

Report of the Strategic Director, Place, to the meeting of Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee to be held on 11th November 2021

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Subject:

Annual progress report on the local implementation of the Armed Forces Covenant and work of the Bradford District Armed Forces Covenant Partnership to meet the needs of the local Armed Forces Community.

Summary statement:

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the implementation of the Armed Forces Covenant locally and report on progress made by the Bradford District Armed Forces Covenant Partnership and the Council in identifying and addressing need within the local Armed Forces Community.

This report also provides: an overview of the West Yorkshire Armed Forces Covenant Implementation Project and notes expected legislative changes to the Armed Forces Covenant expected later this year.

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Overview & Scrutiny Area:

Corporate

EQUALITY & DIVERSITY:

The Armed Forces Community is present across all the protected characteristics but is not a protected characteristic in its own right.

A main objective of the Community Covenant (now known as the Armed Forces Covenant) pledge is to ensure that the Armed Forces Community has equitable access to local public services. The Bradford District Armed Forces Covenant Partnership is concentrating its efforts on this objective.

The Council through its Silver Defence Employer Recognition Award has demonstrated its commitment to supporting the employment of members of the Armed Forces Community both former personnel and currently serving reservists.

The work of the Bradford District Armed Forces Covenant Partnership contributes to the following Equality Objective:

- **Objective 3: Community**

We will encourage all service areas to better understand our communities. We will actively engage with our communities to help people participate in decision-making processes, to improve the services we provide, and to enable more people to take part in the life in the District.

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1. The Armed Forces Covenant is led by national Government. It is a promise from the nation that no one who serves or has served in the Forces or their families should face disadvantage when accessing public and commercial services.
- 1.2. The Covenant further outlines that in some cases special consideration may be appropriate for those who have given the most, such as the injured or the bereaved.
- 1.3. The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the implementation of the Armed Forces Covenant locally and report on progress made by the Bradford District Armed Forces Covenant Partnership and the Council in identifying and addressing need within the local Armed Forces Community.
- 1.4. This is a regular report to this committee. Previous progress was reported to this committee on 23 January 2020. This update follows the decision of Council of the 16 July 2019 to re-instate an annual Armed Forces Covenant progress update.
- 1.5. In the 20 months since we last came to this committee, we have:
 - Marked celebrations and commemorations throughout the pandemic
 - Consulted with members of the Armed Forces Community to hear about the services they have accessed and gauge awareness of the Armed Forces Covenant
 - Continued to work as a part of the West Yorkshire Armed Forces Covenant Implementation Project. Resulting work has included the West Yorkshire Service Pupil Premium Resource Directory for schools, which is hosted on the Bradford Council website
 - Kept abreast of proposed changes to the Armed Forces Covenant legislation and what this will mean for the City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council
- 1.6. This report also provides an overview of the West Yorkshire Armed Forces Covenant Implementation Project which has been hosted by City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council since June 2019.
- 1.7. The West Yorkshire Armed Forces Covenant Implementation Project appointed a Project Officer in June 2019. The role of the Project Officer has been to support West Yorkshire local authorities' implementation of their Armed Forces Covenant commitments and develop and share good practice across the area. This has included developing strategy and delivering projects and training to raise awareness of the Armed Forces Covenant and the needs and experiences of our Armed Forces community.
- 1.8. Finally, legislation is due to change on the Armed Forces Covenant through the Armed Forces Bill 2021, which is expected to achieve Royal Assent in Parliament later this year. This Bill is likely to have implications on how the Council will need to implement the Covenant. This report touches on how we are preparing for this within 3.12 of this report.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Armed Forces Covenant is led by national Government. It is a promise from the nation that no one who serves or has served in the Forces or their families should face disadvantage when accessing public and commercial services.
- 2.2 The Covenant further outlines that in some cases special consideration may be appropriate for those who have given the most, such as the injured or the bereaved.
- 2.3 The Armed Forces Covenant applies to serving personnel, Reservists, their families and ex-Service personnel (also known as Veterans).
- 2.4 The Council and its partners signed the Armed Forces Covenant Pledge on the 30 January 2012. **Appendix 1** provides a list of the organisations that signed the pledge at this time and subsequently formed the local Covenant Partnership. For our Covenant pledge to remain live, the Partnership must meet once a year.
- 2.5 **Appendix 2** provides the wording of the Bradford District Armed Forces Covenant Pledge, which outlines the promise made by local organisations whose representatives signed the local pledge, previously known as the Community Covenant and now known as the Armed Forces Covenant, on the 30 January 2012.
- 2.6 Public sector, voluntary and charitable organisations, along with private companies, can sign the Armed Forces Covenant committing their support to the Armed Forces Community.
- 2.7 In support of its Covenant commitment, the Council has assigned an Elected Member Armed Forces Champion, a Strategic Officer Lead and an Officer Lead.
- 2.8 Bradford Council's current Elected Armed Forces Champion is Cllr Joanne Dodds. Previous Champions were Cllr Alex Ross-Shaw and, now retired, Cllr John Ruding.
- 2.9 Bradford Council's Strategic Officer Lead has changed through the years with the role now being undertaken by the Assistant Director of Neighbourhoods and Customer Services, Ian Day.
- 2.10 Bradford Council's Officer Lead is Gemma Paine, previously this was Helen Johnston.
- 2.11 On feedback from the report presented to this Committee on 23 January 2020, a section on access to health services for members of the Armed Forces Community can be found in 3.45 – 3.53 of this report.

3. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

The impact of the Coronavirus pandemic on Bradford District Armed Forces celebrations

- 3.1 Like all places in the UK, we have worked to mark key Armed Forces celebrations and commemorations whilst adhering to COVID-19 restrictions. 2020 was a key year for several Armed Forces events and marked the 75th anniversary of both VE Day (Victory over Europe Day) on 8th of May and VJ Day (Victory over Japan Day) on the 15th August. Planned events locally and nationally were impacted upon as a result of the pandemic. This saw many events cancelled or moved online including Armed Forces Week celebrations (22-27 June), the Bradford PALS Memorial Service (1 July) and Remembrance Sunday events for 2020. The Lord Mayor's Office, Office of Chief Exec and Libraries and Museums have worked alongside the Cathedral and others to provide inclusive digital services throughout this time.
- 3.2 On-going restrictions throughout 2021 resulted in Armed Forces Week celebrations and the PALS Memorial Service for 2021 taking place online. A social distanced service of Remembrance was held at Bradford Cathedral.
- 3.3 On 14 November 2021 the annual Remembrance Sunday civic parade, and service at the Cenotaph in Bradford will be held. The Civic Team is also in contact with local organisers across the district to confirm local acts of remembrance and to facilitate representation on behalf of the Lord Mayor at these local community services.
- 3.4 An Armistice Day service will be held at the Cenotaph, led by the Cathedral and in the presence of the Lord Mayor, on Armistice Day 11 November 2021 at 11.00am. As in previous years the Festival of Remembrance will be held at Bradford Cathedral and taking place on 7 November 2021.
- 3.5 In addition to the traditional events of Remembrance this year a service of Remembrance at the Memorial Wall in Bradford was held on 24 October 2021. The Council was approached by an interested party who has been working with the Korean Veterans Association and others to identify servicemen from Bradford who were killed whilst serving in the Korean War. Over the last 18 months three names have been identified for inclusion on the City's War Memorial Wall. The commemoration service included wreath-laying, was led by Acting Dean of Bradford Cathedral Paul Maybury. David Pearson Deputy Lieutenant, the Deputy Lord Mayor Cllr Bev Mullaney and Cllr Joanne Dodds attended together with members of the soldiers' families and representatives of the Korean Veterans Association. A Standard Bearer representing the Duke of Wellington Regiment and bugler from the West Yorkshire Police Band also attended.
- 3.6 In April 2020, Airedale NHS Foundation Trust and Bradford Council commissioned a plaque to honour Captain Sir Thomas Moore who was born and raised in Keighley. Captain Moore, inspired the nation by walking laps of his Bedfordshire garden, raising over £31m for the NHS. A temporary plaque was unveiled ahead of

his 100th birthday, while the official plaque, cast and donated by Buxton-based Leander Architectural, will be unveiled later in the year.

The Armed Forces Bill 2021

- 3.7 While good procedures and initiatives have been put in place by service providers nationally since the introduction of the Armed Forces Covenant in 2011, the Government is concerned that in some cases members of the Armed Forces community are still facing disadvantage when accessing public services.
- 3.8 To combat this the Armed Forces Bill 2021, currently making its way through Parliament, looks to enshrine the Armed Forces Covenant into law. The Bill is expected to receive Royal Assent in the Autumn, and become law in early 2022.
- 3.9 Proposed legislation will impose a new duty on relevant public bodies (including local authorities), when exercising certain aspects of their public functions in the areas of housing, healthcare and education to have due regard to the three principles of the Armed Forces Covenant:
- the unique obligations of, and sacrifices made by, the Armed Forces;
 - the principle that it is desirable to remove disadvantages arising for service people from membership, or former membership, of the Armed Forces; and
 - the principle that special provision for Service People may be justified by the effect on such people of membership, or former membership, of the Armed Forces.
- 3.10 This will mean that in the future, service providers will have to demonstrate they have considered the principles of the Covenant when making decisions in the key areas of housing, healthcare and education.
- 3.11 The private sector is not currently in scope of the duty. However, there is an expectation where services have been commissioned out to private companies that the body in charge of the commissioning will be responsible for ensuring the services provided are subject to the legislation and that the company's policies and processes are compliant.

Preparing Bradford Council for potential changes brought about by the Armed Forces Bill 2021

- 3.12 Officers are currently working to understand the implications of the Armed Forces Bill 2021. Any proposal that requires a change in Council policy will be considered by Council Management Team, Council or Executive as appropriate.

Data about our local Armed Forces community

- 3.13 Although accurate data on the size of the Armed Forces Community is an issue across the UK we are able to gather the following local information:
- The 2011 Census indicated that 409 regular Armed Forces personnel reside in Bradford District (this is the 2nd highest rate in West Yorkshire with only Leeds

having a larger population at 691). Of those, 378 personnel were male and 31 female

- The Department for Education records for 2020/2021 indicated there were 163 children of Service personnel within Bradford's schools (Wakefield has the highest recorded number in West Yorkshire with 256 pupils)
- The 2011 Census indicated that Bradford District is home to 5,155 working age veterans (aged 17-64). This equates to approximately 2% of the total working age population. Most working age veterans across West Yorkshire are male (92%), a majority are white (99%) and most are aged between 40 and 54 years-old
- The Location of UK Armed Forces Pension and Compensation as of 31 March 2021 showed there were 1,397 residents claiming an Armed Forces Pension in Bradford District (the 3rd highest rate for West Yorkshire with the most claimants (2,181) residing in Leeds) and 59 residents in receipt of a War Widows Pension (the 2nd highest rate for West Yorkshire with Leeds having 80 residents in receipt of this pension)

3.14 Through this data we can identify that there are at least 7,183 members of the Armed Forces Community residing within the District. This is a very conservative estimate as the available data only allows us to form a partial picture of the size of the Armed Forces community. We also acknowledge the above data sources provide a snap shot at the time taken.

