



City and County of Swansea

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

Remotely via Microsoft Teams

Monday, 14 September 2020 at 2.00 pm

Present: W G Lewis (Chair) Presided

Representing Organisations

Alyx Baharie	SCVS
Stephen Boswell	SSAFA
Seamus Brennan	Royal British Legion
Jackie Davies	Swansea Bay University Health Board
Louise Fleet	H M Lord Lieutenant
Grace Halfpenny	Regional Armed Forces Covenant Liaison Officer
Natalie McCombe	The Poppy Factory
Charis Moon	Action on Hearing Loss
Finola Pickwell	Hafal
Alyson Pugh	Swansea Council
Adrian Rabey	British Training Board
Tom Sloan	Ospreys Rugby
Timothy Williams	Royal Navy
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

Rob Denman, Thomas Hall, Taha Idris, David Trotman and Sian Woodland

76 Disclosures of Personal & Prejudicial Interests.

None.

77 Minutes.

Resolved that the Minutes of the Panel held on 27 January 2020 be approved as a correct record.

78 Swansea Council Covid 19 Update.

David Price Deer outlined that the 2020 Air Show and all other events planned had been cancelled due to the pandemic.

He indicated that the Council was awaiting advice from Welsh Government on whether any Remembrance Days events could proceed this year, discussion would take place with the Royal British Legion is the go ahead is given, the type and size of any events would obviously depend on the infection rate figures and if any local or national lockdowns were in force at the time.

The Chair outlined that lockdown had been a very difficult period for all the groups and organisations involved in the Panel and thanked them for their efforts and assistance in helping veterans during the time.

She outlined that due to the lockdown and subsequent social distancing rules, she had only been able to attend a single event since March. She had though filmed a couple of short videos for the Council website to coincide with both VE and Armed Forces Day.

Alyson Pugh, Cabinet Member for Better Communities outlined that Armed Forces now came under the umbrella of her portfolio and was attending her first meeting and was keen to liaise and assist Members of the Panel wherever possible.

79 Update from MOD.

Capt Chris Evans referred to the local army reservists that had been mobilised during lockdown to assist the NHS.

He outlined that as previously reported he was awaiting guidance regarding any potential Remembrance Day events. He indicated that the current planning was unfortunately for parades not too take place this year.

He indicated that no recruitment had taken place during lockdown but virtual online training had recently reverted back to face to face training following the easing of lockdown measures.

Lt Cdr Tim Williams indicated that this was his first meeting since replacing Ruth Fleming in the summer.

He too outlined the involvement of navy reservists in assisting the NHS and also that training had moved online during lockdown but had restarted on a face to face basis in September at John Chard house. He indicated that the numbers attending had been very good and would hopefully expand when the universities return shortly. He outlined the excellent link they have with the universities in Swansea.

80 Armed Forces Covenant Regional Project.

Grace Halfpenny reported that during lockdown, homelessness issues had become a major issue and concern.

She referred to the Welsh Government guidance issued during the lockdown period and outlined she had shared as much information/articles/advice as possible during the period, which had been passed on by Members of the panel to their contacts, which was to be welcomed as an excellent example of network support across the region.

She outlined that a part of the queen's speech, a greater recognition of veterans had been included and referred to, which was to be warmly welcomed but more details and information on how this would develop going forward will hopefully be given over the coming months. It was pointed out however that caution should be taken when listening to any announcements made by the UK Government or the MOD regarding this legislation, as all of the matters involved are devolved to the Welsh Government. There will therefore be specific legislation particular to us here in Wales in due course.

She outlined that a new officer to support service personnel's children in schools had recently been appointed and would cover the area including Swansea, Neath Port Talbot and West Wales.

She indicated she had submitted her annual report to Welsh Government and would circulate it to panel members after the meeting.

She also referred to an information leaflet that both local authorities in Swansea and Neath Port Talbot Council's would be circulating shortly to all households relating to information around Covid 19.

81 Armed Forces Covenant Grant Scheme.

Finola Pickwell announced that two further avenues for funding opportunities through positive pathways had been announced in the summer to assist mental health initiative schemes.

She indicated that of the 23 initial projects submitted, 10 had progressed through the first round of funding applications and she would be working with the various bodies to assist them going forward.

She indicated that 3 local projects had been successful in previous rounds which were those with Swansea City, Ospreys Rugby and 65 Degrees North.

Another funding opportunity for schemes linked to tackling loneliness have a closing date in December.

More funding was also available for schemes aimed at tackling suicide and substance misuse and she outlined she was happy to give any help, assistance and advice to any organisations who had potential ideas for projects.

82 Swansea Bay University Health Board, Armed Forces Forum.

Jackie Davies outlined that this was her first opportunity to attend a panel meeting and thanked the Chair for the opportunity to attend and contribute.

She indicated that a lot of the issues raised by this panel previously had still unfortunately yet to be resolved due to the Covid pandemic and its huge impact on the health service across the board, but updated the panel on the following items.

She outlined that the health board was looking to adopt a pilot scheme developed by the Aneurin Bevan health board which had proved successful relating to armed forces children who were experiencing mental health issues.

She indicated that the Red Cross support for people leaving hospital had been reinstated and the scheme was looking to be expanded.

The ward based armed forces champion was looking to be further developed as Covid restrictions are lifted.

She indicated the Armed Forces Health Forum meetings had been obviously been paused during Covid but had re-convened in August, and the meeting had gone really well. The Chair outlined that she had attended this meeting and echoed and supported the comments about the meeting.

The field hospitals developed with the local authorities had been an excellent example of joint working and she thanked the many veterans employed in the health service for their help and expertise in developing these facilities.

She outlined that the service for amputees had continued in a reduced capacity throughout the pandemic and was now up to around 70% attendance following the reopening of the building in June.

Additional funding had recently been awarded for the amputee service, so this should assist in further developing the service in the future.

She referred to the ongoing services available for veterans with mental health issues and detailed the numbers attending.

She indicated that she would circulate a written update following the meeting.

83 Update from Panel Members.

The Chair outlined and referred to the written updates submitted in line with the new procedures for meetings and thanked those organisations for doing so which was greatly appreciated. She asked that for future meetings the more bodies who could submit their written reports would be beneficial to the running of the 'online' meetings.

Written submissions which were circulated with the agenda papers were received from Help for Heroes, Blesma, Citizens Advice, The Poppy Factory, Woody's Lodge and Swansea Bay Health Board Veterans NHS Wales.

Further updates were also given in support of the written reports at the meeting by Woody's Lodge, The Poppy Factory and Veterans NHS Wales and verbal updates were given at the meeting by Ospreys Rugby and Action on Hearing Loss.

The meeting ended at 2.55 pm

Chair