

# **NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

## **CABINET (Policy & Resources) Sub Committee**

**25<sup>th</sup> July 2023**

### **Head of People & Organisational Development**

**S.Rees**

#### **Matter for Information**

**Wards Affected:** All Wards

**Report Title: Update on the ongoing work to support the Armed Forces Community in Neath Port Talbot**

#### **Purpose of Report**

1. To present Members with an update on the ongoing work to support the Armed Forces Community in Neath Port Talbot.

#### **Executive Summary**

2. This report provides an overview of the Armed Forces Covenant, the work of the Neath Port Talbot Armed Forces Forum and the work that has been undertaken to support the Armed Forces Community in Neath Port Talbot.

#### **Background**

##### **What is the Armed Forces Covenant (AFC)?**

3. On 24th June 2013, the council and a number of partners signed the Community Covenant. The Community Covenant is now known simply as the Armed Forces Covenant, which covers all aspect of society and the council has pledged to support the Armed Forces Community via the re-signing of the Armed Forces Covenant by the Chief Executive and Leader on 15<sup>th</sup> May 2023.

4. The Armed Forces Covenant is a promise to ensure that those who serve or have served in the armed forces – and their families – are treated fairly.

The Armed Forces Covenant Duty is a legal obligation on certain public bodies, such as local authorities to pay due regard to the Covenant principles when exercising certain functions.

Under the terms of the Covenant Duty, members of the Armed Forces, veterans and their families should face no disadvantage compared to other citizens in the provision services in health, education and housing.

### **Neath Port Talbot Armed Forces Forum:**

5. The Neath Port Talbot Armed Forces Forum aims to:
  - Provide easy access to information about local services that can provide help and support for the Armed Forces Community;
  - Identify, address and regularly review areas where members of the Armed Forces Community may experience disadvantage;
  - Develop strong relationships and multi-agency joined up approaches to delivering services to meet the needs of the Armed Forces Community; and
  - Keep forum members up to date with key information from respective organisations

The Regional Armed Forces Liaison Officer (NPT, Swansea & Bridgend), provides administrative support to the Neath Port Talbot Armed Forces Forum which takes place three times a year.

The council has two Armed Forces Champions. Councillor Wyndham Griffiths and Councillor Tim Bowen (who replaced Councillor Chris James at Council on 12<sup>th</sup> July 2023).

Members of the Forum are from public, private and third sector organisations from across the county borough. This includes military personnel, health, police, education, DWP, veterans' hubs and other organisations and charities.

Since Covid, the Forum has been taking place virtually. Attendees are encouraged to provide updates on events and key information.

The most recent Forum took place on Thursday 9th March when the Forum was updated on the new Armed Forces Covenant legislation, recent Census Data, the All Wales Armed Forces Covenant Newsletter, Armed Forces Day funding, future events and updates from 223 Transport Squadron, Royal Logistics Corps, the Royal Navy, Alabare, the Bulldogs, Probation Services and Welsh Government.

The June meeting of the Forum was cancelled due to unforeseen circumstances. The next Forum is scheduled to take place in September 2023.

### **Supporting the Armed Forces Community:**

#### a) Providing Funding:

6. The Regional Armed Forces Liaison Officer has worked to distribute £25,000 from the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust's 'Sustaining Delivery of the Covenant' funding across the three regions.

The fund has been distributed via an application process for local organisations, to support events, training and marketing activities. Examples of how the funding has supported Armed Forces communities across the three authorities is provided below:

- Events such as Jubilee parties, Remembrance concerts, the Armed Forces Bikers 'Boio Bash' summer event, the Battle of Britain touring exhibition, a veteran's hub launch event in Swansea and Armed Forces Day in Aberafan Shopping Centre.
- Marketing materials such as posters, leaflets, tommy statues, social media posts, printed mugs and other merchandise. An example of this is the Glyncorrwg memorial (Appendix 1)
- Training such as health and safety for volunteers, mental health awareness, equalities and diversity.