3.15 For the first time in its history, the 2021 Census included an Armed Forces identification question. The Office for National Statistics website states that they "aim to release the first Census 2021 data on the population of England and Wales within one year of census, and to publish all other main Census 2021 data within two years of census."

3.16 We anticipate Census results will offer more accurate data around the size of the Armed Forces Community when released over the coming years.

Bradford District Armed Forces Covenant Partnership

3.17 Within Bradford, a main thrust of the Partnership's work has been around removing barriers to accessing services and improving the Armed Forces community's awareness of services and provision that could support them.

3.18 The Bradford District Armed Forces Covenant Partnership continued to meet virtually throughout the pandemic.

3.19 Since the last report to this Committee the following activities have been undertaken:

- The Partnership has updated its action plan. A draft can be found in **Appendix 3**. The action plan, which is a working document, will be consulted on with the Armed Forces Community as well as those who support them

- Increased annual meetings from twice per year to at least three times per year to help maintain momentum for the new action plan
- Updated the Terms of Reference to reflect the evolution of the Partnership since it formed in 2012. An updated Terms of Reference can be found in **Appendix 4**
- A section on the Partnership has been added to the Council's Armed Forces webpages providing both members of the Armed Forces community and the public with an insight into the work of the Partnership

Bradford Council Armed Forces Covenant Delivery

3.20 In addition to supporting the work of Bradford District Armed Forces Covenant Partnership, Bradford Council undertakes additional activities to raise awareness of the Armed Forces Covenant amongst staff and ensure the local Armed Forces Community are supported.

3.21 Since the last report to this committee the following activities have been undertaken:

- Content within the Armed Forces pages on the Bradford Council website has been updated
- An Armed Forces Covenant resource page has been created for staff on our intranet
- Work has been undertaken cross Council and with partner agencies to develop virtual events for Armed Forces Day and Remembrance
- An Armed Forces Covenant introduction e-learning module has been created for staff

3.22 Additional information and activities to note include:

The role of the Elected Member Champion

3.23 Bradford Council's Elected Member Champion is Cllr Joanne Dodds. Cllr Dodds is the joint chair of the Bradford District Armed Forces Covenant Partnership and an active member of the West Yorkshire Armed Forces Covenant Good Practice Forum.

3.24 As well as representing the Council at key services, celebrations and events, most recently the Meet Your Army event at Belle Vue Barracks in June 2021, Cllr Dodds acts as advocate for members of the Armed Forces Community who may have struggled to access Council and wider services.

3.25 Cllr Dodds has supported members of the Armed Forces community with their housing, welfare and support needs. Members of the Armed Forces community

have approached Cllr Dodds directly and most recently, have begun to be referred to her through Armed Forces charities such as the Royal British Legion and Veterans Gateway.

- 3.26 Prior to the pandemic Cllr Dodds made links and visited the Districts Cadets Associations and supported their activities.
- 3.27 On Tuesday 12 October Cllr Dodds moved an Armed Forces motion at full council which received full support from all members.

Commonwealth Contributions

- 3.28 The Council's Stronger Communities team has worked in partnership with the World War 1 Group since 2017 to raise awareness of 'Shared Remembrance' amongst the South Asian community in Bradford.
- 3.29 The culmination of this work was a more diverse attendance at the City Centre Remembrance Service since 2017. Those leading this work reported a significant number of people who had attended the 'Shared Remembrance' exhibitions attended the Remembrance Day Service as they realised this Service was about all of our communities' sacrifices. The South Asian community felt welcomed, however there is still a feeling that this Service needs to be more inclusive with prayers from the Hindu, Muslim and Sikh faiths.
- 3.30 In 2018 banners were produced to specifically highlight the involvement of people of all faiths from the South Asian countries. Eight new banners were designed within a common theme: All communities in Bradford today will have some connection with the conflict. The banners used in exhibitions within the different South Asian Community settings and also displayed in the four main council buildings within Bradford during 2019 and will be again in 2021.
- 3.31 A Special Award was made to the World War 1 Group at the Community Stars event in 2019 for initiating a 'Global' theme throughout their activities to commemorate the Centenary of WW1 and willingness to engage with all communities and age groups.
- 3.32 Due to the pandemic, plans to host a joint exhibition within places of worship in Shipley did not take place.
- 3.33 Contributions of the Commonwealth were referenced in videos produced for Armed Forces Day by SHAPE-UK, the World War 1 Group and the Commonwealth War Graves Commission and showcased on the Council's YouTube channel.

Afghan Relocation Scheme

- 3.34 Although not covered by the Armed Forces Covenant, the Council acknowledges the sacrifice and support Afghan individuals and their families have offered our British Armed Forces and troops.

Armed Forces Covenant Staff Awareness Survey

- 3.35 A survey is being produced to gauge staff awareness of the Armed Forces Covenant. This will also begin to enable us to identify members of staff who may be part of the Armed Forces Community. Findings from the survey will be used to inform future staff development. The survey is expected to be undertaken around Remembrance Sunday.

Employment

- 3.36 Between 1 April 2018 and 30 June 2021 a total of 373 people applying for employment with the Council identified themselves as either currently serving or having served in Her Majesty's Armed Forces.
- 3.37 Of these applicants, 37 were shortlisted for interview and 13 contracts of employment were issued.
- 3.38 Initial conversations are taking place with colleagues in the Council's Human Resources Services to advertise Council vacancies on nationally recognised, military specific job search sites including [RFEA - The Forces Employment Charity](#) and [Forces Families Jobs](#)

Proposed Development of an Armed Forces Hub

- 3.39 In early 2020, discussions took place between the Elected Champion, Covenant Officer, the Chair of the West Yorkshire Magistrates Bench and Military representatives about a proposal to develop an Armed Forces Hub at Belle Vue Barracks.
- 3.40 Further work is needed to explore the feasibility of developing and running a Hub.

