



**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 22<sup>nd</sup> June, in Ynysangharad War Memorial Park.

**This meeting closed at 11.50 am**

**M Webber  
Chairman.**