

Report of: Leader of the Council

Meeting of: Council

Date: 13 July 2023

Islington Armed Forces Community Covenant – Annual Update

1. Synopsis

- 1.1. Islington Council is committed to recognising and celebrating the invaluable 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: [Supporting our armed forces | Islington Council](#)
- 3.4. 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.

4. The Armed Forces population in Islington

- 4.1. One of the challenges we face in identifying and targeting support is the limited information we have on Armed Forces personnel, veterans and their families. It is difficult to get a sense of numbers of Islington residents who are ex-Forces, because this is not generally included as a distinct category in national or local services data collection.
- 4.2. This lack of information has been successfully challenged by the Royal British Legion who point out that, despite an estimated 1 in 10 of the UK population having been members of the Armed Forces community, there is very limited information about where they are or what their needs might be. The Legion's 'Count Them In' campaign, supported by Islington Council, has resulted in a new question being added to the 2021 Census on past membership of the Armed Forces. The 2021 Census data shows 970 ex-armed forces and 680 ex-reserve armed forces in Islington.
- 4.3. Going forward, the Government has asked the National Statistician to research alternative methods to replace the traditional national census and intermediate surveying approach. This is likely to include use of local administrative data. As a council, we will work with our Armed Forces and Veteran organisations to ensure that any replacement arrangements effectively capture the numbers and needs of the Armed Forces community in Islington.

Military presence

- 4.4. 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 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

- 4.5. There is little information on numbers of Armed Forces personnel or veterans at local authority level. The Location Statistics for UK Regular Armed Forces and Civilians 2022 published on gov.uk website states that at April 2022 there were 30 military personnel based in Islington.
- 4.6. The Department for Education released Pupil Premium data relating to the 2022/2023 financial year. This release shows Islington had eight children eligible as service children. Two are primary age children and the other six are secondary age.

Street population

- 4.7. 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'.
- 4.8. Figures from 2022/23 provided by chain indicated that 336 people were found rough sleeping in Islington. By comparison there were 236 people found rough sleeping for the period 2021/22. This represents an increase of 42% during the year. The overall number of ex-Armed Forces remained low. With 10 people declaring experience of the armed forces which is static compared to 2021/22 which also indicated that 10 people with experience of the armed forces are known to have slept rough in Islington.

5. Islington Armed Forces Covenant – summary of commitments

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

6. Recognition, celebration and remembrance

Championing the Armed Forces

- 6.1. 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.

Marking and commemorating key events

- 6.2. Key events attended by the Mayor, Leader, Armed Forces Champion or other Members and officers included:
- 20 June 2022: Mayor, Leader and Chief Executive joined the IVA on the Town Hall forecourt for the raising of the Armed Forces Flag
 - 25 June 2022: Mayor attended Armed Forces Day event at Islington Green
 - 25 June 2022: Mayor attended Islington Veteran's Association Jubilee Dinner
 - 13 July 2022: Mayor attended the RAF Cadet Presentation evening
 - 15 July 2022: Mayor attended the Armed Forces Veterans breakfast club at St Lukes
 - 21 August 2022: Mayor attended an Islington Veterans Association meeting
 - 16 September 2022: Mayor attended the Armed Forces Veterans breakfast club at St Lukes
 - 10 November 2021: Mayor and Leader attended a Service of Remembrance at the Islington & St Pancras Cemetery
 - 11 November 2021: Mayor, Leader and Chief Executive commemorated the Two Minute Silence Ceremony inside the Town Hall in front of the War Memorial
 - 13 November 2021: Mayor and Chief Executive attended Remembrance Day ceremonies at Islington Green, Spa Green and Manor Gardens war memorials
 - 16 December 2022: Mayor attended the Armed Forces Veterans breakfast club at St Lukes
 - 20 January 2023: Mayor attended the Armed Forces Veterans breakfast club at St Lukes
 - 17 February 2023: Mayor attended the Armed Forces Veterans breakfast club at St Lukes
 - 21 April 2023: Mayor attended the Armed Forces Veterans breakfast club at St Lukes

- 6.3. None of these events could take place without a lot of background work and planning. Our Facilities Team at the Town Hall plays a key role in organising the Two Minute Silence, Armed Forces Flag Raising, and other events.
- 6.4. The Council's Greenspace Team ensures the safe and smooth running of events in our parks and open spaces. Over the past year, the team has:
- Ensured our parks and memorials were clean and prepared for Remembrance Sunday and Armed Forces Day.
 - Supported the IVA with the logistics, planning and health and safety/risk assessments and implementation of the event on the day.
 - Ensured that Islington Green was clean for Anzac Day and that the Community Rangers provided a presence on the day.