The Regional Armed Forces Liaison Officer will also research, share and help organisations with funding applications if necessary. The

Officer recently supported a local organisation to successfully apply for Sport Wales and the National Lottery Community Fund.

b) Arranging / Supporting Events:

7.

- Armed Forces Week and Armed Forces Day - 19th June – 24th June 2023:

The flag raising ceremony took place at both Neath and Port Talbot Civic Centres on Monday 19th June, attended by dignitaries, service personnel and the public. This marked the start of Armed Forces Week.

- Wales and the Battle of Britain Touring Exhibition - 5th September – 18th September 2022:

The Regional Armed Forces Liaison Officer organised the exhibition displayed at Aberafan Shopping Centre. The exhibition shared the Welsh stories of the Battle of Britain including the Neath Spitfire. A full sized replica of a Spitfire was displayed in the shopping centre and an opening ceremony took place to open the exhibition, attended by the public and a number of dignitaries. (Appendix 2)

- Mayor of Neath Port Talbot's Armed Forces Festival – 29th October – 11th November 2022:

The Festival consisted of an opening ceremony (Appendix 3), a flag raising event, a service children event at Ysgol Cwm Brombil (Appendix 4) and a concert. The concert, which was held in the Princess Royal Theatre, was a variety style show with concluded with a Remembrance Service. Performers included Kirsten Orsborn, Bois Afan, Bagpiper Ben James, NPT Cerdd and compered by Kev Johns. The event was supported by the tri-service cadet organisations who sold programmes and had collection buckets or the local Royal British Legion (Appendix 5).

Other events were encouraged to affiliate with the Festival to provide promotion via our website. The Library service added a range of events

for example, poppy making and there was also a concert in Briton Ferry Community Centre.

The service children event was such a success similar events have been arranged in Swansea and Bridgend with the Neath Port Talbot event being used as an example of best practice.

- Ministry of Defence Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS):

In July 2023, the council was awarded the Silver award one of only 17 major Welsh employers to have received the Silver Award this year. The prestigious award recognises employers who have actively demonstrated support for the Armed Forces community by implementing policies to help them. To achieve the Silver award, organisations must proactively demonstrate that the Armed Forces community is not unfairly disadvantaged as part of their recruitment policies. They must also actively ensure their workforce is aware of their positive policies towards the defence community and understand issues for reservists, veterans, cadet force adult volunteers, and spouses and partners of those serving in the Armed Forces.

The council has a guaranteed interview in place for veterans and offer 5 days' additional unpaid leave to allow Reservists to carry out their training which supported the Silver application.

- Signposting & Supporting:

The Regional Armed Forces Liaison Officer is regularly contacted by individuals across the 3 authorities who ask for support or signposting for a range of issues, including health, education and housing. This is a continuing part of the role.

The Regional Armed Forces Liaison Officer keeps the Veteran's Gateway up to date with information for armed forces communities to find local support via Welsh Government-

<https://www.veteransgateway.org.uk>

## **Financial Appraisal**

8. The Regional Armed Forces Liaison Officer post is funded by the Welsh Government's Armed Forces Liaison Officer Grant.

## **Integrated Impact Assessment**

9. There is no requirement to undertake an Integrated Impact Assessment as this report is for information purposes.

## **Valleys Communities Impact**

10. No implications.

## **Workforce Impact**

11. There are no workforce impacts.

## **Legal Impact**

12. There are no legal impacts.

## **Risk Management**

13. This report is for information purposes only.

## **Consultation**

14. There is no requirement for external consultation on this item.

## **Recommendation**

15. For Members to note the work in Neath Port Talbot to support the local Armed Forces Community.

## **List of Background Papers**

16. None

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# Appendices

## Appendix 1

### Glyncorrwg Memorial



## Appendix 2

### Battle of Britain Exhibition – Spitfire Replica



### Appendix 3

#### Opening Event of the Mayor of Neath Port Talbot's Armed Forces Festival



### Appendix 4

#### Service Children Event in Ysgol Cwm Brombil – 9<sup>th</sup> November 2022





Remembrance Concert, Princess Royal Theatre – 11<sup>th</sup> November 2022

