

Report of: Leader of the Council

Meeting of	Date	Ward(s)
Council	20 September 2018	All

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Islington Armed Forces Community Covenant: Annual Update

1 Synopsis

- 1.1 Islington Council is committed to recognising and celebrating the valuable contribution made by the Armed Forces, and to supporting veterans and their families in times of need. In June 2013, the Council signed the Islington Armed Forces Community Covenant, and agreed a package of measures to demonstrate how the spirit of the covenant would be delivered in practice. This report summarises activity over the past year.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 To note activity over the past year to celebrate and support Armed Forces personnel, veterans and their families.

3 Background

- 3.1 The Armed Forces Covenant is a national agreement which sets out the relationship between the nation, the state and the Armed Forces. It recognises that the whole nation has a moral obligation to members of the Armed Forces and their families and establishes how they should expect to be treated. It applies to both current and ex-Forces personnel and their families, with a view to redressing the disadvantages that the Armed Forces community faces in comparison to other citizens, and recognising the sacrifices they have made.
- 3.2 In addition to the national Covenant, the government has encouraged local authorities, their partners, and military organisations to sign their own Armed Forces Community Covenants, setting out how they will work together to celebrate and support the Armed Forces community within their areas.
- 3.3 Islington Council and its partners signed the Islington Armed Forces Community Covenant in June 2013, and the council backed this up by committing to a package of measures to

celebrate and support Forces personnel in the borough. Details are set out at Appendix A and on our website at <https://www.islington.gov.uk/advice/armed-forces-support>

- 3.4 The government has also established the Covenant Fund, with £10 million a year available for projects across the country which support the ambitions of the Armed Forces Covenants.

4 The Armed Forces population in Islington

Military presence

- 4.1 Islington is home to the Honourable Artillery Company, one of the oldest military organisations in the world. The HAC, which is based in the south of the borough, is now a registered charity whose purpose is to support the defence of the realm. It supports the HAC Regiment, which is the oldest regiment in the British Army and now a renowned regiment within the Territorial Army. It also supports a detachment of the City of London Special Constabulary, plus a number of other charitable activities. The Company consists of 2,500 members, around 400 of whom are actively serving with the HAC regiment or the detachment of Special Constabulary. The remainder are veterans of the HAC Regiment or other military or police services.

Resident population

- 4.2 There is very little data collected on numbers of Armed Forces personnel or veterans at local authority level. The last Census in 2011 identified 75 Islington residents who were, at that time, employed in the Armed Forces. However, the Census did not record details of veterans. The Council has supported a Royal British Legion campaign to capture this data in the next Census to enable a clearer picture of the veteran population.
- 4.3 Latest data from the Annual Schools Census (January 2018), indicates that there are less than 5 pupils across Islington's schools who are from Forces families. Schools are required to capture data on children of service personnel through the annual census as these pupils are eligible for the Pupil Premium.

Street population

- 4.4 The Greater London Authority (GLA) publishes data on rough sleeping across London. Information is derived from the Combined Homelessness and Information Network (CHAIN), a multi-agency database recording information about rough sleepers and the wider street population in London. People are categorised as rough sleeping if they have been encountered by an outreach worker bedded down on the street or in an open space 'not designed for habitation'. The reports do not include 'hidden homeless', for instance those who are 'sofa surfing'.
- 4.5 The CHAIN report for 2017-18 recorded 140 people seen rough sleeping by outreach teams in Islington between April 2017 and March 2018, only 4 of whom had experience of the armed forces.

Prison population

- 4.6 In 2015, the Ministry of Justice began identifying veterans as they entered the prison service, following concerns about the management of ex-service personnel arising from a review of the criminal justice system. Islington has one prison, HMP Pentonville, which takes men aged 18 plus from local courts in the catchment area. The prison has a population of just under 1,300. Feedback from the Governor of HMP Pentonville is that there is currently only 1 inmate with a known Forces history.

5 Islington Armed Forces Covenant – activity over the past year

- 5.1 The commitments set out by the Council to honour the Islington Armed Forces Community Covenant focus upon:
- Recognition, celebration and remembrance: championing the Armed Forces, formally marking important events and celebrating achievements and sacrifices
 - Grants for local projects and organisations
 - Support for veterans and their families: financial support, access to council housing, employment and skills support, and help with health and social care needs
- 5.2 Highlights and activity to meet these commitments over the past year are set out below.

