



Report of: **Leader of the Council**

Meeting of	Date	Ward(s)
Council	25 June 2015	All

Delete as appropriate	Exempt	Non-exempt
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Islington Armed Forces Community Covenant: annual update

1 Synopsis

- 1.1 On 29 June 2013, Armed Forces Day, the Council signed the Islington Armed Forces Community Covenant and pledged to develop practical ways to help armed forces personnel living and serving in Islington, and to recognise their contribution and achievements. Members asked the Chief Executive and Service Directors to report back each year prior to Armed Forces Day on how the Armed Forces community in Islington is being supported by the Council.
- 1.2 This report sets out the range of activity over the past year to promote and support the Armed Forces and events / priorities for the coming year.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 To note progress and events over the past year.
- 2.2 To raise awareness amongst local communities and organisations of the availability of funding through the Local Initiatives Fund to support Youth Organisations in Uniform and other activities which bring together military and local communities and support the priorities in Islington's Community Covenant.
- 2.3 To continue to support public events as set out in 5.4 and 5.5.

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 serving and former members of the Armed Forces and their families with a view to redressing the disadvantages that the Armed Forces community faces in comparison to other citizens and to recognising the sacrifices that they have made. Through the Covenant a range of measures have already been agreed to support the Armed Forces, including:
 - Council tax relief for serving personnel on six-month plus deployments;
 - Allowing schools to exceed maximum class sizes to accommodate children of serving personnel;
 - Money Force – a financial awareness and training website for Forces families.

- 3.2 In addition to the national Covenant, local authorities, their partners, and military organisations within the area are encouraged to sign up to an Armed Forces Community Covenant, setting out what can be done locally to:
- Encourage local communities to support the Armed Forces community in their areas;
 - Nurture understanding and awareness of issues affecting the Armed Forces community;
 - Recognise and remember the sacrifices faced by the Armed Forces community;
 - Encourage activities which help to integrate the Armed Forces community into local life;
 - Encourage the Armed Forces community to help and support the wider community, whether through participation in events and joint projects, or other forms of engagement.
- 3.3 Islington Council signed the Islington Armed Forces Community Covenant on 29 June 2013.
- 3.4 The government set aside funding (£30 million for the period 2012-15) for a Community Covenant Grants Scheme. This is available for projects across the country which will help to deliver the ambitions set out in local community covenants. The government has not yet confirmed if the funding will be extended.

4 Supporting our Armed Forces - progress in the past year

- 4.1 Since signing our Community Covenant in June 2013, further work has taken place to build on and understand what the pledge of Council support means in practice, develop arrangements to promote and manage applications to the Community Covenants Grants Scheme, and continue to organise events which engage with and recognise the contribution of our Armed Forces. Over the past 2 years we have:

Agreed a package of practical support

- 4.2 Measures include:
- *Financial support:* discounting war widows' and other benefits when calculating entitlement to financial support;
 - *Access to council housing:* additional points for war widows and those injured in service;
 - *Employment support:* ex-personnel struggling to find work will be able to get support from Islington Learning & Working (which includes Islington Working for Parents and Adult & Community Learning);
 - *Support for those with mental or physical health needs:* including Mental Health First Aid training for frontline services charities.
- 4.3 Full details of the Council's package of support to the Armed Forces through the Community Covenant are attached at Appendix A.

Personnel supported over the past year

- 4.4 We currently have 16 war pensioners in receipt of Housing and/or Council Tax support. All are living in social housing (either Council or Housing Association). Four of them are of working age.

Bids from Islington to the Community Covenant Grants Scheme

- 4.5 The Islington Panel approved an application from The Charlie F Project, to stage performances of a play called *The Two Worlds of Charlie F*. This was submitted to the regional panel who awarded it £69,925. Charlie F is about the experiences of wounded and injured soldiers, performed by them. It provides a personal account of their injuries and the impact that it has had on their lives, their families, the transition to civilian life and the civilian community.
- 4.6 Rowan Arts have also received £5,000 from the regional grant scheme to fund an interactive arts and education project comprising oral history, creative writing, a visual arts exhibition and film screenings. The project will explore what it means to be a soldier and how that is expressed in culture and the media versus the personal narratives of serving and former soldiers. The project is predominantly aimed at students from London Metropolitan University who will work closely with post-World War 2 veterans to produce filmed interviews of their experiences of war and return to civilian life. Together, the veterans and students will also run workshops with pupils from New River College Pupil Referral Unit.

Cascaded information on support and funding available

- 4.7 Information on the support offered through the Community Covenant and on the funding available through the Grants Scheme has been circulated to a wide range of services and partners including:
- Internal staff, particularly frontline services;
 - Key statutory sector partners including Jobcentre Plus, Housing Associations and NHS;
 - Voluntary and community sector groups – through Voluntary Action Islington;
 - Military organisations: the Honorary Artillery Company (HAC), Youth Organisations in Uniform, Islington Veterans' Association.
- 4.8 Representatives from Islington Council and the HAC also attended a cross-borough event hosted by Kensington & Chelsea to identify support needs of current and ex-forces personnel and share progress in developing local Armed Forces Community Covenants.
- 4.9 The council has continue to promote its support for armed forces personnel through a public webpage: <http://www.islington.gov.uk/advice/armed-forces-support/>

Observed significant events

- 4.10 The Armed Forces flag is flown annually on the roof of the Town Hall on St George's Day and on Armed Forces Day. On Remembrance Day a two minute silence is observed on the steps of the Town Hall, attended by veterans, local civic leaders including the Mayor, Leader of the Council and Chief Executive, council staff and members of the public.
- 4.11 Ceremony to award Islington Veterans Association Freedom of the Borough at the Awards Council meeting on Tuesday 10th March 2015.
- 4.12 Commemoration of the 100th anniversary of ANZAC day in April for the first time in the Borough.
- 4.13 Celebrating a Month of Peace in September 2014, with a theme of 'Faith & War', exploring with Islington schools the impact of war and the importance of peace. Activities included The Peace Cup, an inter-community football tournament.
- 4.14 The Council will be commemorating the 70th anniversary of VE Day with a lunch

for surviving WW2 veterans on 26th June at the Assembly Hall.

