined in law in the Armed Forces Act 2011 and ensures that members of the Armed Forces community are not disadvantaged as a result of their service in accessing Government and commercial services. Special consideration is also appropriate in some cases, especially for those who have given most such as the injured and bereaved. The Covenant applies to serving and past Armed Forces community members and their families.
- 4.2 The majority of Service leavers may settle back into civilian life effectively, using the wide variety of skills developed during their time in the Armed Forces to gain meaningful employment and contribute to their communities. However, there are those that will need extra support.
- 4.3 Veterans are typically resilient and possess many valuable transferable skills including effective communication and problem solving. A forces career promotes teamwork at all levels, and management and leadership potential is developed throughout. The Council could benefit from these skills in the future development of a suitably skilled workforce.
- 4.4 The introduction of a guaranteed interview scheme along with the other options identified below, may go some way to enabling veterans to overcome any barriers to finding civilian employment and help reduce any negative impacts of potential long-term unemployment.

- 4.5 A guaranteed interview scheme if implemented would provide the guarantee of an interview to those who meet the essential criteria set out in any job pack. It would not however, guarantee employment, as selection procedures would ensure the best candidate for the job is appointed.
- 4.6 Other employers are adopting the Guaranteed Interview Scheme across Wales, including Council local Authorities such as Torfaen County Borough Council and Newport City Council, who have adopted the Guaranteed Interview Scheme, with the Vale of Glamorgan in the process of implementation. Many local authorities in England have successfully adopted the scheme including Buckinghamshire, Cumbria and Lancashire County Councils.

## **5. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The Council as an equal opportunities employer positively encourages a diverse workforce from all sections of the community. A screening EIA has been developed and established some potential negative impacts of the proposal, however these can be mitigated against in the wider recruitment strategy.

## **6. CONSULTATION**

- 6.1 Consultation details are listed within Appendix A

## **7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)**

- 7.1 Any financial implications are listed within Appendix A

## **8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED**

- 8.1 There are no legal implications aligned to this report.

## **9. LINKS TO THE COUNCILS CORPORATE PLAN / OTHER CORPORATE PRIORITIES/ FUTURE GENERATIONS – SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT.**

- 9.1 The success of the ERS will help improve well-being and will therefore help to make a positive contribution to armed forces employees'. Implementing the Guaranteed Interview Scheme will contribute to the following well-being goals within the Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2016:
- A prosperous Wales
  - A more equal Wales
  - A Wales of cohesive communities

- A Healthier Wales

The scheme is consistent with the five ways of working as set out in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

## **10. CONCLUSION**

- 10.1 The introduction of a Guaranteed Interview Scheme and other recruitment options suggested will strengthen the Council's standing amongst the general public, particularly the Armed Forces Community. It should increase recognition amongst the public about the actions the Council is taking as a signatory of our Armed Forces Covenant.
- 10.2 The recommendations if agreed will benefit the Council as an employer through a potential wider selection of candidates who meet the essential criteria and have a large number of transferrable skills. They will also benefit veterans and armed forces leavers by helping them overcome the barriers to employment post service and helping to reduce the potential health and wellbeing impacts of long-term unemployment.

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**CABINET**

**4<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER 2021**

**IMPROVING THE COUNCIL'S RECRUITMENT PROCESS FOR THE  
ARMED FORCES COMMUNITY.**

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF HUMAN RESOURCES RICHARD EVANS  
& SERVICE DIRECTOR DEMOCRATIC SERVICES & COMMUNICATIONS  
CHRISTIAN HANAGAN IN DISCUSSION WITH THE CABINET'S ARMED  
FORCES CHAMPION (COUNCILLOR MAUREEN WEBBER)**

**Author(s): Peter Cushion & Chris Davies**

**1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide Cabinet with a number of options that could improve the Council's recruitment process, so as to make it easier for the Armed Forces Community and veterans to overcome barriers to civilian employment.
- 1.2 The main proposal is the introduction of a Guaranteed Interview Scheme for Armed Forces service leavers, reservists and veterans if they meet the vacancy essential criteria.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that the Cabinet:

- 2.1 Note and agree to the implementation of a Guaranteed Interview Scheme for service leavers, veterans and reservists.
- 2.2 Agree that the Council works with the Career Transition Partnership, a no cost recruitment service for organisations seeking highly motivated and experienced veterans, who are leaving the Armed Forces.
- 2.3 Agree that the Council works with Forces Families Jobs, a no cost recruitment service supporting members of the Armed Forces Community into employment.
- 2.4 Agree to include a strap line on job advertisements welcoming

applications from the ex-forces community.

