



City and County of Swansea

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

Remotely via Microsoft Teams

Monday, 18 January 2021 at 2.00 pm

**Present:** W G Lewis (Chair) Presided

### Representing Organisations

Seamus Brennan	Royal British Legion
Rob Denman	Prison Service
Pat Dunmore	Citizens Advice Bureau
CPO Rob Evans	HMS Cambria
Sqd Ldr Phil. C. Flower	Royal British Legion Swansea Branch
Grace Halfpenny	Regional Armed Forces Covenant Liaison Officer
Thomas Hall	Blesma
Paul Jones	STOMP
Christine Morrell	Swansea Bay University Health Board
Julian North	Help for Heroes
Adrian Rabey	British Training Board
Tom Sloan	Ospreys Rugby
Neil Tomlin	Royal Air Force Benevolent Fund
John Williams	Royal British Legion
Victoria Williams	Veterans NHS Wales

### Officer(s)

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

### Apologies for Absence

Alyx Baharie, Jackie Davies, Capt. Chris Evans, Louise Fleet, Natalie McCombe, Peter Neville, Finola Pickwell, Cllr Alyson Pugh and Sian Woodland

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#### 91 Disclosures of Personal & Prejudicial Interests.

None.

#### 92 Minutes.

**Resolved** that the Minutes of the Panel held on 16 November 2020 be approved as a correct record.

**93 Armed Forces Covenant Regional Project.**

Grace Halfpenny reported that the new member of staff, Yasmin Todd had recently recently taken up her role as the 'Supporting Service Children in Schools' officer under the Welsh Local Government Association's schools project and would attend the next meeting to discuss her role.

She would be meeting with the education department from Swansea Council shortly to discuss matters and issues that she may be able to assist with.

Tom Sloan offered his help and any assistance he could to assist the new officer through the Ospreys rugby well established links and networks in both schools and the community.

Grace Halfpenny outlined that her and her armed forces covenant officer colleagues around Wales are liaising with both Welsh Government and the Welsh Local Government Association with an aim to further improve communications between those bodies and armed forces community across Wales. The aim is to produce a new website and regular newsletter in the near future.

She also detailed that a comprehensive armed forces covenant awareness raising programme is being developed which would initially be rolled out to front line council staff with a view to expand it to the wider community.

She outlined that following observations made by the Armed Forces Co-ordinators across Wales during the pandemic, that the Welsh Government are also ensuring that the needs of veterans are being considered in national support for suicide prevention and housing support programmes. .

**94 Update from MOD.**

CPO Rob Evans (HMS Cambria) reported that due to the most recent lockdown all face to face and reservist activities had unfortunately ceased, but indicated that Rob Govier and his team are continuing their online outreach and engagement activities wherever possible.

**95 Swansea Bay University Health Board, Armed Forces Forum.**

Chris Morrell reported that the health board had held its first armed forces panel in November since the initial lockdown.

She outlined that the health board had held a Remembrance Day online commemoration and service for staff.

The early developments relating to the support for bereavement and 'care after death' programme and centre were detailed, more information will be shared when available.

She detailed that the health board are exploring the issues around the achieving of the gold employer status around armed forces and are actively looking to expand their links with reservists in their employment and those with military connections.

She outlined that the artificial limb service is currently recruiting staff which should improve the service to patients moving forward.

Victoria Williams (Veterans NHS) outlined that the service continues to be very busy with 33 referrals in the last 3 months, all referrals are now being dealt with online, which has helped speed up the process and aid engagement and take up.

She referred to the staff changes that have recently occurred within the service.

## **96 Royal Air Force Benevolent Fund.**

Neil Tomlin, Area Director, South England & South Wales outlined to the panel the background and history to the fund.

He stated that anyone who had served in the royal air force, regardless of length of service and their partners and families were eligible for help, advice and assistance.

He outlined that 27m had been spent in 2020, all of which had been raised through donations. The number of people helped had risen to seventy one thousand last year, up from fifty two thousand the year before.

He outlined the various forms of welfare support, grants and assistance that is available to veterans and their families.

He referred to the impact of the pandemic on the service, its fundraising efforts and their ability to deliver some of its services.

Various members of the panel outlined that they could link up and support with the efforts and work of the fund and indicated that conversations and dialogue would continue outside the meeting, particularly around the potential use of cadets, reservists and veterans in activities and the expansion of the link to the NHS support services.

The funds printed brochure 'a guide to our services' had been circulated with the agenda papers.

More detailed information can be found online at <https://www.rafbf.org/>

## **97 Update from Panel Members.**

### Hafal

Stephen Sullivan outlined that only 1 application from Swansea had been submitted during the last tranche of funding applications relating to garrison farm community interest company.

He outlined that Hafal were successful with their application with the 'force for change' programme which will include an element of digital inclusion for veterans.

### Royal British Legion

Phil Flower spoke further to the discussion in the previous item, and outlined that the cadet forces in the area who remain very active online currently would always welcome the involvement of veterans in their activities. This could prove beneficial to all parties going forward.

This could include both involvement online and actual physical attendance in the future when lockdown restrictions are eased.

He outlined that 2020 was the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Royal Air Force Air Cadets.

He outlined the plans for a series of events, which pandemic restrictions allowing would include – schools poster competition, vintage car and motorcycle rally's, hog roast, black tie dinner, sky dives, penalty shoot out at a Swans game & Pen y Fan climb.

He also indicated that a virtual parade & church service would take place on 7<sup>th</sup> February and he would circulate details for anyone who wished to take part.

### Blesma

Thomas Hall outlined that his organisation continues to operate through the pandemic, mostly online, but with actual physical visits to people if necessary.

He outlined issues that had been highlighted to him relating to winter fuel payments and that the DWP had been experiencing issues with a new computer system, which had resulted in some people being wrongly removed from the list and not receiving their payments.

He also referred to an issue a client had been having with Citizens Advice in Bridgend.

Pat Dunmore (Citizens Advice) outlined the current working procedures as a result of Covid in Swansea/Neath Port Talbot and indicated it should be very similar in Bridgend.

The meeting ended at 2.55 pm

**Chair**