



City and County of Swansea

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

Multi-Location Meeting - Lilian Hopkin Room, Guildhall / MS Teams

Monday, 22 April 2024 at 2.00 pm

Present: Councillor Wendy G Lewis (Chair) Presided

Representing Organisations

Moawia Bin-Sufyan	Care After Combat
Ruth Birch	Fighting With Pride
Christina Christie	SCVS
Lt Cdr Andy Davies	Royal Navy
Russ Davies	Swansea Sea Cadets
Pat Dunmore	Citizens Advice Bureau
Wing Cdr Phil Flower	Royal British Legion Swansea Branch
Thomas Hall	Blesma
Calvin Hughes	Swansea Prison
Kelly Jarvis	Royal British Legion Swansea Branch
Wayne Jenkins	Swansea Veterans Hub
Cllr Elliott King	Swansea Council
Sophie Metcalf	Royal Navy
Andrew Millership	Royal British Legion Swansea Branch
Cllr Francesca O'Brien	Swansea Council
Rachel Pook	South Wales Police
Steve Spill	Swansea Bay University Health Board
Stephen Sullivan	Adferiad
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
Natalie Ellis-Burt	Local Area Coordinator
Finola Pickwell	Regional Armed Forces Covenant Officer

Apologies for Absence

Louise Fleet, Chris Morrell, Paul Smith, Yasmin Todd and Neil Tomlin

56 Disclosures of Personal & Prejudicial Interests from Members.

None.

57 Minutes.

Agreed that the minutes of the Panel held on 29 January 2024 be approved as correct record.

58 South Wales Police.

Rachel Pook referred to her recent appointment to her role as the Development & Engagement Officer for South Wales Police.

She outlined her background in the criminal justice system whilst working for both the Prison Service & Probation.

She outlined that she had been tasked by the Chief Constable with improving the service offered to veterans entering the custody system.

She hoped to finalise a directory of contacts for service users and officers alike which can be used to access information and get help if needed for veterans from organisation/charities. The upskilling of staff in custody units is also another aim going forward as well as the introduction of compulsory questions relating to 'veterans' when admitting people into the custody process.

She will share the directory in due course to ensure its accuracy and indicated she was available to attend meetings/events relating to veterans whenever she could.

59 Armed Forces Covenant Regional Project.

Finola Pickwell updated the panel on the following areas:

Plans have been sent to the Armed Forces Champion, Cllr Wendy Lewis, to hold an art competition both for service children 'The Art of Being a Military Child' and all the school children throughout the Swansea local authority, the Art of D-Day, which will comprise of either a picture, painting, poem, or short story giving the young person's interpretation of D-Day or of being a military child.

She indicated she had been asked by Welsh Government to collate any D-Day and Armed Forces Day events throughout my region, which they would like to add to their database, so if anyone has any events planned could they please send me through their details. Armedforces@npt.gov.uk

She is currently updating the contacts on her database and the areas of Wales they wish to receive information for, so if you haven't already, could you please reply to the email I recently sent out, even if it is just to say please remove me, it would be very much appreciated.

The Service Pupil Support Programme – Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust
Following the launch of the Families Strategy in January 2022, the MOD created a dedicated fund, 'The Armed Forces Families Fund' (AF3). This programme sits within the AF3 Fund. The MOD has partnered with the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust to administer the AF3 Fund.

Major Capital Grants Fund - Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust

This programme will award grants of between £75,000 and £500,000 towards projects that support significant refurbishment, including extensions and new builds, of rental accommodation that will offer high quality support for Veterans with a housing need.

Refurbishment Grants Programme - Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust

This programme will award grants of up to £75K towards projects that assist in the refurbishment or extension of rental accommodation that will offer high quality support for veterans with a housing need.

ACE's

There is 20-25k over 4 years, to tackle consequences of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) from the **leather seller company foundation**. Its only available for Registered Charities and CIOs and more information can be found on their website.

Veterans Foundation - closing dates for funding applications

- 30th July 2024 - for a decision in September 2024
- 15th October 2024 - for a decision in December 2024

She reminded all to contact your local Volunteer Association as they hold a database of all the funding that is available out there for different things, it doesn't just have to be for the Armed Forces Community for us to access it.

The role of all the AFLO's in Wales is currently under review by the Welsh Government and I would like to say thank you to all those of you that have been contacted by the evaluator, he has had very positive feedback from everyone and "doesn't believe the Welsh Government realise the Gold Nugget they have in AFLO's".

The Community Covenant that many people signed alongside Swansea City Council no longer exists, it was superseded by the 'Armed Forces Covenant' (AFC) ten years ago and everyone now needs to make their individual pledges and sign the AFC in their own right.

