

Report of:	To:	Date
Councillor Peter Le Marinel	Council	15 September 2022

Periodic Report - Armed Forces Champion

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 To inform the Council of the current position on various issues relating to the Armed Forces Covenant and Community.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Council has been a signatory of the Armed Forces Community Covenant since 25 June 2012. On 23 June 2022, Wyre Council re-signed the updated Armed Forces Covenant.
- 2.2 The Armed Forces Covenant is a promise by the nation that those who serve and have served, and their families, should be treated fairly. The Covenant was enshrined in law in the 2021 Armed Forces Act and ensures that members of the Armed Forces community are not disadvantaged as a result of their service when accessing Government and commercial services. Special consideration is also appropriate in some cases, especially for those who have given most, such as the injured and bereaved. The Government, local authorities, the wider public sector, charities, commercial organisations and civil society all have a role in supporting the Armed Forces community. This includes in areas such as employment, healthcare, housing, education, and financial advice.
- 2.3 Johnny Mercer MP was appointed Minister of State (Minister for Veterans' Affairs) at the Cabinet Office on 7 July 2022 with responsibility for championing veterans' interests at the heart of government. This appointment is to highlight the outstanding contribution veterans from all walks of life are already making to our economy and society, ensuring no individual who needs help is left behind after they leave service. The Strategy for our Veterans was jointly published by the UK, Scottish and Welsh Governments in November 2018.

3. Armed Forces Covenant and Community Activity in Wyre

- 3.1 I have reported previously that in January 2020, Wyre Council established an Armed Forces Covenant Network Group to drive forward the Armed Forces Covenant agenda and to engage with the Armed Forces community in Wyre. The Covid-19 pandemic in March 2020 hampered regular meetings. However since the end of lockdown, the

network group has met on two occasions and has picked up the action plan from where it was paused in March 2020.

- 3.2** In August 2020 Wyre Council achieved the Ministry of Defence Employer Recognition Scheme silver award after achieving bronze in 2019 in recognition for Wyre Council's commitment to ensuring that members of the Armed Forces community are not disadvantaged by their service when employing veterans and the partners of service personnel. This includes supporting Reservist employees to meet their training commitments and by continuing to help service leavers as they make their transition back into civilian life.
- 3.3** In order for the council to work towards achieving the gold award, there is a requirement to maintain the recognised silver standard and continue to meet the required criteria expected prior to applying for the gold award.
- 3.4** Currently there are Armed Forces (AF) engagement projects being run by Fleetwood, Blackpool and Fylde football clubs. These are funded by the AF Covenant Trust Fund and provide activities for the AF community. The coordinators offer a referral/signposting service to Veterans in need. A thriving and informative Facebook group for the armed forces community on the Fylde Coast has been set up and has recently exceeded 600 members.
- 3.5** Wyre is fortunate to have a Veterans outreach project worker. Funded by Lancashire County Council (LCC) via the LCC Armed Forces Champion, Cllr Alf Clempson. Dave Whitworth the project lead continues to act as an advocate and support worker for Veterans in need across the Fylde Coast.
- 3.6** Since 2018, LCC and UCLAN have jointly run an Armed Forces Covenant team to coordinate strategy and work with practitioners and projects across Lancashire. Wyre's Armed Forces Champion and support officer have regularly attended virtual meetings during lockdown to ensure Wyre maintains representation and focus around the Armed Forces Agenda.
- 3.7** On 23 May 2022, a parade to commemorate the granting of the freedom of the borough to the Duke of Lancaster's Regiment was held. Residents were invited to watch the parade through Poulton-le-Fylde and line the streets to celebrate and cheer on the Regiment.
- 3.8** The Freedom of a town or city is an honour given by a local council to a military unit in recognition of their exceptional service and as a sign of mutual respect. The event was especially significant as the Regiment's Colonel-in-Chief, Her Majesty The Queen, celebrated her Platinum Jubilee this year.

4. Future National Strategy and Legislation

- 4.1 I have reported previously that the Armed Forces Covenant is being further incorporated into law and further information regarding the new legislation and duties delegated to Local Authorities will be included in future reports.

Financial and legal implications	
Finance	There are no financial implications directly associated with this report.
Legal	There are no legal implications directly associated with this report.

Other risks/implications: checklist

If there are significant implications arising from this report on any issues marked with a ✓ below, the report author will have consulted with the appropriate specialist officers on those implications and addressed them in the body of the report. There are no significant implications arising directly from this report, for those issues marked with a x.

risks/implications	✓ / x
community safety	x
equality and diversity	x
sustainability	x
health and safety	x

risks/implications	✓ / x
asset management	x
climate change	x
ICT	x
data protection	x

Processing Personal Data

In addition to considering data protection along with the other risks/ implications, the report author will need to decide if a 'privacy impact assessment (PIA)' is also required. If the decision(s) recommended in this report will result in the collection and processing of personal data for the first time (i.e. purchase of a new system, a new working arrangement with a third party) a PIA will need to have been completed and signed off by Data Protection Officer before the decision is taken in compliance with the Data Protection Act 2018.

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List of background papers:		
name of document	date	where available for inspection
None		

List of appendices

None