

Meeting:	Council
Meeting Date:	12 December 2024
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Council Priority:	Empowering People
Wards:	All
Report of:	Leader of the Council

Subject: Islington Armed Forces Community Covenant – annual update

1. Recommendations

The Council are asked:

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

2. Report summary

- 2.1. 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](#). This report summarises the various ways that Islington has support the armed forces community in the past year.
- 2.2. 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 lower than average, 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.

3. Details

- 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. The government has also established the Covenant Fund, with £10 million a year available for projects across the country to support the ambitions of the Armed Forces Covenant.
- 3.3. 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.
- 3.4. 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 can offer practical support to veterans and their families in Islington in times of need to help them adjust to and resettle into civilian life.

Military presence

- 3.5. Islington is home to the Honorary Artillery Company (the oldest military organisation in the UK), and to 1,707 veterans according to the 2021 census.
- 3.6. Islington is home to the Honourable Artillery Company, the second-oldest military organisations in the world. It was established by Royal Charter in 1537 and has occupied its current site in the south of the borough since 1641. The HAC is a registered charity whose purpose is to support the defence of the realm. It supports the HAC Regiment (the oldest regiment in the British Army), a detachment of the City of London Special Constabulary, plus several 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

- 3.7. According to data from the 2021 Census, approximately 1,707 veterans live in Islington. This figure represents a small portion of the local population, with around 1% of Islington residents identified as veterans, compared to 3.8% of the population nationally. This is also below the London average of 1.4% of residents being veterans. Among these, 970 served in the regular armed forces, while 680 were in the reserves.

- 3.8. According to the January 2021 School Census data, there are fewer than 5 service children in Islington schools.

Street population

- 3.9. 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, managed by St Mungos, which captures data on people seen rough sleeping in each borough by outreach teams. 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'.
- 3.10. Figures from 2023/2024 show that in Islington, 10 people were seen rough sleeping who had been in the armed forces. This is a decrease from 2021/2022 when the figure was 17. This can be seen in Appendix B

Islington Armed Forces Covenant – Summary of commitments

- 3.11. 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
- 3.12. An update on activity in each of these areas is set out below.

Championing the Armed Forces

- 3.13. An update on activity in each of these areas is set out below.
- 3.14. Each year, the Council nominates an elected councillor as its Armed Forces Champion. The current champion is Cllr Marian Spall. Her 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.

Making and commemorating key events

- 3.15. Key events attended by the Mayor, Leader, or other Members and officers included:

Cllr Heather, Mayor of Islington for 2023/24, Deputy Mayor Cllr Khurana and Mayoress Cllr Tricia Clarke

Date	Who Attended	What was the event
04-Jul-23	Mayor	Islington Veterans' Association Meeting
21-Jul-23	Mayor and Mayoress	Islington Armed Forces Veterans Breakfast Club
10-Sep-23	Mayor	Wreath Laying Ceremony on the 55th anniversary of the unveiling of the Polish Air Force Memorial Plaque
12-Oct-23	Mayor	Rep DL Youth Cadet Certificate Event
16-Oct-23	Mayor and Mayoress	329 (Finsbury) Squadron RAFAC AGM
20-Oct-23	Mayor and Consort	Islington AFVBC
28-Oct-23	Mayor	Islington RBL Poppy Appeal Launch
09-Nov-23	Mayor and Mayoress	ICCS Service of Remembrance
10-Nov-23	Mayor	City Hall Service of Remembrance
12-Nov-23	Mayor and Mayoress, Deputy Mayor and Consort	Islington Green Service of Remembrance
12-Nov-23	Mayor and Mayoress	Spa Green Service of Remembrance
12-Nov-23	Mayor and Mayoress, Deputy Mayor and Consort	Manor Gardens Remembrance Community event
09-Dec-23	Mayor and Mayoress	IVA's annual Christmas lunch

