



WOKING JOINT COMMITTEE

DATE: 26 JUNE 2019

LEAD OFFICER: JOHN KINGSBURY, ARMED FORCES CHAMPION (WBC),
ZAFAR IQBAL, SENIOR POLICY OFFICER (WBC),
PETER BRUINVELS, CIVILIAN MILITARY LIAISON ADVISOR (SCC)

SUBJECT: ARMED FORCES COVENANT UPDATE

AREA: WOKING

SUMMARY OF ISSUE:

Surrey County Council signed the Armed Forces Community Covenant with the military on 13 March 2012, with Woking Borough Council signing on 1 November 2012. Following the signings, a countywide Surrey Civilian Military Partnership Board was established to implement actions under the Covenant across Surrey. At the same time Woking established a Military Covenant Advisory Panel to coordinate work across the Borough.

This report provides an update of activities undertaken since the last update was given to the committee in March 2018.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Woking Joint Committee is asked to:

- i) note the contents of this report

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

This report is for information only.

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND:

- 1.1 The Armed Forces Covenant is a promise from the nation ensuring that those who serve or who have served, and their families, are treated fairly. Following the signing of the Covenant back in 2012, Surrey County Council set up the Surrey Civilian Military Partnership Board (SCMPB), which is currently chaired by Peter Martin, and Woking Borough Council established the Military Covenant Advisory Panel. John Kingsbury continues to be Woking Borough Council's Armed Forces Champion, chairman the Woking Military Covenant Advisory Panel and a representative on the SCMPB. Annex 1 sets out the key successes that have been achieved in Surrey under the Armed Forces Covenant over the last year. Set out below is an update on Woking as well as further information on countywide achievements which may be of particular interest to the committee.

2. ANALYSIS:

- a) The Military in Surrey is fully engaged with the work of both the countywide board and Woking Panel. At a countywide level this support is provided by 11 Infantry Brigade, and at a Woking level it is provided through close working relationships with officers at ATC (Pirbright).

Key Woking Achievements:

- b) Remembrance Commemorations Armistice 100 – throughout the year Woking commemorated 100 years since the Armistice was signed. Events included:
- a. 100 Silent Soldiers displayed all over the Borough.
 - b. Armed Forces Week 2018 – Flag raising ceremony was held at the Civic Offices and a parade in the Town Centre was organised by veterans from Royal Naval Association.
 - c. Woking Party in the Park – Woking came together in Woking Park on Saturday 7 July 2018 to help commemorate 100 years since the end of WWI. The event was reminiscent of a Peace Celebration party that took place 100 years before. The event opened with a parade introduced by the Military Wives Choir and, as the procession ended, Joey the War Horse emerged. It was a fantastic day and gave officers the opportunity to promote the Peace Garden as well as some of the wider work being done to support our armed forces community locally.
 - d. Muslim 100 Ceremony at Woking Peace Garden – To mark 100 years since the end of WWI, the Armed Forces Muslim Association played a key role in the first National Muslim Service of Commemoration held at the Peace Garden. This was very well attended by community representatives from England, Wales and Scotland.
 - e. Remembrance Sunday – Woking Borough Council at the annual Remembrance Service marked the 100 year commemorations of the Great War with thousands of people attending the open air church ceremony.

- c) Freedom March – The Freedom March by the Army Training Centre (Pirbright) took place on Sunday 28 April 2019. This highly successful event attracted large numbers of residents into Jubilee Square to witness the March and the music played by the Band of the Royal Artillery. VIPs included the Lord-Lieutenant, the High Sheriff, the Mayor and the Commanding Officer of the Army Training Centre. Other groups involved in the event included the Army Benevolent Fund (ABF), Sea Cadets, Army Cadets and Air Cadets.
- d) Peace Garden – a selection of engagement events were held at the Peace Garden during the year including:
- a. In July the Annual commemoration service was held in July with a Poem written by one of the decedents of a soldier buried at the site and was recited by a student from Woking High School. It was well attend by people from all walks of life including Sophena Chisembele the daughter of the last soldier to be buried at the site.
 - b. A number of schools visited the Garden via Horsell Common Preservation Society and it continues to attract visitors from all parts of the country as well as internationally.
 - c. The Peace Garden was a major part of a Doctoral thesis on the act of remembrance from Boston University in the United States.
- e) Brookwood Last Post Association – In August 2018 the first ever multi- faith service was held in Brookwood to remember the fallen during the First World War. Prayers were offered by leaders from Bhai, Christian, Hindu, Muslim and Sikh faiths.
- f) Fundraising - Woking Poppy appeal was launched on 26th October 2018 and raised funds approaching £60,000.
- g) Covenant Funding - Brookwood Youth Café received £10,888 from the Armed Forces Covenant Fund to improve facilities at St Saviours Church Brookwood. The funding enabled facilities to be improved so more young people from the local service and civilian communities could come together in a safe environment to make new friends, learn new skills and have fun.
- h) Woking Veterans' Hub – The local Veterans' Hub in Woking is run out of the Woking Railway Athletic Club on Goldsworth Road from 11am – 1pm on the third Thursday of every month. Further work needs to be done to promote this Hub which provides help, advice, support and camaraderie to local veterans. Work is ongoing as part of the Forces Connect South East Veterans' Hub Project to promote the network of Hubs across the South East through a monthly Newsletter and calendar of events.
- i) Sandhurst Leadership Challenge – The most recent Sandhurst Leadership Challenge was held on 23 March 2019, with three participants from Woking Borough Council from Benefits, Open Housing and Planning. The Head of HR attended as an observer to see how the course benefits the council. The training is valued at £3,500 per person and received very positive feedback with participants noting how interesting the challenge was.

