



City and County of Swansea

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

Committee Room 1 - Civic Centre, Swansea

Monday, 27 January 2020 at 2.00 pm

Present: Councillor W G Lewis (Chair) Presided

Representing Organisations

Craig Finn	Veterans Club
Thomas Hall	Blesma
Mathew Hendry	Royal Navy Reserve
Fiona Jones	DWP
Phil Jones	Swansea Outdoor Fitness
Anna Looker	Royal British Legion
Natalie McCombe	The Poppy Factory
Kathryn Morgans	Veterans Club
Finola Pickwell	Hafal
Adrian Rabey	British Training Board
Sandy Shaw	Veterans Club
Paul Thomas	Citizens Advice Bureau
Danielle Welsh	Age Cymru

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, Tania Davies, Capt Chris Evans, Deb Hamer, Bernice Morgan, Peter Neville and David Singletary

71 Disclosures of Personal & Prejudicial Interests.

None.

72 Minutes.

Resolved that the Minutes of the Panel held on 25 November 2019 be approved as a correct record.

73 Armed Forces Covenant Regional Project.

Grace Halfpenny reported that she had met with the Welsh Local Government Association's Armed Forces Network last week. The Armed Forces Strategy that is currently being finalised by the UK Government was discussed along with certain aspects of the strategy which will be covered by Welsh Government via their devolved powers. Further details will follow in due course.

At the Armed Forces Network meeting the Veteran's Gateway had given a presentation outlining what services they provide via their 'one stop shop' approach. She outlined that the referrals via the veterans gateway in Swansea was one of the lowest for any Council area in Wales.

Members of the panel discussed the referral statistics and outlined that the low numbers in this area was more likely to be due to the comprehensive amount of information already available on the Covenants website in Swansea, the good links and proactive groups/organisations in this area and that the gateway was merely a 'referral/signposting service' and not an actual service provider, rather than a lack of knowledge of the gateway service from veterans in the Swansea area. Grace suggested that the Veteran's Gateway could be invited to give a presentation to a future meeting of the panel.

She also referred to the initiative for local youth groups to attend 'royal gun salutes' in Cardiff. This could include assistance with transport and a tour of the museum in Cardiff castle. She indicated she was able to pass on details of interested groups if required.

She also reported on the meeting she had attended with Swansea headteachers which had raised the profile of service children in education. She was due to meet with Bridgend schools shortly on the same matter. Neath Port Talbot had already been successful in bidding for funding from Welsh Government for two staff specifically to assist with the issues affecting service children, and encouraged other Council's to explore the funding opportunities. Contact would now be maintained with schools, to ensure that the best possible support was available to children from Armed Forces families.

She also sought information from covenant members on their plans for Armed Forces Day/ VE day and VJ day.

Anna Looker outlined the legion's plans for various events across the country for VE/VJ day and outlined that the legion following on from the success of providing travel and accommodation which enabled veterans to attend the 75th anniversary of D Day in France last year would be arranging for veterans to visit south east Asia. She asked for details of any people that could potentially attend.

David Price Deer outlined that the Council wouldn't be finalising its budget until 5 March, so as of yet no money had been able to be allocated for any potential VE/VJ day commemorations.

He indicated that he understood that a church service was planned for St Marys on the Sunday closest to VE day and a potential event could be linked to this.

He outlined that the Authority was considering bidding for Welsh Government funding to hold the Wales National Armed Forces Day in Swansea. The bid would be submitted on the basis that the event would be held on the same weekend as the Air Show.

74 Swansea Bay University Health Board, Armed Forces Forum.

Grace Halfpenny outlined that disappointingly no progress had been made to date with the attendance of a health board representative at panel meetings. She would continue to pursue this matter with the board.

She also would attend the next health board meeting and would continue to chase the board on several issues including Armed Forces Children referrals for those with mental health problems and the withdrawal of the Red Cross support for people leaving hospital.

The suggestion of an Armed Forces Champion on each ward would also be followed up.

75 Update from Panel Members.

Royal British Legion

Anna Looker gave a summary of information from the legion's annual report and conference. She outlined the various campaigns and initiatives that the organisation had been involved with over the last year including the 75 Anniversary of D Day, World War 1 Service at Llandaff Cathedral and various remembrance day events.

She outlined it had been confirmed that the census in 2021 will contain a question relating to 'service within the armed forces'.

She referred to the plans for VE and VJ day commemorations and that the Legion itself will be 100 years old in May 2020 with various events planned to commemorate this.

She outlined the ongoing internal review and audit that the legion is currently undertaken.

She referred to the part time position for an advice & information officer in Carmarthen that was currently being advertised.

DWP

Fiona Jones outlined the 'self employment' event that is being held at the Grand Hotel on 27 February.

British Training Board

Adrian Rabey reported that following on from a recent meeting with Welsh Government, funding had now been agreed to establish two hubs in Swansea and

Newport. These would open in February and provide help and assistance to veterans and their families looking for training and work opportunities.

He referred to the excellent links developed with both Careers Wales on training/employment etc and the Aneurin Bevan Health Board on a veteran's strategy. The health board's strategy will potentially be used as template for all health boards going forward and links in with veterans and their families.

He outlined the links developed with the YMCA in Swansea for young people to access funding for sporting activities.

He referred to the links recently established with the Buckingham construction group who are the developers of the new arena in Swansea. These links have been developed in conjunction with Swansea Council and will provide a guaranteed interview subject to the person having the necessary qualifications.

He also outlined the process and assistance the company can provide to veterans and their families in getting their military skills and experiences converted into relevant qualifications to use going forward.

Hafal

Finola Pickwell outlined that funding/grants are available from the Armed Forces Covenant Trust for activities for veterans with mental health issues. She indicated she could assist any potential applicants with their submissions and would circulate the relevant information following the meeting.

General Issues

Wendy Lewis referred to the recent announcement of a veteran's railcard which will be formally launched in November.

Spencer Martin outlined that veterans are able to access the various foodbanks in Swansea, he could assist with any queries and provide information where requested.

Grace Halfpenny requested information on the Single Advice Fund, Paul Thomas from the Citizens Advice Bureau indicated he would seek information for the next meeting.

The meeting ended at 2.55 pm

Chair