



City and County of Swansea

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

Committee Room 2 - Civic Centre, Swansea

Monday, 25 November 2019 at 2.00 pm

Present: Councillor Wendy G Lewis (Chair) Presided

Representing Organisations

Captain Chris Evans MBE	Welsh Transport Regiment
Thomas Hall	Blesma
David Singletary	SSAFA
Danielle Welsh	Age Cymru
Fiona Jones	DWP
Sarah Mallaghan	DWP
John Williams	Royal British Legion
Jamie Phillips	UWTSD

Officer(s)

Gareth Borsden	Democratic Services Officer
David Price Deer	Special Events Manager
Grace Halfpenny	Regional Armed Forces Covenant Liaison Officer
Spencer Martin	Third Sector & Trust Fund Commissioning Co-ordinator

Apologies for Absence

Alyx Baharie, Lt Cdr Ruth Fleming, D Byron Lewis, Anna Looker, Natalie McCombe, Peter Neville, Sandy Shaw and David Trotman

64 Disclosures of Personal & Prejudicial Interest.

None.

65 Minutes.

Resolved that the Minutes of the Panel held on 29 July 2019 be approved as a correct record.

66 Update from MOD.

Capt Chris Evans referred to the success of the crucial crew event held at the Grange in June and indicated that the event would be repeated again in June 2020, with the aim to get in excess of 1000 young people involved.

He indicated that planning and discussions for the Airshow & Armed Forces Day in 2020 continue with the Council's Special Events team and other partner organisations. The aim was to make the ground displays bigger and better than ever and for the covenant marquee to be in place again.

He outlined the event planned with the DVLA for July 2020.

He also outlined that the Ospreys plan to hold an Armed Forces Day at their home game on 7 December, but full details had yet to be received.

He referred to the various events that the unit had been involved with around the Remembrance Day period.

67 Supporting Service Children in Education.

Grace Halfpenny referred to the project being promoted by the WLGA relating to the above. She indicated that she and Millie Taylor from the WLGA are due to meet with both Primary & Secondary Headteachers in Swansea to explain the importance of raising awareness of the issue of children of service children in schools and their particular needs and issues.

She indicated that the WLGA are bidding for a regional support officer for service children which would cover the area from Port Talbot to West Wales.

She outlined that Neath Port Talbot Council have been successful in bidding for funding for a staff member.

She indicated she has approached the Health Board regarding young people's issues, particularly around mental health support.

68 Armed Forces Covenant Regional Project.

Grace Halfpenny indicated that she was about to send her half yearly report to the MOD. She would circulate the report once submitted.

She outlined that the funding from the MOD for her post ends in March 2020, but Welsh Government have agreed to fund the post until 2022. The new funding arrangements will not include funding for marketing/promotion going forward.

69 Swansea Bay University Health Board, Armed Forces Forum.

Grace Halfpenny indicated that she has again requested the Health Board sends a representative to Panel meetings. To date this request has proved unsuccessful.

She indicated that she and other members of the Panel attended the most recent Health Board Armed Forces meeting. Unfortunately the required attendance from health professionals had again proved unsatisfactory. The suggestion discussed at the last Panel meeting of an armed forces champion on each ward had been put forward at the meeting.

She had also raised the issue of the withdrawal of the Red Cross assistance to patients leaving hospital and its effect on discharges from hospital with the Health Board, but hadn't received a reply to date.

The Health Board had recently produced a new terms of reference for armed forces issues, she indicated that she would circulate this to panel members.

She indicated she would e mail the Health Board to outline the panel's disappointment regarding the lack of attendance from health board representatives at the various meetings.

70 Update from Panel Members.

Swansea Council

David Price Deer outlined that planning continues for the Airshow & Armed Forces Day on 4/5 July 2020.

He indicated no plans had yet been formalised for the VE Day commemorations due to the ongoing budget discussions within the Authority.

He referred to the comments/complaints received regarding the issues around the Silence in the Square service and Cenotaph service. He outlined that due to the nature of the event in the square, it had always previously been held at 11am on the 11th. He was happy to further discuss the options for this event to potentially be held on Remembrance Sunday with the service from London being relayed on the big screen. The official Cenotaph service will continue as in past years to be held at 11am on the 11th.

Royal British Legion

John Williams thanked all the agencies for their help and assistance in delivering the various services and events around Remembrance Day.

He indicated that the RBL as part of the upcoming General Election campaign will be campaigning the various political parties on issues including visa fees for commonwealth veterans and disregarding compensation payments as income relating to council tax and housing benefit.

SSAFA

Dave Singletary raised an issue relating to being able to contact various organisations out of office hours and at weekends/bank holidays. He asked for contact numbers to be provided to assist his organisation when assisting veterans particularly in emergency situations.

Panel members outlined that the vast majority of public sector organisations do not have out of office numbers or contacts now and indicated that a lot of information can be found online via various websites such as the Covenants own webpage, Dowis, Veterans Gateway, Swansea Info etc. The British Legion also has a weekend call centre.

Age Cymru

Danielle Welsh outlined that the organisation continue to progress with their pensions campaign for over 60s. She would circulate information following the meeting.

Blesma

Thomas Hall reported an issue he'd been assisting with where a veteran had had his housing benefit stopped suddenly following an issue with his ESA payments.

The Chair indicated she would meet with Thomas & relevant officers to discuss the case.

Future of Brecon Barracks/Army in Wales

Panel members briefly discussed the issues around the future of the Army in Wales.

Capt Chris Evans stated that the whole issue was still awaiting confirmation from the MOD but indicated that the Army would retain still retain a significant presence in Wales following any changes.

The meeting ended at 3.10 pm

Chair