



City and County of Swansea

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

Remotely via Microsoft Teams

Monday, 17 April 2023 at 2.00 pm

Present: Councillor W G Lewis (Chair) Presided

Representing Organisations

Alyx Baharie	SCVS
Moawia Bin-Sufyan	Care After Combat
Ruth Birch	Fighting with Pride
Pat Dunmore	Citizens Advice Bureau
Wing Cdr Phil Flower	Royal British Legion/RAF Cadets
Wg Cdr Steve Fry	Deputy Lieutenant/RAF Reserve
WO1 Rob Govier	HMS Cambria
Debbie Hamer	Natural Resources Wales
Jonathan Hinkin	Swansea University
Cllr Elliott King	Swansea Council
Sarah Mallaghan	DWP
Julian North	Help for Heroes
Emma Reeves	Regional School Liaison Officer
Paul Smith	Veterans RV
Steve Spill	SBUHB
Stephen Sullivan	Hafal
Capt Huw Williams	157 Regt RLC
Victoria Williams	Veterans NHS Wales

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

Glyn Davies, Bethan Dennedy, Louise Fleet and Tomlin

24 Disclosures of Personal & Prejudicial Interests from Members.

None.

25 Minutes.

Agreed that the minutes of the Panel held on 30 January 2023 be approved as correct record.

26 **Armed Forces Covenant Regional Project.**

Bethan Dennedy was not present, so an update would be circulated by e mail.

27 **Update from MOD.**

Army

Capt Huw Williams reported and outlined the following areas:

157 Regt, 223 Sqn continues to provide support to many agencies in the local area and it is good that we are being asked to support events such as open days and providing activity sessions for local charities and groups.

Local events that we have most recently supported are HarMINDise, an initiative to bring non-British people together to build networks and relationships.

One of the next events we are supporting will be Swansea Veterans hub on the 29 April at their open day.

This morning we held the most recent Military Support Meeting where we looked at forthcoming events. This is where we look at the plan to support future events, areas discussed were:

- Month of the Military Child – April 23. Event being put on at The Grange ARC for service children on 25 April.
- Kings Coronation – local events to be held on the 30 April in Neath and Swansea. Invites have been distributed, however, there are spaces available for veterans to attend, if you would like to be invited, please get in touch with me: huw.williams830@mod.gov.uk
- Armed Forces Day/week – 19-25 June:
- 19 June @ Neath & Port Talbot commencing at 1030 hrs at the civic buildings. It is requested that if any veterans are able to attend that they do so please to boost numbers.
- Sat 24 June is the date Swansea event. Those wishing to participate in the Swansea Armed Forces day service and flag raising are asked to be at the Guildhall no later than 1030 hrs on the morning of the 24 June. The service will commence at 1100 hrs. It would be great to see as many veterans there as possible.
- Wales National Airshow – 30 June – 2 July. Lots being planned for this event with the military village growing considerably.

We are also engaging with other local groups in relation to briefing them on what the Army Reserve entails and what our role is. This is to provide clarity to our role. Please contact me and use us if you think that we can add value to events and meet groups etc.

RAF

Wg Cdr Steve Fry outlined that was aligned to 614 Squadron based in Cardiff but who had reservists active in support roles across the UK and also currently in both Cyprus and the Falkland Islands.

He outlined the ongoing restructuring of the current 29 reserve squadrons across the country into 4 main wings across the country that will focus on recruiting and training.

Navy

WO1 Rob Govier provided an update from his service which included the gearing up of providing assistance to the upcoming large events as outlined above.

He indicated that the more advance notice that can be given should events and organisations wish his units to be involved and assist the better, due to the diary being booked up many months in advance due to the small number of personnel involved.

He outlined that attendance from his service at the flag raising in Swansea is likely to be affected as it is the same day as the national Armed Forces Day event in Newport.

He outlined that Swansea's affiliated ship HMS Scott is currently berthed in Gibraltar on an operational stand down.