6 Recognition, celebration and remembrance

- 6.1 Each year, the Council nominates an elected councillor as its Armed Forces Champion. The current champion is Cllr Gary Poole. His role includes attending meetings of the Youth Organisations in Uniform (YOU) forum and celebration and commemorative events, and championing and supporting Armed Forces and veterans in Islington.

Marking and commemorating key events

- 6.2 During the past year, the Council has recognised and celebrated a number of significant events related to the Armed Forces including:
- Remembrance Day Service and Parade on 12 November 2017
 - Raising of the Armed Forces Flag on 25 June at the Town Hall, followed by the Armed Forces Day Parade on 30 June 2018
 - Commemoration events for Islington born recipients of the Victoria Cross
- 6.3 These events were attended by the Leader, Mayor and Executive Members of the Council together with senior council officers.
- 6.4 In addition to the events listed above, the Mayor has attended:
- Launch of the Armed Forces Breakfast at Fish Central with Islington Veterans in February 2018
 - Laying of Victoria Cross Paving Stone for Sgt Booth at Islington Green in March 2018
 - Raising of the St George's Flag at the Town Hall on St George's Day (23 April 2018) with Members of the Honourable Artillery Company and Pikemen and Musketeers
 - ANZAC Day Commemoration (25 April) with Islington Veterans Association at Islington Green
 - Honourable Artillery Company Open Day in May 2018
 - Service of Remembrance and Dedication with Cllr Poole on 31 May 2018 to mark the Centenary of the Destruction of the St John Ambulance Brigade Hospital in Etaples in 1918. The service was also attended by HRH The Duke of Gloucester, Grand Prior of The Order of St John
 - "London Remembers WW1" on 1 September with Cllr Poole at the Royal Hospital Chelsea. This was organised by the Reserve Forces' and Cadets' Association for Greater London – the commemoration was a Drumhead Service which is a traditional military religious service using drums as a makeshift altar

Preparing for World War I centenary commemorations

- 6.5 During the past year, a range of activity has taken place across the Council to prepare for the WWI centenary commemorations in November 2018.

- 6.6 A key priority has been to campaign for and secure the restoration of the Memorial Arch at Manor Gardens, ideally in time for the WWI commemorations. The Memorial Arch, which is at the site of the former Royal Northern Hospital at Manor Gardens, is the old Metropolitan Borough of Islington's war memorial, and marks the 1,307 Islingtonians who gave their lives in the Great War of 1914-18. This site has since been redeveloped by Bellway Homes.
- 6.7 Last year, the Council wrote to Bellway Homes asking for their help in restoring the memorial to good condition and enabling public access. However, the Memorial, which is a Grade II Listed war memorial, continues to be in poor condition and remains on the Heritage at Risk register, the only war memorial currently on this register.
- 6.8 In April 2018 the council commissioned a Conservation Report from an architect with a specialist knowledge of historic structures. The report suggested that the current poor condition of the memorial was largely attributed to its treatment during the demolition of the surrounding hospital buildings and its incorporation into the residential development carried out by Bellway Homes circa 1998.
- 6.9 The Council is planning to talk to the War Memorial's Trust to explore the potential for them to contribute grant funding towards restoration of the memorial. However, even if they do agree, the Trust will only award grants of up to £30,000 and up to 75% of the cost of restoring the monument. The Leader has therefore sent a further letter (10 September 2018), co-signed by the Armed Forces Champion and the Executive Member for Economic Development, asking Bellway Homes to match any grant funding that the Council secures from the War Memorials Trust up to a maximum of £30,000 in order to restore the Memorial Arch and facilitate public access.
- 6.10 The Council is also in the process of purchasing a 'Tommy statue' as part of the 'There But Not There' campaign organised by the charity, Remembered. There But Not There's campaign objectives are to commemorate the Fallen, highlighting the sacrifices made by so many through Tommy installations across the country; to educate all, particularly our younger generation, to help them understand why and how 888,246 British and Commonwealth service personnel lost their lives; and to help heal those suffering from the hidden wounds of post-traumatic stress disorder and other legacies of recent combat operations, by raising funds for beneficiary charities. The statue of a soldier will be displayed at Islington Green as part of this year's range of activities that will mark the centenary of the end of WW1. The Mayor has also written to other organisations and business groups in the borough to encourage them to purchase and display statues.
- 6.11 Further events and activities are planned for October/November 2018 when we will be marking the centenary of the end of WW1. Remembrance Day on Sunday 11 November will include a Beacon Lighting in Dartmouth Park at 7.00pm as part of the Nation's Tribute WW1 Beacons of Light.