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- j) Armed Forces Muslim Association (AFMA) – Woking continues to support AFMA in its work to promote awareness of the Armed Forces in the Muslim communities.
- k) South East Regional Employer Engagement Group, (SE REEG) – Woking BC is a member of this Group which provides advice to the military chain of command on engagement with employers in order to ensure that the interests of both Service personnel and their employers enjoy a mutually beneficial relationship that sustains the desired level of operational capability required by the Ministry of Defence.
- l) Housing Allocation - Woking BC monitors its housing allocation on a quarterly basis for applicants with links to the Armed Forces. During the past year three applicants with armed forces connections were allocated housing in the Borough.
- m) Recruitment - All recruitment application forms are monitored at regular intervals and Woking BC is exploring ways to pledged at least an interview to anyone with links to the Armed Forces including spouses, subject to them meeting the minimum requirements for the post. During the past year 22 people with armed forces connections applied of which two were short listed but were not offered interviews for the jobs.

Key Surrey-wide Achievements:

- n) Surrey Armed Forces Covenant Conference 2019 – this years conference was held at the Army Training Centre in Pirbright on 6 February 2019. As well as looking back at achievements over the past year, the afternoon had a specific focus on the needs of our service children which included a video of two Surrey service children explaining from their perspective what it is like being a service child in a school where the majority of their peers are not.
- o) Cross Border Working – Forces Connect South East (FCSE) - Surrey County Council has led two successful cross border partnership bids with Hampshire, Kent, East and West Sussex County Councils, Brighton and Hove and Medway Councils, the Sussex, Kent and Medway CCGs, Royal British Legion and SSAFA. The first was a bid to provide training opportunities and signposting information to support our armed forces community. The second was to look at supporting veterans and ex-service personnel through local hubs and drop-in centres. These two bids brought in £469,000 of Ministry of Defence funding into the county. The success of FCSE has been highlighted nationally and a presentation on the outcomes was made at the National Armed Forces Covenant Conference held in Newcastle in April 2019 and will be further highlighted at this years' LGA Conference in Bournemouth. Key achievements of the projects include:
 - a. Over 4,000 people trained from local authorities, Police, Fire and Rescue, health and the voluntary sector on the issues facing the wider armed forces community. This includes frontline staff, managers and councillors.
 - b. Signposting pathways for the armed forces community covering issues such as housing, mental health, education, welfare and employment have been created and made available digitally through a new 'Forces Connect' mobile app that is available for free download for both apple and android.

- c. A series of 12 regional workshops across the UK have been organised, with workshops held in Scotland and Cambridge to date, providing the FCSE training to other local authorities whilst making editable resources available freely via the LGA Knowledge Hub website.

3. OPTIONS:

- 3.1 This report is for information.

4. CONSULTATIONS:

- 4.1 Annex 1 was presented to the Surrey Covenant Conference on 6 February 2019 at ATC Pirbright and comments and additions were invited.

5. FINANCIAL AND VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS:

- 5.1 There are no financial implications of the forward programme.

6. RISK MANAGEMENT:

- 6.1 There are no significant risk management implications arising from this report.

7. LOCALISM:

- 7.1 11 Infantry Brigade have implemented the concept of Task Force Commanders, where a Commanding Officer of a Surrey Regiment are linked with a particular borough or district council area to work closely together on issues of mutual concern. Woking has been linked with ATC Pirbright. The Brigade Commander has also appointed Peter Bruinvels as the Brigade's Armed Forces Champion to link in locally.

8. EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS:

- 8.1 The aim of the Armed Forces Covenant is to ensure that the armed forces community are not disadvantaged by their service.

9. OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Area assessed:	Direct Implications:
Crime and Disorder	No significant implications arising from this report
Sustainability (including Climate Change and Carbon Emissions)	No significant implications arising from this report
Corporate Parenting/Looked After Children	No significant implications arising from this report
Safeguarding responsibilities for vulnerable children and adults	No significant implications arising from this report
Public Health	No significant implications arising from this report

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Human Resource/Training and Development	No significant implications arising from this report
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10. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

10.1 The Committee is asked to note the contents of this report.

11. WHAT HAPPENS NEXT:

11.1 Officers supporting the Surrey Board and the Woking Panel will continue to further promote the work of the Armed Forces Covenant in Woking.

11.2 Woking BCs Panel's key aims for the coming year include:

- a) Considering an application for the Gold Employer Recognition Scheme Award which will build on the Silver Award the Council currently holds.
- b) Working with HR to promote Woking BCs commitment to the Armed Forces to potential employees.
- c) Identifying current Woking BC employees with a link to the Armed Forces with a view to forming a focus group to identify any support they need as well as to consult them on the wider work the Council does in supporting the Armed Forces locally.
- d) Promoting the diversity of the Armed Forces nationally through close working with the Armed Forces Muslim Association.
- e) Work with 11 Infantry Brigade to promote recruitment of both Regular and Reservists in Woking.
- f) Continue to work with SERFCA to promote the Armed Forces Covenant to the local business community.

11.3 Members are asked to help promote the presence of the local Veteran Hub in Woking as well as the opportunity for local groups to apply for funding from the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust for projects which help to integrate the civilian and armed forces communities.

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Consulted:

Woking Military Advisory Panel

Borough Portfolio Holder

John Kingsbury

County Council Cabinet Member

Mrs Denise Turner-Stewart, Cabinet Member

Annexes:

SCMPB – Armed Forces Covenant Successes 2018/19

Sources/background papers:

None

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