Bradford Council's Armed Forces Covenant Pledge

- 3.41 The 30th of January 2022 marks 10 years since the Council and partners made their formal commitment and pledges of support to the local Armed Forces Community by signing the Community Covenant (now known as the Armed Forces Covenant).
- 3.42 Dependent on further discussions and agreement, we are looking to get Council permission to host a re-signing ceremony to mark this anniversary and re-state the Council's commitment to the Covenant and celebration of the work of our Armed Forces.

Defence Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS)

- 3.43 The Defence Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS) awards encourage employers to support members of the Armed Forces community and align their values with the Armed Forces Covenant. The scheme offers businesses and organisations the opportunity to showcase their good practice and support for their local Armed Forces community, both within and outside their workforce.
- 3.44 Bradford Council achieved their Silver ERS award in November 2018. Dependent on further discussion and approval the Council will look to pursue ERS Gold Award status.

Work of Partners

Access to healthcare for members of the Armed Forces Community

- 3.45 Members of the Armed Forces Community can access specific healthcare services through the NHS, which covers both mental and physical healthcare.
- 3.46 The NHS's Armed Forces mental health pathway offers varying levels of mental healthcare support, which covers the following services:
- Veterans' Mental Health Transition, Intervention and Liaison Service (TILS)
 - NHS Veterans' Mental Health Complex Treatment Service (CTS)
 - Veterans' Mental Health High Intensity Service (HIS)
- 3.47 Plans are in place to rebrand the current healthcare pathway to Op COURAGE.
- 3.48 Colleagues from the TILS service have supported the work of the West Yorkshire Armed Forces Covenant Implementation Project, providing an overview of support during webinars. A representative also sat as a partner on the West Yorkshire Armed Forces Covenant Housing Forum, referenced in 3.76 of this report. Further information on the West Yorkshire Armed Forces Covenant Implementation Project can be found within 3.62 and 3.81 of this report.
- 3.49 The Royal College of General Practitioners are working with NHS England and NHS Improvement to accredit GP practices as 'Veteran Friendly'.
- 3.50 As of 27 August 2021, 18 GP's within the Airedale, Wharfedale and Craven CCG and the Bradford District CCG have achieved their Veteran's Friendly Accreditation.
- 3.51 The Council and the Bradford District Armed Forces Covenant Partnership are keen to find ways to work together to encourage more GPs to achieve their accreditation and show their support for the local Armed Forces community. As part of this work, an initial meeting in July was held of NHS healthcare partners.
- 3.52 The Veterans Covenant Healthcare Alliance (VCHA) have an ambition to accredit all NHS hospital providers in England as Veteran Aware by November 2022. Within the Bradford District Airedale NHS Foundation Trust achieved their Veterans Aware Status in 2020.
- 3.53 NHS Bradford District and Craven CCG signed the Armed Forces Covenant in 2020 during the online signing ceremony organised as part of the West Yorkshire Armed Forces Implementation Project with the Reserve Forces and Cadets Association (RFCA) Yorkshire and Humber referenced further in 3.73.

The Department of Work and Pensions (DWP)

- 3.54 The DWP has appointed an Armed Forces Champion in every Jobcentre Plus district. The Champion provides support to ex-service personnel as well as the spouses and civil partners of serving and ex-serving personnel.

- 3.55 The Champion provides Jobcentre Plus staff with information on Armed Forces issues and aims to remove barriers that members of the Armed Forces community can face accessing work.
- 3.56 The West Yorkshire Armed Forces Champion for the DWP sits as a partner on the Bradford District Armed Forces Covenant Partnership.

Housing

- 3.57 Since December 2019, Leeds City Council has hosted two Armed Forces support officers who work to support members of the Armed Forces community who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. The support officers cover the Leeds City Region.
- 3.58 The support officers have supported the development of the West Yorkshire Armed Forces Covenant Housing Forum referenced in 3.77 of this report.

Armed Forces and Veterans Breakfast Clubs

- 3.59 There are two official Armed Forces and Veterans Breakfast Clubs in the District. These are based in Keighley and Shipley and are led by ex-service personnel. Age UK also host a Breakfast Club meeting for members of the Armed Forces community in Bradford City Centre.
- 3.60 The Covenant Officer has continued to keep in contact with Breakfast Club organisers from Keighley and Shipley throughout the pandemic period, offering support and sign-posting where appropriate.
- 3.61 The Elected Member Champion and Covenant Officer visited the District's Breakfast Clubs throughout October to re-establish relationships with club members and to hear of any current support requirements. Any information on changing support needs club members raise will be reflected back to the Bradford District Armed Forces Covenant Partnership and Council departments where appropriate.

The West Yorkshire Armed Forces Covenant Implementation Project

- 3.62 Bradford Council was awarded Ministry of Defence Covenant grant funding to host and manage a two-year West Yorkshire-wide Local Authority Covenant Implementation Project. A Project Officer was appointed to undertake the Project in June 2019.
- 3.63 A four-month extension was granted by the Ministry of Defence due to the pandemic.
- 3.64 The Project Officer was joined by a Local Government Association Graduate Trainee from October 2020 until October 2021. The Graduate supported the Project Officer with activities to raise awareness of the Armed Forces Covenant.