Contribution of key Council services

- 6.12 This year, the Council's Parks Service has been recognised for the support it has provided over the years in helping to organise both Remembrance Sunday and Armed Forces Day events on Islington Memorial Green, Highbury Fields, Manor Gardens and Spa Green. The Parks services has also consulted and worked with the Veterans on smaller projects and events including Anzac Day, the bedding display to celebrate 100 years of the Suffragette movement and the Veterans' Breakfast Club. The team was presented with a handmade plaque of gratitude from the Islington Veterans Association.
- 6.13 The Heritage Team ensures Islington's history and the achievements of veterans are highlighted and remembered. During the past year, events have taken place to commemorative four Islington born war heroes awarded the Victoria Cross:

- 8 December 2017 a VC commemorative paving stone event at Islington Green. Corporal Charles Train VC
- 6 March 2018: civic memorial service for Sgt Frederick Booth (paving stone laid in Islington Memorial Green in 2017)
- 21 March 1918: Double VC commemorative paving stone event at Islington Green. Lance Corporal John Sayer VC and Lieutenant Colonel Frank Roberts. This event featured on BBC London TV news

- 6.14 The Council's Media Team plays a key role in highlighting, communicating and commemorating the contribution of the Armed Forces. During the past year there have been a wide range of news releases, articles and tweets, with a strong focus on WWI to mark the centenary.
- 6.15 In addition to press releases, Facebook posts and tweets on all of the above events, there have also been articles in Islington Life (the Council's magazine) on Islington during the First World War, and on the Victoria Cross memorial stones. Some stories have been picked up by the Islington Gazette and BBC London News.
- 6.16 The council continues to host an online Book of Remembrance, which commemorates over 13,000 men, women and children of Islington who died as a result of war here and abroad – from 1899 (the beginning of the Boer War) to the 1950s. The book can be found at <http://bookofremembrance.islington.gov.uk/BookOfRemembrance>.

7 Grants and funding

Local Initiatives Fund

- 7.1 The Local Initiatives Fund provides small grants to local projects put forward by ward councillors. Each year, the councillors of St Mary's Ward have awarded funding to the Islington Veteran's Association to organise Armed Forces Day, which takes place in June of each year. The sum applied for this year was for £960.
- 7.2 Local Initiatives Fund is also used to support youth projects, including Youth Organisations in Uniform (YOU). Over the past year, the Islington Sea Cadets have been awarded a total of £6,500 (£3,250 by St Mary's ward and £3,250 by Canonbury ward) to renovate their building. Funding will be used for fire safety improvements, ensuring that the building meets fire safety standards. The materials required for the upgrade have been donated by a building firm. Once refurbished and reopened, the Sea Cadets will provide a valuable element of an integrated youth offer alongside other organisations such as the Rose Bowl. The building will also be available for wider community use.

Armed Forces Community Covenant Grants Scheme

- 7.3 Each year, the government sets aside £10 million through its Covenant Fund to provide grants for projects across the country which benefit the Armed Forces and the community. Applications relating to Islington are endorsed by a local Islington Grants Scheme Panel before being forward to a London panel for decision and ongoing administration of the award.
- 7.4 At the Council meeting on the 24 May 2018, Councillor Kaya Comer-Schwartz and Councillor Gary Poole were nominated as the representatives to the Grant Schemes Panel. NB: the Panel has not been required to meet for some time as there have been no new applications. In fact, since the launch of the Community Covenant Grants Scheme in 2013, there have been fewer than five applications from organisations or projects in Islington.

8 Supporting veterans and their families

- 8.1 The Council has in place a range of measures and services to support vulnerable residents. This support is available to current or ex-Forces personnel and their families in times of need. Evidence to date is that there has been very little demand for support from veterans and their families. This is perhaps not surprising given the evidence of very low numbers who have resettled in Islington. However, it is vital that this support is there for those who need it.

