



City and County of Swansea

Minutes of the **Armed Forces Community Covenant Signatories Panel**

Multi-Location Meeting - Gloucester Room, Guildhall / MS

Teams

Monday, 29 January 2024 at 2.00 pm

Present: Councillor Wendy G Lewis (Chair) Presided

Representing Organisations

Moawia Bin-Sufyan	Care After Combat
Ruth Birch	Fighting With Pride
Lt Cdr Andy Davies	Royal Navy
Russ Davies	Swansea Sea Cadets
Pat Dunmore	Citizens Advice Bureau
Wing Cdr Phil Flower	Royal British Legion Swansea Branch
WO1 Rob Govier	HMS Cambria
Kisty Hanson	Swansea Veterans Hub
Debbie Hamer	Natural Resources Wales
Lance Higgen Young	Royal British Legion
Calvin Hughes	HMP Swansea
Phil Jones	So Fit/Veterans RV
Adrian Leslie	Royal British Legion Swansea Branch
Sophie Metcalf	
Michelle Mills	Alabare
Julian North	Help for Heroes
Cllr Francesca O'Brien	Swansea Council
Dave Prior	Royal British Legion Swansea Branch
Ellis Robinson	Alabare
Paul Smith	Veterans RV
Tony Strutt	V Aid
Stephen Sullivan	Hafal
Neil Tomlin	Royal Air Force Benevolent Fund
Capt Huw Williams	157 Squadron
Simon Winspear	SCVS

Officer(s)

Gareth Borsden	Democratic Services Officer
Marie Muldoon	Housing Options Manager
David Price Deer	Special Events Manager
Natalie Ellis-Burt	Local Area Coordinator
Spencer Martin	Third Sector & Trust Fund Commissioning Co-ordinator

Apologies for Absence

Louise Fleet, Cllr Elliott King, Finola Pickwell, Wayne Jenkins, Steve Spill and Victoria Williams

48 Disclosures of Personal & Prejudicial Interests from Members.

None.

49 Minutes.

Agreed that the minutes of the Panel held on 9 October 2023 be approved as correct record.

50 Swansea Council Housing.

Marie Muldoon referred to and outlined the current pressures facing Swansea Council relating to the huge increases in demand for Council Housing.

She outlined that the section she oversees is responsible for administering the councils allocation policy and homelessness prevention services.

She outlined that demand now was at the highest she had ever experienced and this was due to various factors within the housing sector including both social and private availability being reduced, large increases in private rented costs & reduced movement of people in council premises. This was affecting all local authorities across Wales. The demand for accommodation has almost doubled in Swansea in the last few years.

She outlined the points system for allocations that Swansea has in place, which does recognise veterans and those leaving the forces, but this has been impacted by the Welsh Governments 'Everyone In' legislation which has really impacted on the amount of people that are able to apply for housing.

She outlined that the Council is exploring many avenues to increase provision including buying back former council houses, increasing temporary accommodation available and helping with renting/deposits etc.

She outlined the link the department has with Swansea Prison and the prisoner pathway scheme which has been in place since 2015. This involves all the various criminal justice based agencies. The department has a dedicated ex offender resettlement officer who deals with these matters.

She referred to the ongoing allocations policy review and survey that the Council is undertaking, all panel members are welcome and encouraged to participate. The survey can be accessed via a link which will be circulated after the meeting and is also below.

[Council housing allocations survey: have your say - Swansea](#)

The Chair thanks the Officer for her presentation and update and thanked her for the support she provides to herself and other members when they get requests from veterans.

51 Armed Forces Covenant Regional Project.

Spencer Martin in the absence of Finola Pickwell gave a verbal update relating to the following areas;

Currently one grant funding programme that is open for applications from groups; Reducing Veterans Homeless Programme; Kings College London (KCMHR) - Are looking for Real Stories for an online gallery of images.

LGBT Armed Forces Memorial details have now been published along with the recommendations of the review.

Full details will be circulated after the meetings.

Ruth Birch outlined that the Government had now accepted 49 of the recommendations of the review, and there is an online application form that can be completed. Again details of this and a link to the online form will be sent to panel members after the meeting.

52 Update from MOD.

Capt Huw Williams reported that a lot has happened since the last panel meeting with Remembrance weekend taking place and all the Christmas activities that they were involved with.

There have been a few significant events in relation to 100th birthday celebrations where the Lord Mayor of Swansea was very kind in allowing the use of Mansion House to say happy birthday to Mr David Jones, who served in the Royal Navy in WW2.

We also held a church service for Miss Kath Morris, a Bletchley Park operative in St David's Church, Neath.

He asked panel members if they have in their organisations or know of any veterans reaching a significant milestone, please do let him know, so appropriate celebrations and attendance can be arranged where possible.

Since the last panel meeting things have got very busy and there are a lot of personnel preparing to deploy on overseas exercises with circa 250 reservists from the Army Reserve in Wales preparing to deploy into Europe in the coming months.