06-Feb-24	Mayor and Mayoress	Islington Veterans' Association AGM
26-Feb-24	Mayor and Mayoress	Lunch at Royal Hospital
15-Mar-24	Mayor and Mayoress	Islington Armed Forces Veterans Breakfast Club
28-Mar-24	Mayor	IVA visit to the Town Hall
18-Apr-24	Mayor and Mayoress	Poppy Appeal Fundraising Presentation
19-Apr-24	Deputy Mayor and Cllr Spall	Islington Armed Forces Veterans Breakfast Club
25-Apr-24	Deputy Mayor and Cllr Jason Jackson	IVA's Gallipoli Day commemoration
Cllr Khurana, Mayor of Islington for 2024/25 and Consort Micky Khurana, Deputy Mayor Cllr Jackson and Consort Tatiana Jackson		
04-Jun-24	Mayor and Consort	Islington Veterans' Association Meeting
06-Jun-24	Mayor and Consort	80th D Day Anniversary wreath laying in the Town Hall
22-Jun-24	Mayor and Consort	IVA D Day Parade
22-Jun-24	Deputy Mayor and Consort	IVA D Day Dinner
24-Jun-24	Mayor	Armed Forces Week Flag Raising
29-Jun-24	Mayor and Consort	Armed Forces Day 2024 - Islington Veterans' Association event
16-Jul-24	Mayor	Cadet Certificate Presentation event

19-Jul-24	Deputy Mayor	Islington Armed Forces and Veterans' Breakfast Club
20-Sep-24	Mayor and Consort	Islington AFVBC
23-Sep-24	Mayor and Consort	Annual General Meeting of 329 (Finsbury) Squadron RAFAC
06-Oct-24	Deputy Mayor	Islington Poppy Appeal fundraiser
20-Oct-24	Mayor and Consort	Remembrance Service and Wreath Laying on the 56th Anniversary of the unveiling of the Polish Air Force Memorial Plaque - wreath required
02-Nov-24	Mayor	Islington Poppy Appeal collection
07-Nov-24	Mayor and Consort	ICCS Service of Remembrance
10-Nov-24	Mayor and Consort; Deputy Mayor and Consort	Remembrance Sunday Commemorations
11-Nov-24	Mayor	Armistice Day Commemorations, followed by refreshments in CR1
07-Dec-24	Deputy Mayor and Consort	IVA Christmas Function
20-Dec-24	Mayor and Consort	Islington AFVBC

Exhibitions and memorials

- 3.16. During the past year, our Libraries and Heritage Service have organised a range of activities to celebrate and commemorate the bravery and sacrifices of the Armed Forces during the two world wars.
- 3.17. Islington Museum has a temporary exhibition 'Our Islington: Art of the Borough' featuring two paintings by refugee artist Käthe Strenitz, who was evacuated from Prague at the beginning of World War II, and painted Islington and King's Cross throughout her career.

- 3.18. Islington Museum also has a permanent display in the museum highlighting the World Wars, spotlighting the home front efforts.
- 3.19. Prior to last year, our programming included:
- 2018 – Museum exhibition: Raids, Rations and Rifles: Islington during the First World War
 - 2016 – Museum exhibition: The Battle of the Somme – Searching for Hugh Victor Hember
 - 2015 – Heritage education project: The Streets They Left Behind Mapping Project
 - 2015 – Heritage education project: Finsbury Rifles in Gallipoli

Grants and Funding

Local Initiatives Fund

- 3.20. The Local Initiatives Fund is a pot of funding available to Islington Councillors to support events and projects in their wards or across Islington. The majority of the funding is allocated to local voluntary sector and community groups. These small amounts of money can make a huge difference to residents and communities.
- 3.21. In 2023-24, Local Initiatives Funding has been awarded to:
- Islington Veterans Association were also awarded £1214.38. This money will be used to host events to recognise and support veterans in Islington in partnership with the council and local businesses. These include events marking;
 - Armed Forces Week and Armed Forces Day (June)
 - Merchant Navy Day and Battle of Britain Day (Sept)
 - Trafalgar Day (Oct)
 - Armistice Day
 - Remembrance Sunday (Nov).
 - They also hold monthly membership meetings, attend other local festivals and launch the Poppy Appeal in October.
 - Funding is also used to pay for an armed forces breakfast, a brass band on Armed Forces Day (24 June 2023), annual insurance, software, newspaper adverts and internet costs.

Islington Community Chest

- 3.22. The Council also works in partnership with the Cripplegate Foundation to provide small grants through the Islington Community Chest.

Armed Forces Community Covenant Grants Scheme

- 3.23. Each year, the Government sets aside £10 million for the Armed Forces Covenant Fund, which supports initiatives that contribute towards the delivery of the Armed Forces Covenant. The Covenant Fund includes a Local Grants Programme, which

awards grants of up to £20,000 for projects that tackle community integration and delivery of local services.