Support for Forces children

- 8.2 The Leader, Cllr Watts, was invited to speak at the Royal British Legion's fringe event at the Labour Party Conference in September 2017, in his role as Chair of the LGA Children & Young People Board. He spoke as part of a panel, on the launch of the Royal British Legion's new best practice guide for schools on the challenges faced by Service pupils. Children of Forces personnel face additional challenges in schools admissions and their wellbeing can be affected by the absence of a parent who is away from home serving in the Armed Forces.
- 8.3 Cllr Watts stressed the importance of local authorities providing extra support for Service children's emotional wellbeing, and targeting extra support for specific groups of children, including Service children, face additional challenges. He also called for the government to provide further funding to local authorities to enable them to best support Service children, and to work with schools and the local community to do so.

Financial support

- 8.4 Our financial and benefits systems do not currently capture details of whether people are ex-Forces. However, we are able to identify those in receipt of War Pensions.
- 8.5 There are 11 veterans in receipt of War Pensions who are also in receipt of Housing Benefit, 10 of whom are also in receipt of Council Tax Support. These are mostly long-standing claims – the most recent being in January 2016.
- 8.6 Three of those in receipt of War Pensions are currently receiving financial support through Islington Social Services on a weekly basis to contribute towards the cost of home care, nursing or residential care.

Access to Council Housing

- 8.7 The Council awards additional points to war widows and injured or disabled ex-personnel, as one of the key commitments in the Covenant.
- 8.8 In terms of rehousing veteran, our data systems do not currently capture whether applicants for council housing are ex-Forces unless they are injured. During the last five years, there has been only one application from a seriously injured ex-serviceman - he and his family were successfully housed in 2013.
- 8.9 Our Housing Team will explore the potential to include a new field in their client database to identify applications from ex-Forces personnel for future reports.

Employment and skills support

- 8.10 The Council's Employment and Skills services have updated their client record systems to capture information on veterans and their families, to help reporting.
- 8.11 However, during the last year, there have been no veterans or their family members enrolling on learning and skills courses delivered by Adult & Community Learning. Similarly, the iWork team has had no requests from veterans or their families for Employment support during the past year.

Support with health and social care needs

- 8.12 The London Veterans service, funded by NHS England, is provided locally by Camden and Islington Foundation Trust and based at St Pancras Hospital. This is a pan-London resource. Data on the number of Islington veterans accessing support is not available.
- 8.13 In terms of locally commissioned support services, there are no health or social care services commissioned specifically for veterans in Islington, but they are able to access support through a range of targeted services.
- 8.14 A number of veterans have been treated through the Better Lives programme - an Integrated Drug and Alcohol Treatment service in Islington.

9 Conclusion

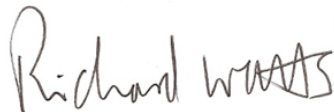
- 9.1 The commitments set out in our Armed Forces Covenant send an important message that the Council and its partners recognise and celebrate the achievements and sacrifices of our Armed Forces, and are able to offer practical support to veterans and their families in times of need to help them adjust to and resettle into civilian life.
- 9.2 Over the past year, the Council has led, organised and supported a wide range of activities to celebrate and commemorate the Armed Forces in Islington. And although evidence indicates that the number of ex-Forces personnel in Islington is low, with little demand for support, it is nonetheless important that we demonstrate our commitment and gratitude to veterans by maintaining that package of support should they ever need it.

Appendices: Islington Armed Forces Community Covenant: Council's Commitment

Background Papers: None

Final Report Clearance

Signed by



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Leader of the Council

07.09.18

Date

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Islington Armed Forces Community Covenant: Council's Commitment

On 29 June 2013 – Armed Forces Day – the Council signed up to the Islington Armed Forces Community Covenant. In doing so it recognised and pledged to promote the valuable contribution of and sacrifices made by the Armed Forces and to provide practical support to help serving and former members of the Armed Forces and their families living in Islington.

The Council already has in place a range of support services for residents, particularly for families on low incomes, disabled people, those with long term health conditions and vulnerable adults and children. Current and ex-serving personnel living in Islington will have access to the same services and support as other residents. This document sets out the commitments the Council has made, over and above the core offer, to support Armed Forces personnel and their families and recognise the contribution they make. We will honour our pledges in the community covenant through:

Financial support

The income of war widows and war disablement will be disregarded when calculating entitlement to:

- Housing Benefit
- Council Tax Support
- Access to financial support through the Resident Support Scheme

Payments to veterans under the War Pension Scheme will be fully disregarded in the financial assessment for social care charging, with the exception of payments of Constant Attendance Allowance, which may be taken into account.

