



Overview and Scrutiny Committee Briefing Paper

Subject: Veterans, Armed Forces Covenant and Remembrance

Executive Director: Graeme Kane

Officer Responsible: Kevin Larnar – Healthy Communities Manger

Background and Reason for Briefing Note	To inform Overview & Scrutiny Committee of current and future CDC support relating to remembrance events, veterans, and the Armed Forces Covenant.
<p>1. Introduction</p> <p>1.1 Our lead member for wellbeing, Cllr Andrew McHugh, signed the Armed Forces Covenant (AFC) on behalf of the council earlier this year, committing the organisation to work together with the military to offer support to service personnel and their families, as well as reservists and veterans.</p> <p>1.2 This commitment will ensure those who have served in the past, and their families, should face no disadvantage compared to other citizens, and recognise that in some circumstances it is appropriate to offer enhanced or additional support. CDC is committed to honouring the Armed Forces Covenant through its services to residents, and as an employer.</p> <p>1.3 At the County level, AFC activity is co-ordinated by Oxfordshire County Council. OCC hosted an AFC awareness raising and training event in Oxford on 11 November, which CDC’s Healthy Communities Partner attended. OCC facilitates a Civilian Military Partnership made up of representatives of armed forces organisations and members of the County Council Management Team. OCC plans to broaden the partnership and remit, to share relevant knowledge and good practice. CDC Healthy Communities Manager has requested to be involved.</p> <p>2. Armed Forces Member Champion</p> <p>2.1 Armed Forces Covenant (AFC) liaison - Cllr McHugh is the member champion for issues related to the Armed Forces. Officer support comes from the Healthy Communities Manager. Both attended the Oxfordshire Veterans’ Forum in September 2019.</p> <p>3. Armed Forces Day and Remembrance Day</p> <p>3.1 On 24 June 2019 CDC invited staff and local veterans to an Armed Forces Flag raising ceremony and informal reception at Bodicote House. This was well received, and it is proposed to hold a similar event in 2020.</p> <p>3.2 On 10 November 2019 Cllr Hughes (as Council Chairman) represented CDC at the Bicester and Bodicote Remembrance Sunday ceremonies. Cllr Banfield (As Deputy Chairwoman of the Council) attended and laid a wreath on behalf of CDC at the Banbury ceremony. Cllr McHugh also attended.</p>	



3.3 Council staff observed the two minutes silence at 11am on the 11 November. The council held an Act of Remembrance in The Chamber on 11th November 2019 led by Cllr's McHugh, Hallchurch and Perry. It is planned to make this an annual event when 11th November falls within the working week.

3.4 Cherwell District Council allows staff to assist (on work time, and in addition to the staff volunteering scheme) with the poppy appeal collections at supermarkets around the Banbury area.

4. Policies

Housing – Housing allocation scheme

4.1 Cherwell's housing allocation scheme gives the very highest Band 1 'Urgent need to move' priority to ex-service personnel who have sustained serious injury, medical condition or disability during service (this includes reservists whose illness or injury is at least partly attributed to their service).

4.2 Other serving personnel and recent veterans are accorded Band 2 'Significant need to move' status (the same band as households who are accepted as being owed homeless duties), and they are not required to satisfy the 'local connection' criteria. This status also applies to recently bereaved spouses and civil partners who are no longer entitled to Ministry of Defence accommodation.

4.3 Vulnerable homeless veterans are recognised as a priority for temporary accommodation. Vulnerability is assessed in accordance with government guidance.

4.4 CDC housing staff attend a quarterly meeting of the Heyford & Bicester Veterans' Support Group, to provide advice on issues with landlords, repairs, applications to the housing register or housing benefit.

HR - Guaranteed Interview Scheme

4.5 To further support the pledges in the Council's Armed Forces Community Covenant; and to make a positive contribution to help ex-Armed Forces personnel (veterans) make the transition to civilian life the Council is committed to ensuring that ex-armed forces personnel are not disadvantaged as a result of their service. Veterans of the armed forces will be guaranteed the offer of an interview, provided that:

- The armed forces was the veteran's last long-term employer and where no more than three years has elapsed since they have left
- The veteran meets the essential criteria
- The veteran is in a position to take up employment within a maximum of 12 weeks following the offer of employment being made

5. Veterans ID Card

5.1 This year the Ministry of Defence has launched a new Veterans ID card. This enables public and charitable sector services to instantly recognise the service of a Veteran. This card can



provide proof that a person has served in HM Armed Forces. With this in mind there is work to be done to embed recognition of the ID card within the relevant council services.

6. Defence Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS)

- 6.1 This MOD sponsored scheme encourages employers to support defence communities and inspire others to do the same. The scheme encompasses bronze, silver and gold awards for employer organisations that pledge, demonstrate and advocate support to the armed forces community, and align their values with the Armed Forces Covenant.
- 6.2 In March 2019 CDC was proud to achieve the ERS Bronze Award. The council gained this by signing the Armed forces Covenant, pledging support to the armed forces community and as an employer being armed forces-friendly. The Council is open to employing reservists and armed forces veterans.
- 6.3 Cherwell District Council recently adopted a new recruitment policy, offering a guaranteed interview to suitably qualified recent veterans. Currently, Cherwell District Council employs at least one reservist.
- 6.4 Cherwell District Council are working towards the Silver Award, this will include addressing our reservist mobilisation and leave policies.
- 6.5 We will also actively ensure that our workforce is aware of our positive policies towards defence people issues and will work closely with OCC colleagues to access appropriate training for frontline staff and service 'champions'.
- 6.6 Around the UK, over 25 district councils hold the Silver award. Locally, current holders of the Silver Award include Oxfordshire County Council, Thames Valley Police and Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust.
- 6.7 We look forward to applying in the next round of applications for the ERS Silver awards, in spring 2020.
- 6.8 Looking further ahead to the ERS Gold Award, The Council will additionally need to:
- provide 10 days' paid training leave for reservists
 - use approved agencies to actively recruit service leavers
 - advocate support for defence people issues to partner organisations, suppliers and customers, with tangible positive results
- 6.9 Several County and unitary authorities hold the Gold Award, but it has only been awarded to three district councils (Colchester, North Warwickshire, Nuneaton).

Completed by: Kevin Larnar

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