

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO POLICY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

meeting date: 18 JUNE 2024
 title: ARMED FORCES COVENANT UPDATE
 submitted by: MARSHAL SCOTT - CHIEF EXECUTIVE
 author: REBECCA HODGSON – DEMOCRATIC SERVICES AND CIVIC OFFICER

1 PURPOSE

1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Committee in regard 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 on 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 In November 2023, Committee noted that the Council had pledged under Section 2 of the Armed Forces Covenant to provide training to contact centre staff in matters relating to the Armed Forces. At that time only 1 member of Council staff had attended the training.

3.2 Two further training sessions took place in May 2024, provided by the Project Lead for the Lancashire Armed Forces Covenant Hub. The training was well attended by 36 public facing and office-based staff from a range of departments including Housing, Revenues and Benefits, Contact Centre, HR Section, and Democratic Services.

3.4 Attendees were asked to complete feedback forms after the training, with the results summarised as follows:

Q.1 Your knowledge of the Armed Forces before the training = Average 4.6

Q.2 Your knowledge of the Armed Forces After the training = Average 8.4

83% increase in knowledge of the Armed Forces.

Q.3 Your knowledge of the Armed Forces Covenant before the training = Average 2.9

Q.4 Your knowledge of the Armed Forces Covenant after the training = Average 8.3
186% increase in knowledge of the Armed Forces Covenant.

Q.5 Your confidence to support Forces people before the training = Average 3.9

Q.6 Your confidence to support Forces people after the training = Average 8.4
115% increase in confidence to support Forces people.

4 EMPLOYER RECOGNITION SCHEME (ERS)

4.1 The Council's Armed Forces Officer received confirmation on 24 May 2024 that the Council had been awarded the Bronze Award from the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS). This further demonstrates the Council's commitment to the Armed Forces.

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 Further work is required in order to proceed onto the silver award. The Armed Forces Officer will continue working with the DRM's Regional Employer Engagement Director to understand the requirements. Any changes and actions required will be reported to the appropriate Committee.

4.4 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 EVENTS

5.1 The Council has supported the following recent and forthcoming events:

- **Lancashire & South Cumbria Armed Forces Covenant Conference Thursday 25 April 2024**
The Council's Armed Forces Officer attended the conference. The agenda included information about the Armed Forces Covenant, presentations by providers of regional and national support schemes for the Armed Forces Community, relevant research and data, and shared experiences from community members and professionals with lived experience.
- **D-Day 80 Beacon Lighting Thursday 6 June 2024**

To commemorate the 80th Anniversary of the D-Day landings, the Mayor hosted a Beacon Lighting Ceremony at Clitheroe Castle, which was attended by Deputy Lieutenant, Mrs Catherine Penny MBE DL. A special commemorative flag was flown and an image projected on the Castle.

- **Armed Forces Day Reception, Preston, Monday 24 June 2024**

To mark the start of Armed Forces Week, the Council's Armed Forces Champion and Armed Forces Officer will attend a reception for the Armed Forces and Veteran Community in Lancashire at County Hall, Preston, hosted by Lancashire County Council's Vice Chairman and Armed Forces Champion, Cty Cllr Alf Clempson.

- **Armed Forces Flag Raising Monday 24 June 2024**

To mark the start of Armed Forces Week the Mayor is hosting a flag raising ceremony at Clitheroe Castle, at which Deputy Lieutenant, The Honorable Ralph Assheton TD JP DL will be present, along with members of the Armed Forces Community.

6 RISK ASSESSMENT

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

Resources – officer time 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.

7 CONCLUSION

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

REBECCA HODGSON
DEMOCRATIC SERVICES OFFICER

MARSHAL SCOTT
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

For further information please ask for Rebecca Hodgson, extension 4408
Ref: RT/P&F18062024

Background Documents:

P&F Committee Agenda Pack 130922

P&F Committee Agenda Pack 111022

P&F Committee Agenda Pack 071123