

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO POLICY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

meeting date: 7 NOVEMBER 2023
 title: ARMED FORCES COVENANT
 submitted by: MARSHAL SCOTT - CHIEF EXECUTIVE
 author: REBECCA TAIT – DEMOCRATIC SERVICES AND CIVIC OFFICER

1 PURPOSE

1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Committee in regards to the Council’s work in order to comply with the Armed Forces Covenant Pledges.

1.2 Relevance to the Council’s ambitions and priorities:

- Community Objectives – to treat everyone equally and ensure that access to services is available to all. To engage with all our communities to ensure we deliver services to meet customer needs and expectations.
- Corporate Priorities – to seek to continually improve, ensuring that council services are fit for purpose and customer focused.
- Other Considerations – to meet our ongoing Commitment to the Armed Forces Community in the Ribble Valley.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 The latest version of the Armed Forces Covenant was endorsed at the meeting of the Council 11 October 2022 and the Covenant was signed. The Covenant and the pledges the Council made are attached at Appendix A.

3 TRAINING

3.1 The Council has pledged under Section 2 of the Armed Forces Covenant to provide training to contact centre staff in matters relating to the Armed Forces. To date only 1 member of Council staff has attended the training.

3.2 The training is designed to explain who the armed forces community are, what life is like in the military, what the specific needs of the AF community are and how the AF Covenant helps to address these issues. Suitable staff to undertake the training are, armed forces leads, public facing staff and staff at all levels who operate within community engagement.

3.3 The training has been funded by a grant from the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust and delivered as a partnership between, Lancashire County Council, the Lancashire Armed Forces Covenant Hub and the College for Military Veterans & Emergency Services at UCLan.

3.4 The Project Lead for Lancashire Armed Forces Covenant Hub has offered Authorities further dedicated training sessions if the Council is able to identify a suitable group of individuals to participate.

3.5 The Armed Forces Lead Officer is in the process of arranging a mix of both face to face and remote training sessions which will be offered to all Council staff but particularly directed at the Contact Centre, Housing Team, Human Resources, Democratic Services, and the Benefits Team.

4 EMPLOYER RECOGNITION SCHEME (ERS)

4.1 To further demonstrate the Council's commitment to the Armed Forces, the Council can apply to receive an award under the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS). The scheme encompasses bronze, silver, and gold awards for organisations that pledge, demonstrate or advocate support to defence and the armed forces community, and align their values with the Armed Forces Covenant.

4.2 The Bronze award holders:

- Are self nominated by employers who pledge to support the armed forces, including existing or prospective, who are members of the community
- Must have signed the Armed Forces Covenant
- Promote being armed forces-friendly and are open to employing reservists, armed forces veterans (including the wounded, injured and sick), cadet instructors and military spouses/partners
- Receive an electronic certificate and logos to display on their website, stationary and other collateral

4.3 Committee were informed of the ERS scheme at the meeting of 13 September 2022, and authorised for the scheme to be explored and a further report be brought back to Committee.

4.4 The Armed Forces Lead Officer retired shortly after, therefore the Council's new Armed Forces Lead Officer is now working with the DRM's Regional Employer Engagement Director to progress the ERS scheme further, and understand what changes, if any, would be required to achieve the Bronze ERS award.

4.5 The Defence Relationship Management (DRM) is the Ministry of Defence's interface between British Employers and Defence. The DRM offer advice and support on employing members of the armed forces community, and enable organisations to develop a mutually beneficial working relationship with the Ministry of Defence (MOD).

5 RISK ASSESSMENT

5.1 The approval of this report may have the following implications:

Resources – officer time will be required to implement the identified actions.

Technical, Environmental and Legal – none identified.

Political – none identified.

Reputation – the Council's support of the Armed Forces, though the covenant will enhance its reputation.

Equality & Diversity – the Council ensures that its services are accessible to all and that it is a diverse and inclusive employer.

6 CONCLUSION

6.1 Committee are asked to note the contents of the report.

6.2 A further report will be brought back to Committee detailing progress, and approval will be sought from the appropriate Committee should changes to Policy be required in order to qualify for the ERS scheme.

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Background Documents:
P&F Committee Agenda Pack 130922
P&F Committee Agenda Pack 111022