



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL ARMED FORCES STEERING GROUP

Minutes of the meeting of the virtual Armed Forces Steering Group held on Thursday, 29 September 2022 at 10.00 am.

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

Councillor M Webber (Chair)
Councillor C Middle (Vice-Chair)
Councillor D Parkin

Officers in attendance

Mr C Davies, Armed Forces Covenant Lead
Mr J Ireland, Armed Forces Liaison Officer
Mr S Treeby, Senior Events Co-ordinator
Mr J Phillips, Leisure Asset Manager

11 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

The Chair took the opportunity to welcome new Members into the Armed Forces Steering Group.

Apologies of absence were received from County Borough Councillor S Bradwick and C Preedy.

12 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

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

13 MINUTES AND ACTIONS FROM LAST MEETING

It was **RESOLVED** to approve as an accurate record, the minutes of the meeting of the Armed Forces Steering Group held on the 1st March 2022.

14 ARMED FORCES UPDATE REPORT AND PRESENTATION

With the aid of a PowerPoint presentation, the Armed Forces Liaison Officer provided Members with an update on the services and projects currently being undertaken by the Armed Forces Team thus far.

Brief overviews were provided on the current projects such as Your North Mental Health and Well-being project, Veterans Connected, Served and Proud LGBTQ+ Veteran Support, Staff Engagement and Employee support and the Veterans Advice Service. The Armed Forces Liaison Officer informed Members of the successes of all projects currently being undertaken by the Armed Forces Team; The projects have aided in supporting veterans and creating support channels.

To add, the Armed Forces Liaison Officer informed Members of the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Health Board campaign due to be launched during Remembrance week. The campaign will aid in raising awareness within medical GP practices across Cwm Taf on how to better support Veterans who seek medical support.

The Armed Forces Liaison Officer noted the success of the Armed Forces events throughout the year; these included support for Armed Forces Council Employee Coffee mornings, Cwmparc Blitz Memorial, Falklands 40th Anniversary, Armed Forces Day 2022 and the Queens Platinum Jubilee 2022. Members were advised of the high volume of attendance within these events which highlighted the value and support for Veterans throughout Cwm Taf.

The Armed Forces Liaison Officer provided Members with an update on the Covenant Awareness newsletter and the Southeast Wales Directory. The Directory lists of all key channels such as charities or organisations along with Veteran Groups for supporting Veterans. Members were advised of the launch of the RCT Covenant Facebook in October ahead of Remembrance week. The page will be used to advertise the upcoming Remembrance events on the 6th and 13th November and highlight all the work being undertaken by the Armed Forces Team.

The Armed Forces Liaison Officer noted the importance of supporting Veteran Groups throughout Cwm Taf; he referred to the number of Veteran groups which take place within Cwm Taf, these include, Valley Veterans, Taf Ely Veterans, Merthyr Tydfil Veteran Group, Mountain Ash Veteran Group and Aberdare Town Centre Veterans. The Veteran groups play a significant role in allowing Veterans to come together, socialise and support one another.

The Armed Forces Liaison Officer was pleased to announce the attainment of the Armed Forces RCT Gold award. It was advised that as a Local Authority a guaranteed interview scheme is offered for Veterans and Reservists with partnership from CTP Career transition, and Forces Family Jobs. The partnerships play a key role in advertising vacancies to the Veteran Community.

The Armed Forces Liaison Officer continued by highlighting further support that the Local Authority provides to the Armed Forces community; these include, covering the cost of burial fees for Veterans, free access to Leisure facilities, and free swimming for Veterans.

To conclude the Armed Forces Liaison Officer advised Members of the Veterans Advice Service; the Veteran Advice service provides free, impartial, dedicated information, advise and support to Members of the Armed Forces Community with Rhondda Cynon Taf. The service covers a range of areas, including Benefits, Adult Social Services, Finances and Employment. The Veteran Advice Services Signposts Veterans to the most appropriate organisation or charity for support. It can also be used as a Single Point of Contact for Veterans accessing Council Services. To date, the service has received 1200 referrals, 91% are male, 72% served in the British Army, 42% of referrals originated from Veteran's support groups such as Valley Veterans and Taf Ely Veteran group.

The Chair extended her gratitude to the Armed Forces Liaison Officer and Armed Forces Lead Officer for the work being undertaken to support Veterans. The Chair required further information on the courses which are being done by Your North.