Access to council housing

Our housing allocations policy has been amended to support Armed Forces personnel and their families applying for council housing in the following circumstances:

- Service personnel will not be affected by residency restrictions if they have to live outside Islington as part of their service
- Welfare Category B is an award of 80 points and may be awarded in to bereaved spouses or civil partners of those serving in the regular forces where the bereaved spouse or civil partner has recently ceased, or will cease to be entitled, to reside in Ministry of Defence accommodation following the death of their service spouse or civil partner, and the death was wholly or partly attributable to their service
- Welfare Category C is an award of 40 points and may be awarded to applicants whose welfare needs are comparable to former members of the regular forces
- Medical Category A gives the maximum 150 points and will be awarded to serving members of the regular forces who are suffering from a serious injury, illness or disability which is wholly or partly attributable to their service

Employment and skills support

Ex-forces personnel who are facing challenges in securing employment will be eligible for support through council employment programmes. This could include support in developing new skills and in accessing local vacancies. The discipline, resilience and team spirit of armed forces personnel could be a considerable incentive to employers.

The Council provides employment and skills support to vulnerable groups and / or those facing significant barriers as part of its commitment to tackle poverty and inequality in Islington.

Support for health and social care needs

The Council will provide:

- Mental Health First Aid training to Armed Forces organisations / charities enabling them to

recognise mental health issues and refer on to relevant support

- Alcohol awareness training to representatives of Armed Forces organisations / charities
- Support (both financial and practical) with housing adaptations – for those moving to private as well as council housing, and refer those with disabilities / longer term health conditions onto relevant support services

Appointment of an Armed Forces Champion

Each year the Council will formally nominate a councillor to be the Armed Forces Champion, ensuring good relationships with Armed Forces organisations in the borough and promoting engagement activities and support. The current Armed Forces Champion is Cllr Gary Poole.

Formally recognising the contribution of the Armed Forces

- The Armed Forces Flag will be flown on the roof of the Town Hall each year on Armed Forces Day
- A Veteran or Cadet of the Year Award will be launched during Armed Forces Week 2014 to highlight the contribution of individuals
- Freedom of the Borough has been awarded to:
 - The Honorary Artillery Company in 2009
 - Colonel Brian Kay, the former Deputy Lieutenant in 2010

Supporting 'Youth Organisations in Uniform'

Islington has a number of Air Training Corps, Army Cadets and Sea Cadets in the borough and the Islington Academy has just set up a Combined Cadet Force. The Council will support these positive activities for young people through:

- Active involvement of the Mayor in visiting and supporting the activities of the various cadet forces in Islington
- Access to funding for running costs and activities through the Council's two small grants schemes – the Local Initiatives Fund and Islington Community Chest
- Chiring meetings of Youth Organisations in Uniform (YOU) which brings together various organisations - the Cubs, Scouts, Boys Brigade etc. – to identify opportunities for sharing help and resources

Promote the Community Covenants Grants Scheme

The government has established a Covenant Fund, with £10m available per year for projects across the country which support the priorities of local Armed Forces Community Covenants, and which bring together the civilian and Armed Forces communities to promote integration and raise awareness of the contribution and sacrifices made by Forces personnel.

The scheme is administered on a regional basis. Applications can be submitted by any part of the community, including voluntary and community sector organisations / charities, community interest companies (CICs), local authorities and schools. Projects should deliver tangible results and meet the overall aims of the community covenant.

The Council will promote the Covenant Fund through its links with local Youth Organisations in Uniform (YOU), other voluntary and community sector organisations, statutory sector partners, schools and local businesses. The Council will also, through the Armed Forces Champion, convene a local panel to act as the Local Covenant Partnership (comprising senior Armed Forces / Council representatives) to review and support local bids to the Covenant Fund.

Islington Council will work closely with Armed Forces organisations to increase understanding of, and address issues faced by, serving and ex-personnel and to maximise awareness and take up of the commitments made through this covenant