- 4.15 The Mayor has attended events at the HAC and strengthened our ties with them including a celebration of 100th anniversary of HM King George taking the Salute at the HAC and the HAC's Open Evening. The HAC have also attended events organised by the Council, including the Remembrance Parade and Service at Islington Green, St George's Day Flag Raising Ceremony and the Flag Raising Ceremony for Armed Forces Day.

Commemoration of World War 1

- 4.16 Summer 2014 started the official remembrance of 100 years since World War 1, which is planned to extend until 2018. The Council is working with partners and local communities to deliver a programme of events which will highlight the scale of the loss and lessons for future generations:
- *The Streets They Left Behind*: Islington Museum secured £85,000 Heritage Lottery funding for a project which will use data from the Book of Remembrance to explore the lives of families before war broke out, then the impact on women and families left behind when men went to war. Remembrance plaques are being installed on every street in Islington where soldiers from in World War 1 lived and grew up.
 - Islington Council Choir dedicated half of their summer concert to war songs commemorating the beginning of WW1 and the 70th anniversary of D-Day.
 - There are commemorative displays in all of Islington's libraries detailing some of the ways the First World War impacted on the local area, including an exhibition at Islington Museum on the Zeppelin and Gotha Raids 1915-1918.
 - The council has established a Pinterest page, "Islington 1914-1918", which provides an interactive educational platform for the public to engage with the history of the borough during WW1. Photos and images remember those who served on the front line as well as exploring everyday life in Islington during the War.
 - The council participated in the national "Lights Out" campaign on 4th August 2014, turning lights out in council buildings between 10-11pm and encouraging residents to do the same and put a candle in their windows to commemorate those who lost their lives in WW1. The campaign was inspired by the words of Sir Edward Grey, the Foreign Secretary in 1914, on the eve of War - "The lamps are going out all over Europe, we shall not see them lit again in our life-time". A formal service of commemoration to remember the 9,403 men (and 1 woman) from Islington who died in WW1 was also held on 4th August.
 - *Islington's Boy Soldiers*, the council, with funding from the Museum of London and the Arts Council, has created a short film documenting the stories of three young men from Islington who died in World War 1 before reaching their 18th birthdays.

5 Supporting our Armed Forces through local communities – forthcoming projects

Remembrance of World War 1 in Islington

- 5.1 *Victoria Cross Commemorative Paving Stone scheme*: Between 1914 and 1918, 5 soldiers born in Islington were awarded the Victoria Cross, the UK's highest award

for valour “in the face of the enemy”. Over the course of the next 5 years, Islington will take part in the government’s Victoria Cross Commemorative Paving Stone scheme, with 5 commemorative paving stones being unveiled by the War Memorial at Islington Green. The first paving stone will be unveiled in July 2015.

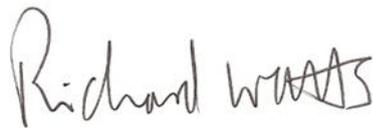
- 5.2 *Gallipoli*: with funding from the Gallipoli Association, Gallipoli will work with 5 schools teaching them about the Allied and Turkish roles through contemporary music and storytelling to help them understand the contribution of the Armed Forces.
- 5.3 *The Somme 1916/2016*: Islington residents can uncover their own family links with World War 1 through *The Somme 1916/2016* and bring forward memorabilia and letters, emphasising the local aspect of World War 1 and the part local Armed Forces played.
- 5.4 *The Widows of Islington 2017*: With over 1,500 women widowed in the borough this project will focus on the plight of war widows in Islington during World War 1 in Islington.

Events that celebrate the contribution the Armed Forces make and bring together the armed forces and local community

- 5.5 The council should continue to support public events and ceremonies including St George’s Day, Armed Forces week, Remembrance Sunday.
- 5.6 The council should continue to engage with the HAC at their Open Evening and other events.

Final Report Clearance

Signed by



17 June 2015

Leader of the Council

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

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 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 Community Covenants Grant Scheme, with £10m available per year for projects across the country which support the priorities of local Armed Forces Community Covenants and 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 but bids must be signed off at local level before being submitted to the regional panel. Applications can be submitted by any part of the community, including voluntary and community sector organisations / charities, public sector bodies, schools, etc. Projects should deliver tangible results and meet the overall aims of the community covenant scheme.

The Council will:

- Promote the Community Covenants Grants Scheme through its links with local voluntary and community sector organisations, statutory sector partners, schools and local businesses
- Convene a local panel, comprising senior Armed Forces / Council, to endorse local bids
- Administer the grants process, from receiving bids through the making payments for those which are successful, and publish on its website details of how to apply, and of successful local bids

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