Work achieved as a result of the West Yorkshire Implementation Project

3.65 Although covering the whole of West Yorkshire, the work of the Project has directly benefited Bradford in regards to outputs such as:

- West Yorkshire Armed Forces Covenant Good Practice Forum membership – the Forum offers our Elected Member Champion, Strategic Officer and Covenant Officer the opportunity to meet colleagues working to support the Covenant within local authorities across West Yorkshire and share good practice. Further opportunity is offered to form links with guest speakers who are invited to the Forum to share their work to support the Armed Forces community
- Regular updates on local and national Covenant activities and support available for members of the Armed Forces community
- The creation of a Bradford specific Armed Forces Covenant awareness e-learning module
- Support implementing the Armed Forces Covenant locally

3.66 Additional outputs of the Project to note include:

- **The West Yorkshire Service Pupil Premium Resource Directory**

3.67 [The West Yorkshire Service Pupil Premium Resource Directory](#) was developed by the Project Officer in 2020 with support from West Yorkshire local authority education colleagues, the Ministry of Defence's Directorate Children and Young People (now known as the Armed Forces Families Safeguarding), the Department for Education and the three Forces Families Federations.

3.68 Developed for schools, the Directory aims to raise awareness of the Armed Forces Covenant, the needs and experiences of Armed Forces families and provide further information on the Service Pupil Premium.

3.69 Hosted on Bradford Council's Armed Forces webpages, the Directory has been updated since the first edition to include new content around higher education and reflect government policy changes.

3.70 The Directory has been cited as good practice nationally [Service-children-CPD-guide-2020-TF-group-report.pdf \(scipalliance.org\)](#) and has been used as a template to inform other local areas work, such as in Norfolk [Norfolk-SPP-Resource-Directory.pdf \(raf-ff.org.uk\)](#)

- **West Yorkshire Armed Forces Covenant Webinar**

3.71 The Project Officer hosted a webinar for West Yorkshire local authority staff in June 2021.

3.72 The webinar, jointly opened by Lt Col Balmer from the Royal Navy and West Yorkshire Mayor Tracy Brabin, offered staff the opportunity to find out more about:

- The Armed Forces Covenant and upcoming Legislation changes
- The needs and experiences of the Armed Forces community
- Some of the services available to support the Armed Forces community, such as the specific healthcare pathway offered by the NHS and housing support offered by the Leeds City Region housing support officers

- **West Yorkshire Virtual Armed Forces Covenant Signing Ceremony for Businesses and Organisations**

3.73 In November 2020 the Project Officer worked alongside the Reserve Forces and Cadets Association (RFCA) Yorkshire and Humber to host a virtual Armed Forces Covenant signing ceremony for West Yorkshire businesses and organisations. The event was joined by colleagues from the West Yorkshire Armed Forces Covenant Good Practice Forum and Military personnel.

3.74 The Project Officer and the RFCA Yorkshire and Humber plan to host an information event for West Yorkshire businesses and organisations at the Bankfield Museum in Halifax on Wednesday 3 November 2021.

3.75 The event aims to offer businesses and organisations an opportunity to find out more about the Armed Forces Covenant and how they can become a Forces Friendly employer. A verbal update on the event will be provided to the meeting.

- **West Yorkshire Armed Forces Housing Forum**

3.76 In June 2020 the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government released statutory guidance for local authorities to improve access to social housing for members of the Armed Forces community. The guidance provides examples of needs and experiences facing members of the Armed Forces community such as spouses and ex-Forces personnel with mental health conditions. It also encourages social housing providers to consider them within their social housing allocations policy.

3.77 The Project Officer, alongside the Armed Forces support officers referenced in 3.55 of this report, established the West Yorkshire Armed Forces Housing Forum to raise awareness of the guidance and needs and experiences of the Armed Forces community. The forum met regularly and concluded with a West Yorkshire Armed Forces Covenant Housing Webinar, held on Thursday 9 September 2021.

- **West Yorkshire Armed Forces Covenant Awareness Surveys**

3.78 In January 2020, on behalf of the West Yorkshire local authorities, the Project Officer released a survey to gauge awareness of the Armed Forces Covenant and build a picture of the services accessed both inside and outside the Council by the Armed Forces community.

- 3.79 The survey ran from the 13th of January until the 28th of February 2020 and received a total of 249 responses from across West Yorkshire and beyond. Results from the survey were developed into an infographic which can be viewed in **Appendix 5**.
- 3.80 A second survey was released on the 23rd of September aiming to discover if: members of the Armed Forces Community's support needs have changed, if they have heard of or benefited from the Armed Forces Covenant. The survey is due to conclude on the 21st October.

Continuation Funding

- 3.81 The West Yorkshire Armed Forces Covenant Implementation Project has been awarded funding from the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust to continue the Project for a final year.

4. FINANCIAL & RESOURCE APPRAISAL

Work on the delivery of the Armed Forces Covenant by the Council is undertaken within existing resources and is supported by a grant from the Ministry of Defence that supports delivery of the two-year West Yorkshire-wide local authority Covenant Implementation Project and officer, outlined in paragraphs 3.62 – 3.81 above.

5. RISK MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE ISSUES

None directly arising from this report.

6. LEGAL APPRAISAL

- 6.1 This is an annual progress report on the Bradford Armed Forces Covenant.
- 6.2 In relation to the Armed Forces Bill 2021 the primary purpose of the Bill is to renew the Armed Forces Act (AFA) 2006 and, in so doing, continue in force the primary legislation governing the armed forces. The Bill also provides for measures to maintain the effectiveness of the service justice system so that it continues to meet the needs of the armed forces and it will further incorporate the Armed Forces Covenant into law. Clause 8 of the Bill is the most relevant provision to local government.
- 6.3 The Bill amends Part 16A of the AFA 2006 to impose a duty to have due regard to the principles of the Armed Forces Covenant, as follows: (a) the unique obligations of, and sacrifices made by, the armed forces; (b) the principle that it is desirable to remove disadvantages arising for service people from membership, or former membership, of the armed forces; and (c) the principle that special provision for service people may be justified by the effects on such people of membership, or former membership, of the armed forces.