### **3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 The scheme would benefit veterans and armed forces leavers by helping them overcome the barriers to employment post service and helping to reduce the potential health and wellbeing impacts of long-term unemployment.
- 3.2 The Council would benefit from a wider selection of candidates who meet the essential criteria and who may have a large number of transferrable skills.
- 3.3 It would further demonstrate the Council's support for the Armed Forces Community and honour the spirit of the Armed Forces Covenant to which RCTCBC is a signatory.
- 3.4 The Council would also be able to demonstrate its continuing commitment to the Armed Forces Community when reapplying for the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme Gold Award in 2022. Though not an essential requirement, the implementation of the Guaranteed Interview Scheme for the Armed Forces Community is seen as an important supportive measure.
- 3.5 The other recruitment options proposed would ensure that Council jobs are promoted in the right places to encourage applications from the armed forces community and veterans.

### **4. BACKGROUND**

- 4.1 The Armed Forces Covenant was enshrined in law in the Armed Forces Act 2011 and ensures that members of the Armed Forces community are not disadvantaged as a result of their service in accessing Government and commercial services. Special consideration is also appropriate in some cases, especially for those who have given most such as the injured and bereaved. The Covenant applies to serving and past Armed Forces community members and their families.
- 4.2 The Armed Forces community is defined, for the purposes of the Armed Forces Covenant, as including all those towards whom the Nation has a moral obligation due to service in HM Armed Forces i.e. serving Regular and Reserve personnel, veterans, and their families.

#### The Current position

- 4.3 Rhondda Cynon Taf Council was proud to be one of the first Local Authorities in Wales to sign up to the Armed Forces Covenant in 2012. The Council has a proud record of valuing its armed services, both past and present, and the commitment to the Covenant significantly takes forward the Council's, and the County Borough's, objectives to support our Armed Forces Community. As a local authority we have used Covenant funding to establish a successful Veteran Advice Service.
- 4.4 The Veteran Advice service provides free, impartial, dedicated information, advice and support to members of the Armed Forces Community within Rhondda Cynon Taf. The service covers a range of areas, including Benefits, Adult Social Care, Finances, Employment and Housing and has provided advice and support to over 600 Veterans in the community.

#### Guaranteed Interview Scheme

- 4.5 The majority of Service leavers may settle back into civilian life effectively, using the wide variety of skills developed during their time in the Armed Forces to gain meaningful employment and contribute to their communities. However, there are those that will need extra support.
- 4.6 Veterans are typically resilient and possess many valuable transferable skills including effective communication and problem solving. A forces career promotes teamwork at all levels, and management and leadership potential is developed throughout. The Council could benefit from these skills in the future development of a suitably skilled workforce.
- 4.7 The introduction of a guaranteed interview scheme along with the other options identified below, may go some way to enabling veterans to overcome any barriers to finding civilian employment and help reduce any negative impacts of potential long-term unemployment.
- 4.8 A guaranteed interview scheme if implemented would provide the guarantee of an interview to those who meet the essential criteria set out in any job pack. It would not however, guarantee employment, as selection procedures would ensure the best candidate for the job is appointed.
- 4.9 Other employers are adopting the Guaranteed Interview Scheme across Wales, including Council local Authorities such as Torfaen County Borough Council and Newport City Council, who have adopted the Guaranteed Interview Scheme, with the Vale of Glamorgan in the process of implementation. Many local authorities in England have

successfully adopted the scheme including Buckinghamshire, Cumbria and Lancashire County Councils.

#### The Defence Employment Recognition Scheme

- 4.10 The Defence Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS) comprises of Bronze, Silver and Gold awards for employers (including local authorities) that pledge, demonstrate or advocate support to defence and the Armed Forces Community, and inspire others to do the same. RCTCBC are currently holding the Gold Award.
- 4.11 Rhondda Cynon Taf Council is proud to hold the Gold Employer recognition award and have employed a dedicated Armed Forces Covenant Liaison officer to ensure the Armed Forces Community are not disadvantaged in any way by their service. The Council provides Covenant awareness sessions to council staff, charities and external organisations and work closely with Armed Forces partners, neighbouring authorities, charities and Veteran groups.
- 4.12 A supportive measure of the Gold award, although not an essential requirement, is to implement the Guaranteed Interview Scheme for the Armed Forces Community. RCTCBC will submit a renewal application for the Gold Award in 2022.