Action: JI to share information to Members of the group on the courses which are available at the Lido by Your North.

The Chair commented on the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Health Board campaign and was pleased to see work is being undertaken to target Veterans within GP practices to ensure they are provided with necessary support.

A Member echoed the praises from the Chair regarding the progress achieved by the Armed Forces Team relating to Cwm Taf Morgannwg Health Board. The Member inquired whether further work could be done to capture the work that is being undertaken within the Local Authority which concerns the Armed Forces Community. The Armed Forces Liaison Officer noted the importance of this and advised Members that a meeting will be undertaken with Officers in the Local Authority in order to promote and raise awareness.

A Member requested where the specific information regarding Armed Forces support can be found in order to raise awareness of the support services.

Action: JI to attend event on the 3rd November for the Lighthouse Project with Cllr Parkin to offer support.

Action: JI to drop information leaflets and Directory at the Community Centre.

The Armed Forces Steering Group **RESOLVED** to:

- Note the contents of the report and the accompanying presentation by the Armed Forces Liaison Officer (AFLO).

15 ARMED FORCES EVENTS

The Senior Events Co-ordinator provided a verbal update to Members on the Armed Forces events delivered this year. Members were advised of the success of the Armed Forces Day Event however it was noted that attendance was impacted due to the weather. A total of 3000 people were in attendance and overall positive feedback was received concerning the event. It was noted that a grant was received from the MOD to support the event. Members were advised that for the upcoming Armed Forces Day 2023, the team will look to apply for the Grant.

Members were advised of the upcoming Festival of Remembrance events on the 6th November 2022 which will take place at the Aberdare Coliseum Theatre. Performances will be received from the Military Wives Choir, Band of the Royal Welsh and a School Choir.

The Senior Events Co-ordinator advised Members that the event will be rotated across the Borough to have a wider outreach and raise awareness.

Lastly, the Senior Events Co-Ordinator advised Members of the last event of the year, Remembrance Sunday Parade in Pontypridd which will take place on the 13th November. It was confirmed that the parade will take place within the grounds of the park with a similar format to the previous year event.

The Chair extended praises to the Senior Events Co-Ordinator for the support they have provided in delivering Armed Forces events. The Chair commented on the Festival of Remembrance event being undertaken at the Coliseum as it

encompasses the wider community and passes on the message of the significance on the Armed Forces Community and encourage the younger generation to attend.

A Member commented on the event being rotated throughout the Borough as it raises awareness of the events and encourages residents to attend from different community groups. The Member added by thanking the team for continuing to support the Festival in RCT.

The Armed Forces Steering Group **RESOLVED** to:

- Note verbal update

16 LEISURE SERVICES FOR VETERANS AND THE ARMED FORCES

The Leisure Asset Manager shared a presentation, the presentation provided Members with a brief overview of the Leisure department and Veteran's use of the services.

It was noted there are 323 serving Armed Forces currently accessing a free membership. Members were advised that there currently there are 13 Veteran defence discount cards which include serving family members accessing the Corporate Membership.

The Leisure Asset Manager continued by advising Member that there are 210 registrations for Veterans free swimming. Lastly, Members were advised of a new initiative which will be launching later in the year which will offer a 20% discount on pay as you go for all defence discount card holders.

Action: JP to send information regarding the new scheme to JI to link on the Covenant Facebook page.

The Chair requested the Leisure Services to produce a Veterans leaflet to share with Veterans, the leaflet will specify what is available and when. The Chair also suggested for Leisure Services to arrange a Veterans Session in available pools to encourage the Veteran community to come together and have a club atmosphere.

A Member extended his thanks to the Leisure Services team for the work they are undertaking towards Veterans. The Member required further information regarding the 10 Veterans accessing the Concessionary pay as you go and whether they are provided with updates on the services which are available to them.

Action: CD to arrange meeting with JP regarding the Veteran Memberships within Leisure Services.

Following discussion, the Armed Forces Steering Group **RESOLVED** to:

- Note presentation

17 URGENT BUSINESS

The Chair requested for a meeting to be arranged with the new appointed Heritage Monument Officer in RCT.

Action: CD to arrange a one-to-one meeting with the Chair and the Heritage Monument Officer and to invite the Heritage Monument to the next Armed Forces Steering Group Committee to update the group on the work currently being undertaken.

This meeting closed at 11.14 am

**CIlr M Webber
Chair.**