6.4 The new duty will apply to specified persons or bodies, including councils, when exercising certain housing, education or healthcare functions.

7. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

7.1 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

None directly arising from this report.

7.2 GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS IMPACTS

None directly arising from this report.

7.3 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

None directly arising from this report

7.4 HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

No implications directly arising from this report.

7.5 TRADE UNION

No implications directly arising from this report.

7.6 WARD IMPLICATIONS

No directly arising from this report. The Armed forces community is dispersed across district.

7.8 IMPLICATIONS FOR CORPORATE PARENTING

The report does not have any implications for Corporate Parenting

7.9 ISSUES ARISING FROM PRIVACY IMPACT ASSESMENT

There are no issues arising from the privacy impact assessment

8. NOT FOR PUBLICATION DOCUMENTS

None

9. OPTIONS

This is the annual progress report on the Bradford District Armed Forces Covenant and for the contents to be noted.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 To note and comment on the contents of the progress report on the Bradford District Armed Forces Covenant and the work of the Bradford District Armed Forces Covenant Partnership to meet the needs of the local Armed Forces Community.

11. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Bradford District Armed Forces Covenant Partner Membership

Appendix 2 Bradford District Armed Forces Covenant Pledge

Appendix 3 Bradford District Armed Forces Covenant Partnership Action Plan

Appendix 4 Bradford District Armed Forces Covenant Partnership Terms of Reference

Appendix 5 West Yorkshire Armed Forces Covenant Survey 2020 Infographic

12. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

[Armed Forces Covenant - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

[Plaque to honour Captain Tom unveiled at Airedale Hospital | Airedale NHS Foundation Trust \(airedale-trust.nhs.uk\)](http://airedale-trust.nhs.uk)

[Armed Forces Bill - Parliamentary Bills - UK Parliament](#)

[Strengthening the Covenant in Legislation - Armed Forces Covenant](#)

[Members of the Armed Forces community by residence type ONS data](#)

[Pupil premium: allocations and conditions of grant 2020 to 2021](#)

[Working age UK Armed Forces Veterans in England and Wales](#)

[Location of armed forces pension and compensation recipients: 2021 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#) [Location of Armed Forces pension scheme](#)

[Release plans - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](http://ons.gov.uk)

[Defence Employer Recognition Scheme - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

[Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy: further information on eligibility criteria, offer details and how to apply - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

[Businesses who have signed the Armed Forces Covenant - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

[Healthcare for the armed forces community - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](http://www.nhs.uk)

[Veteran friendly GP practices \(rcgp.org.uk\)](http://rcgp.org.uk)

[Veteran Friendly GP practices register](#)

[Veterans Covenant Healthcare Alliance – Veterans Covenant Healthcare Alliance \(veteranaware.nhs.uk\)](http://veteranaware.nhs.uk)

[Armed forces access to Jobcentre Plus services - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

[Armed Forces & Veterans Breakfast Clubs – We Are The Only Official Armed Forces and Veterans Breakfast Clubs \(afvbc.net\)](http://afvbc.net)

[Armed Forces & Veterans Breakfast Clubs \(AFVBC\) are run by Veterans for Veterans and for the benefit of veterans](#)

[Service pupil premium \(SPP\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

[West Yorkshire Service Pupil Premium Resource Directory | Bradford Council](#)

[RFCA Yorkshire \(rfca-yorkshire.org.uk\)](http://rfca-yorkshire.org.uk)

[Improving access to social housing for members of the Armed Forces - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

Appendix 1 Bradford District Armed Forces Covenant Partner Membership

The Partnership will be jointly chaired by the Council's Armed Forces Champion and the Armed Forces representative. Membership will include:

- Armed Forces representative
- Elected Member Armed Forces Champion
- The Royal British Legion
- Yorkshire and Humber Veterans Pensions and Advisory Committee
- West Yorkshire SSAFA
- Bradford District Care Trust
- Airedale NHS Foundation Trust
- Bradford Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
- Airedale, Bradford and Leeds NHS Cluster
- Job Centre Plus
- Incommunities
- Bradford District Credit Union
- Community Action Bradford & District (X3)
- West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service
- West Yorkshire Police Service
- Local Councils representatives – Town and Parish Councils (x2)
- Assistant Director of Neighbourhood and Customer Services
- Yorkshire Housing
- Representative for the Lord-Lieutenants

Other organisations that sign the Covenant Pledge will be invited to join the Partnership and provide representatives as appropriate.

Appendix 2 Bradford District Armed Forces Covenant Pledge

THE BRADFORD DISTRICT COMMUNITY COVENANT 30th JANUARY 2012

The People of the United Kingdom
Her Majesty's Government

And

All those who serve or have served in the Armed Forces of the Crown
And their Families

The first duty of Government is the defence of the realm. Our Armed Forces fulfil that responsibility on behalf of the Government, sacrificing some civilian freedoms, facing danger and, sometimes, suffering serious injury or death as a result of their duty. Families also play a vital role in supporting the operational effectiveness of our Armed Forces. In return, the whole nation has a moral obligation to the members of the Naval Service, the Army and the Royal Air Force, together with their families. They deserve our respect and support, and fair treatment.