28 Swansea Bay University Health Board, Armed Forces Forum.

Steve Spill reported that the last SBUHB Armed Forces Forum meeting was held on 8th February and was well attended and the agenda covered a wide range of topics.

The new chair of the Board gave an excellent presentation relating to the number of mental health support clubs that exist in the area, and how some of these clubs which involve veterans are giving help and supporting non-military people from around the world who are being affected and displaced by war.

An update was also given at the meeting on the excellent work being done by the Peter McCarthy and his team at the artificial limb centre at Morriston Hospital who provide great support for veterans and the public alike.

He outlined that the board continues to work towards achieving gold employer status in the future. The pandemic had seriously affected the progress towards this.

He outlined that Swansea Bay Health Board are aiming to hold a veterans coffee morning around the Armed Forces week event. It will be a walk in session for any veterans employed by the Health Board that are able to attend. Work is ongoing to investigate and establish the accurate numbers of veterans that are employed by the Board.

The new Chief Operating Officer for the Board who was recently appointed had previously served in the RAF.

Victoria Williams reported that Veterans NHS Wales have had 32 people referred into their service over the last 3 months, 17 of which have opted in, unfortunately the service remains one therapist down at the moment, so this has obviously impacted on the treatment time which is unfortunately now around 6 months. There are 21

veterans currently waiting for therapy. The job vacancy will hopefully be advertised shortly.

She will shortly be assessing veterans in Swansea Prison.

The next SBUHB Armed Forces Forum meeting will held on June, and all panel members are welcome to attend.

29 Supporting Pupils from Service Families.

Emma Reeves outlined that her organisation is now fully staffed with 5 officers covering the whole of Wales.

She is working towards delivering CPD training to schools and education departments.

April which is the Month of the Military Child is an extremely busy period for the service and she was looking hugely forward to the event at the Grange in West Cross next week which will involve various groups and organisations.

She is working with various schools in Swansea to help them work towards achieving the Armed Forces Friendly Cymru Award and offering support to other schools who have identified service children as pupils.

She detailed that the ESF grants have now closed but there a new Service Pupil Programme which is available to support service children along their educational pathways.

Further information will be circulated following the meeting by e mail.

30 Fighting with Pride.

Ruth Birch thanked the panel for the invite to attend and outlined that her organisation had only been formed as a charity 3 years ago.

Fighting with Pride is the LGBT+ charity and is aimed at supporting LGBT+ Veterans, serving personnel and their families, particularly those who were affected by the 'gay ban', ultimately lifted on 12th January 2000. Before then, thousands of LGBT+ service personnel were removed or forced from service, after serving with pride. In the years ahead it is our aim to restore the military covenant and bring this community back into the military family.

We are working with Veteran supporting organisations to build capacity for LGBT+ Veteran support, to recognise their service and help resolve the challenges they face in their lives beyond military service.

She indicated that her charity has a set up the Pride in Veterans Standard (PiVS) which organisations can work towards.

The PiVs standard is aimed at making the whole veteran community feel confident in accessing its services and support, knowing, that when they do, veterans can be assured they will be treated with dignity, respect and understanding.

She outlined that she would have a stall at Swansea Pride event at the end of April, and looked forward to seeing people there and at future meetings of this Panel.

Victoria Williams indicated she would like Ruth to attend a future meeting of the SBUHB Armed Forces Forum meeting.

31 Veter Aid.

Tony Strutt was not present, item deferred to the next meeting.

32 Update from Panel Members.

Royal Air Force Cadets/ Royal British Legion

Phil Flower outlined that the Royal British Legion has a large number of events planned this year in Swansea around the Remembrance period.

He outlined that a large group of veterans and many different organisations and groups are involved in the delivering of the varied range of events.

He detailed that over 80k had been raised in Swansea during the Poppy Appeal in 2022 which was excellent and almost approaching pre-covid levels, and he thanked the generosity of the public in Swansea.

He indicated he would circulate a complete list of the events following the meeting.

The meeting ended at 2.40 pm

Chair