- 3.24. There have been no applications from Islington organisations or for Islington-based projects in recent years. Details about the Covenant Fund, and how to apply for the Local Grants Programme, can be found at <https://www.covenantfund.org.uk/>.

Supporting veterans and their families

Financial support

- 3.25. The Council's Benefits Processing team provides financial support for vulnerable residents facing hardship in the form of Housing Benefit, Council Tax Support, Social Care, and Resident Support Scheme.
- 3.26. There are currently:
- Three residents receiving Housing Benefit
 - Five residents receiving Council Tax Support
 - No veterans or their families have requested support through our Resident Support Scheme over the past year.

Employment and skills

- 3.27. Armed Forces veterans and their families are a priority group for employment support through the Council's iWork team and the new Islington Working partnership. The service records whether a client has links to the Armed Forces when they are registered. Similarly, veterans are also a priority group for our Adult Learning Service. However, neither service has received any requests for support from veterans or their families over the past year.
- 3.28. Islington council Employment teams helped a veteran secure a permanent role in a hospital.

Health and social care needs

- 3.29. Data on whether a client has links to the Armed Forces is not routinely recorded. However, our Adult Social Care service does support some people who were previously in the Armed Forces, although the numbers are extremely low.
- 3.30. Social care records show that there are currently no residents who have an army or war pension with Islington provided social care needs.
- 3.31. Camden and Islington Mental Health Trust refer veterans through two specialist Veterans services, both commissioned by NHS England:
- NHS Veterans' Mental Health Transition, Intervention and Liaison services (TILs)
 - NHS Veterans' Mental Health Complex Treatment Service (CTS)

4. Other options considered and the reasons for recommending this proposal

4.1. Not applicable

5. Key impacts and risks of the proposal

5.1. Not applicable

6. Contribution to the Islington Together 2030 Plan

6.1. The note contributes to the vision to make Islington a fairer place. We believe everyone should have access to the same opportunities, whatever their background or situation.

6.2. Those that have served in the armed forces may require additional needs such as to return to work, and so our services and work aims to support them with their needs.

7. Consultation and community engagement

7.1. The past year has seen several significant anniversaries related to the Armed Forces, over and above the annual commemorations. The Council has played an active role in both planning and attending these important occasions to recognise the achievements and sacrifices of our Armed Forces.

8. Implications

Financial Implications

8.1. The £1,214.38 contribution Islington Council makes to the Islington Veterans Association is part of the Local Initiative Fund Budget of £238,000, part of the wider Voluntary Community Service budget of £2,173,200 which sits within the Community, Strategy and Change directorate.

8.2. There are no financial implications from the above report, and current contributions are within the core funded budget.

8.3. If there are any changes to contributions above the core budget funding, this will need to be agreed in a subsequent business case.

Legal Implications

- 8.4. The Armed Forces Act 2021 introduced a requirement for local authorities to pay due regard to the principles of the Armed Forces Covenant when carrying out specific public functions in the areas of housing, healthcare, and education.
- 8.5. The core principles of the Covenant are that all organisations (as defined in s.343AA (3) of the Armed Forces Act 2006 as amended) should have regard to:
- 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.
 - The principle that special provision for service people may be justified by the effects on such people of membership, or former

Climate Change and Environmental Implications

- 8.6. 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.
- 8.7. The report is not procuring any new services, simply summarising the various ways in which LBI has helped armed forces and their families over the last year.

Equalities Impact Assessment

- 8.8. The council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and to advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations, between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it (section 149 Equality Act 2010). The council has a duty to have due regard to the need to remove or minimise disadvantages, take steps to meet needs, in particular steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities, and encourage people to participate in public life. The council must have due regard to the need to tackle prejudice and promote understanding.
- 8.9. An Equalities Impact Assessment Screening was completed on the 11th of November and a full Equalities Impact Assessment is not required in relation to this report, because no negative impact was identified.

9. Timetable for implementation

- 9.1. Not applicable

Appendices:

- Appendix A: Islington Armed Forces Community Covenant

Relevant decisions / reports: N/A

Background papers: N/A

Report approval:

Authorised by: Leader of the Council

Date: 09/12/2024

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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 Marian Spall.

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