#### Other Options

- 4.13 A number of additional actions can be implemented by the Council to help better publicise Council jobs to the armed forces community and veterans, with the following suggested options, also helping the council towards reapplying for the Employer Recognition Scheme Gold award in 2022.
- 4.14 The Council could work with the Career Transition Partnership [www.ctp.org.uk](http://www.ctp.org.uk) a no cost recruitment service for organisations seeking highly motivated and experienced veterans, who are leaving the Armed Forces. Resettlement is a Service Leavers responsibility, but the CTP provides a framework and support to all service leavers. The CTP also have an extensive job board, RightJob with many Forces Friendly employers exclusively for use by Service leavers. To date, the CTP have assisted over 235,000 Service leavers with the transition to civilian life and supported thousands of organisations looking to employ ex-Service personnel.
- 4.15 In addition to the above it is recommended that the Council works with Forces Families Jobs [www.forcesfamiliesjobs.co.uk](http://www.forcesfamiliesjobs.co.uk) a no cost recruitment service supporting members of the Armed Forces Community into employment. Forces Families Jobs is the go-to

place for training and employment for family members of currently serving UK military personnel. It allows people to find organisations who are forces family friendly and that employers have signed the Armed Forces Covenant or are able to demonstrate their commitment to the Armed Forces.

- 4.16 The final option for consideration is the addition of a strap line on job advertisements welcoming applications for those from the armed forces community. It is proposed that the following paragraph is inserted into a revised Recruitment and Selection Procedure

*'In support of the Council's voluntary pledge to support the Armed Forces, the recruiter must always be prepared to ensure that applicants who have identified themselves as members of the Armed Forces including Service Leavers, Veterans and Reservists and who meet the essential criteria of the person specification, are offered an interview.'*

## **5. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS / SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY**

- 5.1 The Council as an equal opportunities employer positively encourages a diverse workforce from all sections of the community. A screening EIA has been developed and established some potential negative impacts of the proposal, however these can be mitigated against in the wider recruitment strategy.

## **6. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 A Welsh Language Impact Assessment has been completed and the main findings are as follows -

There would be a positive outcome as the proposal could increase the number of Welsh speaking Veterans employed by the Council leading to a more diverse workforce.

There would be a positive outcome as the proposal would allow an opportunity to promote the Welsh Language and the promotion of armed forces work in Welsh. The experience and knowledge Welsh speaking Veterans could bring, will allow us to develop our commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant amongst Welsh speakers, whatever role they are employed in.

## **7. CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT**

- 7.1 Trade Unions will need to be engaged in the development of any policy.

7.2 The draft report has been shared with the Armed Forces Working Group and feedback from the group noted and shared.

## **8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)**

8.1 There would be the ability to advertise vacant positions through the Career Transition (CTP) and Forces Family Jobs websites at no extra cost

## **9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED**

9.1 There are no legal implications aligned to this report.

## **10. LINKS TO THE CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT.**

10.1 The success of the ERS will help improve well-being and will therefore help to make a positive contribution to armed forces employees'. Implementing the Guaranteed Interview Scheme will contribute to the following well-being goals within the Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2016:

- A prosperous Wales
- A more equal Wales
- A Wales of cohesive communities
- A Healthier Wales

The scheme is consistent with the five ways of working as set out in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

## **11. CONCLUSION**

11.1 The introduction of a Guaranteed Interview Scheme and other recruitment options suggested will strengthen the Council's standing amongst the general public, particularly the Armed Forces Community. It should increase recognition amongst the public about the actions the Council is taking as a signatory of our Armed Forces Covenant.

11.2 The recommendations if agreed will benefit the Council as an employer through a potential wider selection of candidates who meet the essential criteria and have a large number of transferrable skills. They will also benefit veterans and armed forces leavers by helping them overcome the barriers to employment post service and helping to reduce the potential health and wellbeing impacts of long-term unemployment.

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