Exhibitions and memorials

- 6.5. 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.
- 6.6. The Islington Local History Centre and Islington Museum have continued to collect, catalogue and make accessible materials and stories reflecting life in Islington and Finsbury during the world wars, as well as in peacetime. They have also collected materials that pay tribute to the bravery and endurance of Islington and its people on the Home Front during the Second World War; especially rescue crews, fire, police and ambulance services and APP, as well as residents.
- 6.7. There is ongoing research to update the Islington Online Book of Remembrance, including dealing with enquiries from residents and researchers.
- 6.8. On Friday 23rd July 2021, Islington Heritage Service invited residents to attend a series of events in the Peace Garden of Elthorne Park to unveil a WW2 memorial plaque to commemorate the victims of a V2 rocket blast. The Upon Reflection statue by Kevin Atherton was reinstalled and unveiled on this day.
- 6.9. The Challenging Inequality and Events team held a number of events on Holocaust Memorial Day. This included a talk from Antoinette Mutabazi, a survivor of the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda and another by Harry Olmer, telling his story of his time in a concentration camp during World War Two. The events team also ran a Holocaust Education Workshop for secondary students.
- 6.10. Memorial events such as Remembrance Sunday, ANZAC, Day, VE day, and Armed Forces Day have seen Islington veterans, council staff, councillors and residents come together to honour the bravery of the armed forces.

7. Grants and funding

Local Initiatives Fund

- 7.1. 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 local residents and communities. In 2022-23,
- 7.2. Local Initiatives Funding has been awarded to:
 - 7.2.1. Islington Sea Cadets (£2,500) in November 2022 for jobs / building works needed to re-open their unit to young people again
 - 7.2.2. Islington Veterans Association (£1024.25) in November 2022 for events to recognise and support veterans in Islington in partnership with the council and local businesses. Funding was to pay for a brass band and St John's Ambulance on Armed Forces Day (25 June 2022), insurance, Zoom, software and internet costs.

Islington Community Chest

- 7.3. The Council also works in partnership with Cripplegate Foundation to provide small grants through the Islington Community Chest. There have been no applications from organisations linked to the Forces or Youth Organisations in uniform (YOU) during the past year, but the fund has previously supported organisations such as the scouts and the sea cadets.

Armed Forces Community Covenant Grants Scheme

- 7.4. Each year, the Government sets aside £10 million for the Armed Forces Covenant Fund, which supports initiatives that contribute towards 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.
- 7.5. 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/>.

8. Supporting veterans and their families

Financial support

- 8.1. 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. In terms of Housing and Council Tax support we had 6 claims for the year 2022-23 from ex-armed forces. We have 2 service users who have war pensions as part of their assessment.

Support with Housing

- 8.2. Veterans and their families are a priority group in terms of help with housing. In 2022-23, the Council's Housing Needs Team had had no housing applications from ex-armed forces members and consequently have not rehoused any ex-armed forces members. Not all housing applicants will have identified themselves as ex-forces so numbers supported could be higher.
- 8.3. In terms of applications for social housing, we have not received any applications from ex-armed forces personnel who have identified themselves in this way. However, not all housing applicants will have identified themselves as ex-forces, so numbers supported could well be higher.
- 8.4. The Council's Tenancy Team work with a range of residents, some of who present with a wider range of intensive and complex support needs. The team deliver services in a trauma-informed way to support tenants to resolve life issues and sustain their tenancy through a holistic approach to support. People from an ex-forces background would benefit from this approach, where they are experiencing challenges adapting to civilian life, but may not disclose this as part of their interaction with the team. Our Income Recover Team also engage with residents who are in rent arrears and offer support through a number of services to help residents resolve their financial issues and will make wider referrals into support services, where there are wider support needs identified.

Employment and skills

- 8.5. 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.

Health and social care needs

- 8.6. 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. We also support some older war veterans from World War II in care settings (such as domiciliary care, residential or nursing care) although numbers are dwindling.

- 8.7. 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)
 - Feedback from the Trust is that they see very few Islington residents through these specialist services.

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 Islington 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. We will continue to promote the offer of support to ensure those who need it are able to access support.

Background papers: none

Appendices

10. Appendix A: Islington Armed Forces Community Covenant

Authorised by:

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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 Troy Gallagher.

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
- Chairing 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.