With regard to the 'Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS) Awards', once you have signed the AFC and it has been agreed by the covenant, then you are automatically eligible for the Bronze ERS. However, the Silver and Gold ERS Awards are designed very much more for employers, increasing their knowledge and support for the Armed Forces Community.

For branches of larger organisations, then it is the head office or central point that would be required to apply, but for more clarification on that, please contact the REED (Regional Employer Engagement Director) Craig Middle: wa-reed@rfca.mod.uk

60 Update from MOD.

Army

Capt Huw Williams reported that as in per previous meetings, there is a lot going including having personnel deployed supporting one of the Governments pledges to former Afghan security force members and others deployed overseas supporting one of the largest NATO exercises currently taking place in Germany and Poland.

There is lots of planning taking place looking at Normandy 80, with support being provided to events in Swansea, Neath & Port Talbot and at the UK commemorative event in Southsea. The regiment deploys overseas on a battlefield Study in early June to Monte Cassino, Italy.

There will be a church service on the 9 June 24 In St Mary's Church to commemorate D-Day and Normandy commemorations. Invites for this have been distributed by the Royal British Legion.

On the 27 June the unit is working in conjunction with Osprey's in the Community, delivering an event that will support local schools and children in the 14–15-year-old age range. In excess of 150 children are planned to attend.

A Swansea Armed Forces Day event will take place on 29 June at the Rotunda in the Guildhall (service starts at 11am), but the main focus for the unit is Wales Armed Forces Day 24 and the Wales National Airshow that take place concurrently over the weekend 6-7 July, with Wales Armed Forces Day being covered off in detail on the 6 July.

There will be lots going on along the sea front on the 6 & 7 July, so all are welcome to attend and give your support to your local Armed Forces reserve units and cadet forces. There will be lots of entertainment and the Armed Forces Day Flag will be raised at 12 noon (TBC in conjunction with Red Arrows fly past) on the 6 July.

The Covenant marquee is now full, but extra space is potentially available if needed. Groups should contact the Councils Special Events team to check this.

Royal Navy

Lt Cdr Andy Davies indicated that works continues towards supporting both Swansea and Wales Armed Forces Day and the Wales National Airshow.

The VE parade on May 5 would also have personnel in attendance.

It is hoped that a Royal Navy ship will be based in Swansea Docks for the weekend of the airshow.

He indicated that HMS Cambria will accept and exercise the Freedom of Swansea in September and celebrate with a march including the Royal Marine Band through the City Centre to the National Waterfront/Museum Green.

He also outlined he would like to hold an event in John Chard House with local civic dignitaries etc to promote the work going on with reservists/cadets in Swansea.

61 Swansea Bay University Health Board, Armed Forces Forum.

Steve Spill reported that the Health Board had held its latest Armed Forces Forum meeting in February which was another good session and well attended.

Plans are being arranged to hold another coffee morning, as the last one proved a great success.

The Health Board continues working towards the gold employer standard.

Victoria Williams reported that Veterans NHS Wales have had 29 people referred into their service over the last 3 months, 15 opted into the service. The current waiting times are 2 weeks for assessment and 5 weeks for therapy.

She outlined the work ongoing to improve links with GP clusters in the area. The aim is to attend GP cluster meetings and outlined the benefits of referrals to the team.

She outlined that if people self refer to the service, 47% stay engaged as opposed to 36% if referred by GPs.

A walk & talk service is also available for people who find it difficult to attend the actual clinics, usually along Swansea beach.

62 Supporting Pupils from Service Families.

Officer given apologies.

Update to be circulated after the meeting.

63 Update from Panel Members.

Blesma

Tom Hall indicated he hadn't unfortunately been able to attend a meeting in person for a while due to work pressures.

He outlined again the support and services available via his organisation to veterans and their families.

Royal British Legion

Phil Flower referred to the D Day Church Service to be held on 9 June at St Marys Church. Places are still available if required.

This is one of the few D Day events arranged in Wales, so all involved should be very proud.

He also detailed the various events confirmed around the Remembrance period, which will be distributed after the meeting.

The RBL continues to work towards supporting the Armed Forces Day events and Airshow.

Fighting With Pride

Ruth Birch outlined that Swansea Pride had recently joined the Pride in Veterans Standard, becoming the first Pride organisation in the UK to sign up.

She can be contacted by groups/organisations for help and assistance in applying for the standard.

SCVS

Christina Christie outlined that her organisation had established a community transport hub which was set up to ease pressure from small volunteer run community car schemes.

We will be supporting with the development of new and existing schemes, recruiting volunteer drivers, training and signposting to the schemes.

She had spoken to Wayne Jenkins who required transport for veterans to attend the Swansea veterans hub. We are looking to recruit volunteer drivers, which is a rewarding role, and she thought veterans may be interested in doing so, and asked if panel members could spread the word it would be appreciated.

The meeting ended at 2.55 pm

Chair