Those who serve in the Armed Forces, whether Regular or Reserve, those who have served in the past, and their families, should face no disadvantage compared to other citizens in the provision of public and commercial services. Special consideration is appropriate in some cases, especially for those who have given most such as the injured and the bereaved.

This obligation involves the whole of the City of Bradford Metropolitan District: it includes NHS organisations, voluntary and charitable bodies, private organisations, and the actions of individuals in supporting the Armed Forces. Recognising those who have performed military duty unites the District and demonstrates the value of their contribution.

This has no greater expression than in upholding this Covenant.

Appendix 3 Bradford District Partnership Action Plan

The following actions have been identified by members of the Partnership as key areas of focus.

Ref No	Identified Priority	Action	Action Lead(s)	Projected Timeline	Update/ Progress
1.a)	Research into the reasons why there has been a reduction in the take-up of support by members of the Armed Forces Community throughout the pandemic (specifically noted within the Association Trusts and the Armed Forces Charities)	Letter to be drafted and sent to Forces charities on behalf of the Partnership to confirm their take-up of support through the pandemic Nationally SSAFA are undertaking research to help understand the drop in referrals. For the Partnership to consider this research when it is produced	Lt Col Davies Gemma Paine	August 2021	Letter sent
1.b)	Partners to work with the Armed Forces Community to help them overcome barriers accessing support, such as pride				
2.	Creating a data sharing link between Partnership members to build a wider picture of support available for the Armed Forces Community	Liaise with Bradford Council IT services to develop a SharePoint for the Partnership as a site for Partners to share key information and updates about their services and as a platform to host the	Gemma Paine to contact Bradford Council IT		

		new Partnership action plan			
3. a)	To promote the Covenant locally as a Partnership showing the support that is available and the work that has been achieved through joint working	For key information and updates from each Partnership members service/ organisation to be circulated across the Partnership Partners whose service/ organisation has signed the Covenant to advertise this where appropriate on their websites	All Partnership members to send key information to Gemma Paine who will distribute across the Partnership All Partners		
3. b)	The Partnership to look to host an annual awareness session for the Bradford District to show their progress and highlight/ raise awareness of the Armed Forces Covenant and needs and experiences of the Armed Forces Community				
4.	Cross-Partnership development of Armed Forces Awareness training	Request for Partnership volunteers to take part in a working group to develop	Gemma Paine to email Partnership members		

		training			
5.a)	Identification of members who are missing from the Partnership	If Partners come across other Armed Forces organisations that they feel that it would be beneficial to invite to future Partnership meeting, please contact Gemma for further discussion and consideration.	All Partners		
5.b)	Update the Partnership Terms of Reference				
5.c)	Renew links with members on the current Partnership list				
5.d)	Consider if there are wider West Yorkshire links that can be made to support the work of the Partnership				
6.	Publicise the work of the Partnership and the support that is available from Partner members locally	Bradford District Armed Forces Covenant Partnership section to be added to the Bradford Council Armed Forces web pages			
7.	Develop and publicise case studies around members of the Armed Forces Community	The Royal British Legion are in the process of producing	Gemma Paine to email and		

	who have successful received support.	<p>local case studies, to confirm if these can be shared</p> <p>Letter to be drafted and sent to Forces charities on behalf of the Partnership in action point 1 to also include a call for case studies</p> <p>Continue to discuss and share case studies as a Partnership where members of the Armed Forces Community have been supported to access services or overcome barriers. This action also links with no 4.</p>	confirm		
8.	Identify 'task' groups to implement action plan priorities				
9.	Support members of the partnership wanting to gain Defence Employment Recognition Scheme Awards at all levels.				
9. b)	Develop and implement a process in place to offer				

	support to district companies and organisations that have recently signed the Covenant				
10.	The Partnership to nominate businesses and organisations annually during the Armed Forces Covenant signing sessions with the Reserve Forces and Cadets Association (RFCA)				
11.	The Partnership to work with the Mayor's Office to support Armed Forces Day locally and the promotion of the Armed Forces Covenant				

Bradford District Armed Forces Covenant

Partnership

Terms of Reference

1. Introduction

The Armed Forces Covenant is a voluntary statement of mutual support between a civilian community and its local Armed Forces Community. It is intended to complement the Armed Forces Covenant, which outlines the moral obligation between the Nation, the Government and the Armed Forces, at the local level.

The purpose of this Covenant is to encourage support for the Armed Forces Community working and residing in Bradford District and to recognise and remember the sacrifices made by members of this Armed Forces Community, particularly those who have given the most. This includes in-Service and ex-Service personnel their families and widow(er)s in Bradford District.

For the City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council and partner organisations, the Covenant presents an opportunity to bring their knowledge, experience and expertise to bear on the provision of help and advice to members of the Armed Forces Community. It also presents an opportunity to build upon existing good work.

For the Armed Forces Community, the Covenant encourages the integration from Service life into civilian life and encourages members of the Armed Forces Community to help their local community.

2. Purpose and responsibility of the Partnership

The Armed Forces Covenant Partnership will:

- i. Seek to promote the signing of the Covenant by partner organisations and members of the charitable and voluntary sectors and ensure that the commitments made are adhered to.
- ii. Establish a joint action plan and identify resources to support projects and work which strengthen the ties between members of the Armed Forces Community and the wider community in Bradford District.
- iii. Monitor the impact of the Covenant and ensure that its aims are met.
- iv. Work to ensure that members of the Armed Forces Community have equal access to services and are treated with respect and in an equitable manner throughout the District.
- v. Create sub-groups as appropriate to support implementation of the Covenant and assign decision-making responsibility to those sub-groups in line with delegated

tasks. Sub-groups will be supported with specific terms of reference to support their role.

