



City and County of Swansea

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

Multi-Location Meeting - Gloucester Room, Guildhall / MS

Teams

Monday, 9 October 2023 at 2.00 pm

Present: Councillor Wendy G Lewis (Chair) Presided

Representing Organisations

Moawia Bin-Sufyan	Care After Combat
Ruth Birch	Fighting With Pride
Pat Dunmore	Citizens Advice Bureau
Wing Cdr Phil Flower	Royal British Legion Swansea Branch
Debbie Hamer	Natural Resources Wales
Calvin Hughes	HMP Swansea
Phil Jones	SO Fit
Julian North	Help for Heroes
Rob Salmon	REACT
Tom Sloane	Ospreys Rugby
Paul Smith	Veterans RV
Tony Strutt	V-Aid
Stephen Sullivan	Adferiad
Neil Tomlin	Royal Air Force Benevolent Fund
Capt Huw Williams	157 Squadron
Victoria Williams	Veterans NHS Wales
Simon Winspear	SCVS

Officer(s)

Gareth Borsden	Democratic Services Officer
David Price Deer	Special Events Manager
Spencer Martin	Third Sector & Trust Fund Commissioning Co-ordinator
Natalie McCombe	Local Area Coordinator
Finola Pickwell	Regional Armed Forces Covenant Officer

Apologies for Absence

Louise Fleet, Steve Fry, Rob Govier and Steve Spill

41 Disclosures of Personal & Prejudicial Interests.

None.

42 Minutes.

Agreed that the minutes of the Panel held on 10 July 2023 be approved as correct record.

43 Armed Forces Covenant Regional Project.

Finola Pickwell outlined that she had been in post for around a month, and indicated she was looking forward to developing relationships and links with all the various Armed Forces Champions, officers and groups and organisations in the area.

She indicated that she was available for help, advice and assistance where needed.

44 Update from MOD.

Capt Huw Williams reported that the most recent Military Support Meeting was held in early September 2023 where we looked at forthcoming events, including the Duke of Edinburgh Gower Walk on 9 September. There was a choice of either a 22 Mile (Rhossili start) or 10 mile (Port Eynon) walk around some of the most scenic coastline in the world – over 180 participants took part and in excess of £70k raised for charity. It was an excellent day and he thanked the Cadet forces for their assistance on the day.

He indicated that a civilian organisation from the African Community attended an insight day in the Grange on 4 September, this was a very well received event.

He outlined that planning for Remembrance Day continues at pace and Phil Flower will update the panel fully.

He reiterated his statement at the previous meeting that 157 Regt, 223 Sqn provided support to many agencies in the local area, and it was good that we were being asked to support events such as open days and providing activity sessions for local groups.

He again stated that we do not 'cherry pick' which organisations or agencies we support but attempt to assist those who requested our help and assistance whenever possible. There are rumblings around the veterans' charities that I have my 'favourites' but this is not the case.

He further outlined that the planning has started for next years Armed Forces week as Swansea will be the host for Welsh Armed Forces week/day.

Armed Forces week will be slightly adjusted to mirror and complement the Air Show weekend, which will be held over 6 & 7 July.

He outlined that hopefully the displays and forces personnel on the ground will be even better than in previous years. Any members of the panel who have ideas for improving the event or adding additional displays/stands etc, should forward them to him for consideration.

Tom Sloane (Ospreys Rugby) outlined that the Ospreys would be holding their "Armed Forces Day" at the Ospreys vs Glasgow match on the 11 November (5.15pm ko). He indicated that he had been in touch with various groups already, including the Marines who had confirmed attendance and was hoping to build on the success of last year's game and event. Any groups or organisations wishing to attend and take part should get in touch with him.

Phil Flower gave a detailed update on the large number of events that will be held around the Remembrance Day period, including the reintroduction of the Festival of Remembrance at the Brangwyn Hall on the 11 November. Tickets will be free and available shortly.

He outlined the changes to the Poppy Appeal "launch event" which will also now take place at the Brangwyn Hall on 19 October.

Volunteers are still sought to assist with collecting around the City for the Poppy Appeal.

David Price Deer indicated that unfortunately due to works in Castle Square, the Silence in the Square event will be held a short distance away in St Davids Place.

Finola Pickwell outlined that a Remembrance Concert will also be held in the Princess Royal Theatre in Port Talbot on 27 October, with a Poppy sales launch event in the Aberavon Shopping centre on the 28 October with stands being available to groups /organisations if required.

A full list of events will be circulated to panel members after the meeting.

45 Swansea Bay University Health Board, Armed Forces Forum.

Victoria Williams reported that Veterans NHS Wales have had 26 people referred into their service over the last 3 months, 17 opted into the service and 16 of which have already been assessed.

This has been achieved with the appointment of the new therapist who has enabled the waiting times for assessment to be reduced to a week, which is to be really welcomed.

She outlined that the service's annual report has been published and this confirms that we are the busiest Health Board in Wales for services to veterans.

A copy of the annual report will be circulated following the meeting.

She also outlined that with the new member of staff in place, she was available again to give talks and visit any groups/organisations to update them on the work of her unit.

46 Supporting Pupils from Service Families.

Officer not present, no update given.

47 Update from Panel Members.

HMP Swansea

Calvin Hughes reported that the prison has been working on developing a display to go outside the building around Remembrance Day.

This has involved veterans making a large wooden soldier, a bench and in excess of 500 poppies, all of which will be on display, and should prove a fitting visual tribute.

Victoria Williams indicated she had attended a discussion and yoga session at the prison recently, and the event had been excellent and was to be really commended.

Local Area Co-ordinator/Armed Forces Bikers

Natalie McCombe outlined that she had moved areas to the Birchgrove/Llansamlet area in her role as a LAC. There is 1 LAC in each of the electoral wards in the city and they are there to help the public and the community at large.

She outlined that she is also a member of the Boyo's which is the South West Wales Region Branch of the Armed Forces Bikers. They are a fundraising group and local groups can apply for grants from the organisation.

She indicated that she and others from the group had recently taken part in the "ride to the wall" event which ended at the National Memorial Arboretum.

Royal Navy Association – Swansea Branch

Natalie also referred to the establishment of the above group which now has in excess of 40 members including herself. The group will work towards joining the covenant in the new year.

Veterans RV/So Fit

Paul Smith outlined that the surfing and swimming group continues to grow and all are welcome. Additional funding for equipment may be needed going forward.

Phil Jones detailed that they had now delivered mental health sessions to service children in 15 Swansea schools, with more planned to follow.

Meeting Places

Members of the group outlined that meeting rooms are available for groups/organisation to use free of charge in both local fire stations and Tesco extra stores.

Housing Issues

The Chair reported that the next meeting would receive a full update from a council housing officer on the process and criteria that has to be achieved to get on the housing list.

She indicated that she always passed on any referrals she gets from veterans and does her best to assist, but unfortunately veterans can't always be guaranteed accommodation due to the strict regulatory criteria.

The meeting ended at 2.53 pm

Chair