Last week was the Lord Lieutenant of West Glamorgan awards ceremony where 19 personnel from across all reserves, cadet units and charities were commended for their hard work and efforts in the past 12 months. This was a really nice evening hosted by the Reserve Forces and Cadets Association.

Planning is underway to commemorate the 80th anniversary of D Day with a service taking place in Christchurch, Swansea on the 9 June 2024. He asked if there any other events being planned by any other organisations to commemorate D Day 80 that he be informed and can then support if availability allows.

Planning is also well under way for the Wales National Airshow and Armed Forces Day celebrations that will take place over the weekend 6-7 July 2024. Additional details will be publicised in due course. Due to budgetary constraints, the scale of assets available to support the weekend may unfortunately be reduced this year.

We have had a good uptake from military charities to date, and he detailed that we are looking at those charities that provide support to veterans and are not using the event to raise money or funds. If money raising is the principle aim, please contact the Swansea Council Special Events team and they will be able to advise the way ahead.

As a reminder, we are here to help and support, and recently 223 Sqn have worked with Baglan Primary School to enable them to achieve the Silver Award for Supporting Service Children Cymru. This is a great achievement for the school, and he congratulated them on the award.

Kosovo Liberation Commemoration: British and NATO ground troops helped liberate Kosovo from Milosovic's violent regime in June 1999. Operation AGRICOLA 1, arguably, represents the last wholly successful foreign intervention by the British Army, at scale, in the last 25 years. Today, despite continued friction with their northern neighbours, Kosovo is a thriving European democracy.

Kosovo will celebrate the 25th anniversary of their liberation in Pristina on 12 June 2024. We have been invited to take some British veterans of AGRICOLA 1 to help mark that milestone event.

This will be an unofficial visit, organised by volunteers, rather than an official British Army event. Those taking part will be expected to arrange and pay for their own travel – there are direct flights from UK to Kosovo - but we do expect some accommodation to be provided by our Kosovan hosts.

Individuals who took part in AGRICOLA 1, on the ground, and are interested in taking part should contact the undersigned with a non-binding expression of interest. Once we get more detail from the Kosovan side arrangement can be made. Outside dates are likely to be 10 – 14 June 2024, with two or three nights in country.

If interested, please contact:

Rob Tomlinson robtomlinson7@gmail.com ;

Martin Browning martin@mbrowning.co.uk

or Dave Warner davidcritchleywarner@outlook.com

53 Swansea Bay University Health Board, Armed Forces Forum.

Officers given apologies.

Updates to be circulated after the meeting.

54 Supporting Pupils from Service Families.

Officer not present, no update given.

55 Update from Panel Members.

Royal British Legion

Phil Flower reported that the amount collected for the poppy appeal in Swansea in 2023 had exceeded the previous year.

He outlined that the launch in the Branwyn Hall with the Lord Mayor had proved a great start to the appeal and the involvement of various veterans' groups had also proved a great success.

Details of the events planned for 2024 would be circulated after the meeting.

He outlined that the RBL will be launching commemorative memorabilia for the D Day Anniversary in June and he had approached the Quadrant Centre to be able to have a stall in the middle area to sell items and raise awareness of veterans groups.

Clive Prior indicated that the link with the veterans' groups had worked really well, and early planning would begin shortly for this year's events. All veterans' groups are welcome to get involved.

Alabare

Michelle Mills reported that her organisation has currently got one vacancy for a single person veteran in Bernard St, Swansea, she can be contacted via m.mills@alabare.co.uk

Veterans RV/So Fit

Paul Smith outlined the recent Wales Online article relating to the groups surfing and dipping/swimming group. Numbers attending had risen as a result of the article and the popularity continues to grow and all are welcome.

He outlined the link developed with Alabare which had result in six extra veterans attending a session on the weekend.

Phil Jones detailed that they are continuing to deliver mental health sessions to service children in Swansea schools. He can also be contacted for help and advice from organisations and groups looking to achieve accreditation.

He detailed that funding has very recently been secured from the Council to further support the cold water sessions and to arrange a trip to the blue lagoon in Pembrokeshire for veterans.

Swansea Council

The Chair reported that the authority is aiming for Gold Award Standard, she asked and encouraged all groups, organisations or individuals to attend the Health Board Veterans Forum. She outlined that herself and Spencer both attended the meetings and the MOD are strongly encouraging groups etc to attend.

She outlined that the MOD want more regional meetings rather than individual authority meetings.

The link to the meeting can be circulated to Panel Members in due course.

Fighting with Pride

Ruth Birch referred to the Pride in Veterans Standard that panel members can apply to join and sign up for.

The standard shows that groups/organisations etc have the correct awareness of LGBT issues.

Full details would be circulated after the meeting.

The meeting ended at 2.50 pm

Chair