



City and County of Swansea

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

Remotely via Microsoft Teams

Monday, 16 November 2020 at 2.00 pm

Present: Councillor W G Lewis (Chair) Presided

Representing Organisations

Stephen Boswell	SSAFA
Seamus Brennan	Royal British Legion
Jackie Davies	Swansea Bay University Health Board
Rob Denman	Prison Service
Pat Dunmore	Citizens Advice Bureau
Cptn Chris Evans MBE	Welsh Transport Regiment
Sqdn Ldr Phil. C. Flower	Royal British Legion Swansea Branch
Steve Fry	Deputy Lieutenant
Grace Halfpenny	Regional Armed Forces Covenant Liaison Officer
Thomas Hall	Blesma
Claire Jones	Jobcentre Plus
Finola Pickwell	Hafal
Alyson Pugh	Swansea Council
Tom Sloan	Ospreys Rugby
John Williams	Royal British Legion

Officer(s)

Gareth Borsden	Democratic Services Officer
David Price Deer	Special Events Manager
Spencer Martin	Third Sector & Trust Fund Commissioning Co-ordinator

Apologies for Absence

Alyx Baharie, Louise Fleet, Debbie Hamer, Natalie McCombe, David Trotman, Nick Vanderpump, Victoria Williams and Sian Woodland

84 Disclosures of Personal & Prejudicial Interests.

None.

85 Minutes.

Resolved that the Minutes of the Panel held on 14 September 2020 be approved as a correct record.

86 Armed Forces Covenant Regional Project.

Grace Halfpenny reported that due to the Covid 19 pandemic this year's Remembrance period activities and events had been very different to the usual ones, with lots of 'virtual' events being held online.

She indicated that all the actual wreath laying and similar events had all taken place in accordance with the relevant Welsh Government guidelines.

She reported that the member of staff recently appointed to the Welsh Government schools project role had unfortunately left her position, but a new member of staff will start in the new year.

She also stated that she is due to meeting with Welsh Government shortly to discuss the issue of trying to improve the communication between them and veterans groups and organisations.

Finola Pickwell announced that there is two weeks left now to apply for grants for projects under the positive pathways and force for change schemes with is aimed at issues around veteran's mental health and well-being.

She indicated she was happy to liaise and support any groups with applications for funding.

She indicated that an announcement on the round 3 of funding schemes is expected imminently.

87 Update from MOD.

Capt Chris Evans supported the comments made regarding the Remembrance period and indicated that over 120 people had attended the 'virtual' parade.

He outlined that the reserves have now returned to face to face training in line with the Welsh government protocols and guidelines. He indicated that 157 Regt currently has 4 officers deployed at the moment supporting health boards around Wales.

He stated that only online recruitment continues for the moment but he indicated that the planning for events in 2021 continues as normal.

88 Swansea Bay University Health Board, Armed Forces Forum.

Jackie Davies outlined that the health board had held its armed forces forum last week, the virtual meeting was the first once since the initial Covid lockdown.

She indicated that a lot of the work related to veterans, service children, ward champions etc has had to be placed on hold due to Covid and its massive impact on the health service.

Grace Halfpenny outlined that she had been present at the meeting which had received an excellent presentation from Veterans NHS Wales, which she would circulate to panel members after the meeting.

They detailed that consultations between doctors and patients do continue but are mostly online/virtual, this can prove problematic for some veterans who don't have the necessary IT equipment.

Veterans NHS are exploring ways of supporting veterans with this issue and trying to assist with both the provision and access to relevant IT devices. There is a possibility of some grant funding for this through the NHS charitable funds which will be explored.

Councillor Alyson Pugh outlined that there was a potential to link with the council's lifelong learning and library services to provide IT training and equipment for veterans.

89 Re-Act Organisation.

Rob Salmon who has been a volunteer with the organisation since 2015 outlined the background history of the organisation which had formally been known as Team Rubicon.

He outlined that the organisation responds to humanitarian emergencies and disasters around the world and sends its people to assist those communities in need. He outlined that the teams take all the own equipment and supplies when deployed.

He outlined that veterans are a welcome addition to their volunteer group due to their attitude, skills and enthusiasm for problem solving and dealing with difficult situations.

He outlined the current level of volunteers within the organisation and the type and areas of assistance that has been provided both in the UK and abroad.

More details of the organisation and how to volunteer can be found at <https://www.re-act.org.uk/>

90 Update from Panel Members.

Swansea Council

The Chair outlined and detailed the Remembrance day activities and events she had been involved in. She thanked all the organisations involved for their help and support over the period and outlined that despite the difficulties relating to Covid and the Welsh Government firebreak, she felt that the events had been both poignant and respectful.

She indicated that her personal highlight had been the ceremony to place the wreaths on the Paddington bound GWR service.

Councillor Alyson Pugh outlined that in relation to Swansea Working and 'employability' issues that had been discussed at the last meeting, a lot of behind the scenes work continues with officers and partner organisations. The main change to date has been to amend the wording on the form from 'are you a veteran' to 'have you served'. She outlined the rationale behind the change. Members of the panel welcomed and supported the change.

She also outlined that the link with the Prison was back up and running with online meetings.

Swansea CVS

Grace Halfpenny on behalf of Alex Baharie outlined that 3rd sector partners funding is available for capital items to adapt services during the Covid pandemic. The funding can cover retrospective costs back to April 2020. SCVS are applying a broad health and well-being approach to applications.

Details and form can be found at <https://www.scvs.org.uk/News/icf-covid-grant-sept20>

Royal British Legion

Phil Flower outlined and reported that this year's Remembrance day events and services had been completely different to previous years and had been a difficult time for the RBL and other organisations.

The issues around Covid, the firebreak, social distancing, self isolation, shielding etc had massively impacted on events and in particular on the usual poppy appeals and collections in and around the Swansea area.

He indicated that despite the hugely reduced numbers, the annual service at St Marys had been both respectful and poignant.

He indicated that the air cadets are currently on a phased return to training and will hopefully resume face to face activities in the new year and will comply with all Covid guidelines.

Lord Lieutenancy

Steve Fry (Deputy Lieutenant) outlined that the Lord Lieutenant had recently asked him to represent her at the panel meetings and lead on issues relating to the armed forces covenant. He was pleased to attend and outlined he was about to move roles from the Royal Navy reserve to the Air Force reserve.

Swansea Prison

Rob Denman (Deputy Governor) outlined he was also attending his first meeting of the panel. He referred to the exceptionally difficult period that the prison and both its inmates and staff have had to go through because of the Covid pandemic.

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Cont'd

He outlined that the pandemic has seriously restricted both visitors to the prisoners and activities inside for the men.

He outlined that support for veterans within the prison system remains an issue.

He thanked those partner and stakeholder organisations for their ongoing help and assistance during the pandemic and outlined that the intention was, subject to Covid guidelines and advice to get the relevant people and organisations back into the prison to support the inmates as soon as is practically possible.

The meeting ended at 2.40 pm

Chair