- In particular, to form sub-groups as follows:
 - a. **Bradford Council Working Group:** To support the development and the implementation of the Bradford District Covenant Action Plan within the local authority. Membership to this sub-group to be:

Assistant Director of Neighbourhood and Customer Services
Armed Forces Covenant Officer
Elected Member Armed Forces Champion
Representatives from across the Council's departments as and when their expertise are required

The Working Group will meet as it deems necessary and be coordinated by the Armed Forces Covenant Officer.

- vi. Use Armed Forces celebratory events across the District to promote the Covenant.
- vii. Produce an annual progress report for submission to the Council's Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee as requested.

3. Responsibility of Partner organisations

The commitment of any specific organisation's resources can only be made by that organisation's representative.

- i. Ensure their own organisations and staff are aware of the Covenant and take action as appropriate to meet decisions made through the Partnership.
- ii. Provide awareness and training sessions for their own staff.
- iii. Provide resources as they have agreed to support the operation of the Partnership.
- iv. Be advocates for the Armed Forces Covenant both within their own organisations and externally - raising awareness and context of the Covenant.

4. Frequency of Meetings

To meet at least three times per year and ranged to support preparations for Armed Forces Day and also Remembrance Day.

5. Membership

The Partnership will be jointly chaired by the Council's Armed Forces Champion and the Armed Forces representative. Membership will include:

- Armed Forces representative
- Elected Member Armed Forces Champion
- South and West Yorkshire County Royal British Legion
- Bradford Group Royal British Legion

- Yorkshire and Humber Veterans Pensions and Advisory Committee
- West Yorkshire SSAFA
- Bradford District Care Trust
- Airedale NHS Foundation Trust
- Bradford Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
- Airedale, Bradford and Leeds NHS Cluster
- Job Centre Plus
- Incommunities
- Bradford District Credit Union
- Community Action Bradford & District
- West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service
- West Yorkshire Police Service
- Local Councils representatives – Town and Parish Councils
- Assistant Director of Neighbourhood and Customer Services
- Yorkshire Housing
- Representative for the Lord-Lieutenants
- Representatives from the Lord Mayor’s Faith Advisory Group *pending confirmation*

Other organisations that sign the Covenant Pledge will be invited to join the Partnership and provide representatives as appropriate.

6. Executive Committee

The Executive Committee will support the Partnership by:

- Setting the agendas for Partnership meetings
- Dealing with ad hoc issues as they arise within parameters agreed by the Partnership
- Reporting back on activities to Partnership meetings
- Tasking the Bradford Council Working Group as required between Partnership meetings
- Seeking progress reports from any sub-groups as necessary between Partnership meetings
- Providing advice as requested to the Bradford Council Working Group and any other sub-groups that the Partnership creates
- Determining and calling extraordinary meetings of the Partnership as deemed necessary

Membership of the Executive Committee

- Armed Forces representative
- Council Armed Forces Champion
- Assistant Director of Neighbourhood and Customer Services
- Armed Forces Officer

The Executive may seek advice and support from any other representatives from the Partnership as and when required.

7. Reporting arrangements

The Partnership and its members will report to:

- District Partnerships
- The Council Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee and other council committees for information and to inform them about current Armed Forces Community issues
- To the local Armed Forces Community
- Within their own organisation and structures.

End.



West Yorkshire Armed Forces Covenant Survey Spring 2020

Members of the Armed Forces Community and supporters across West Yorkshire were invited to take part in a survey throughout Spring 2020.

The survey aimed to:

- Gauge awareness of the Armed Forces Covenant
- Build a picture of services accessed both inside and outside the Council by the Armed Forces community



Individuals responded to the survey



Individuals lived across the West Yorkshire area and beyond



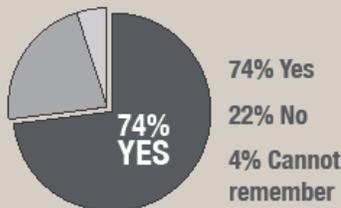
Individuals told us there are many ways they support the Armed Forces Community such as, through currently or previously serving in the Forces themselves, buying a Poppy or attending Remembrance Day events.

Awareness of the Armed Forces Covenant

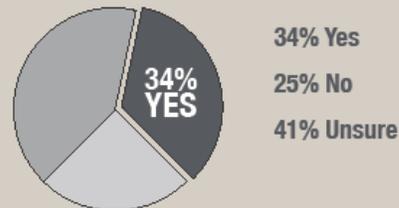
The Armed Forces Covenant is a promise by the nation to ensure that those who serve or who have served in the Armed Forces as a Regular or Reservist, and their families, are treated fairly.

You can find more information about the Armed Forces Covenant at www.armedforcescovenant.org.uk

Had you heard of the Armed Forces Covenant before completing the survey?



Individuals who had an awareness of the Armed Forces Covenant and were currently employed were asked 'Has your employer signed the Armed Forces Covenant?'



Services accessed by the Armed Forces Community*

Armed Forces Charities

Of those who accessed charities, the Royal British Legion and SSAFA were accessed most frequently. Many more charities were also mentioned in the survey.

Social Support

Of those who attended social support groups, respondents mainly accessed Regimental Association events, Breakfast Clubs and Royal British Legion Meetings and events.

Other services accessed both inside and outside the Council

Of those who attended additional support services in the last five years, GP services were accessed the most frequently.

Access to Local Information

75% of respondents told us they like to access their information online. 25% like to access their information in paper form, through leaflets and posters

For further information around support within your local area, please visit your local Council's website and type 'Armed Forces' in the search bar

* Nearly half of all respondents indicated that they hadn't approached any services