



Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority

Meeting and date: Fire Authority Meeting, 16 February 2022

Report title: Armed Forces Covenant

Lead Member: Councillor Steven Lambert

Report sponsor: Area Commander Calum Bell

Author and contact: Group Commander Shaun Cunningham,
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Action: Noting

Recommendations:

That the report be noted.

Executive summary:

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the progress that continues to be made, with regard to the delivery of the Service's pledge to support the Armed Forces Community through the Armed Forces Covenant.

In August 2020 the Service signed the Armed Forces Covenant and were awarded Bronze in the Employer Recognition Scheme and in July 2021 were awarded Silver, after demonstrating further the Service's commitment to support our Armed Forces Community. The award ceremony was held on 1 September 2021 at the Historic Dockyard Portsmouth, due to Covid restrictions only one representative of the Service could attend to receive the award.

To Demonstrate the Service's support to the Armed Forces Community we have:

- Established Veteran Drop-in Centres at Marlow and West Ashlands. These are predominantly for Veterans with complex issues, the footfall is low but this is to be expected, as these are the hardest to reach veterans. The centre at Marlow is in collaboration with NHS 'Op Courage' The Veterans Mental Health and Wellbeing Service. The centre at West Ashlands is in collaboration with the Veterans Community Network.
- Developed a training program to support Armed Forces Cadet associations, allowing them onto our Stations to undertake supported, challenging training.
- Offered to provide a room for 1-1 clinical advice. Veteran support network and NHS services for veterans occasionally need a room to carry out clinical consultations, we will try and support this where possible.

- Identifying Armed Forces Veterans during our own Fire and Wellness visits and directing them to the support networks available.
- Supported, where possible, with events that celebrate Armed Forces Day.

Some of the work above is in collaboration with Buckinghamshire Council Civilian Military Partnership Board.

There are reciprocal benefits to supporting the Armed Forces Community;

- The Service have held a training event at the Reserve Forces centre in Marlow for a nominal fee and communications have been held to discuss further use of their facilities.
- The Service has secured Mental Health First Aid courses through the Veterans Community Network again for a nominal fee.
- Some of our staff, who have supported these events and are themselves military veterans, have certainly benefited from being directly involved.

Financial implications:

There are no direct financial implications associated with this report. Local supermarkets will be approached to donate tea/coffee etc, for the drop-in centres, equipment required for Cadet training is already supplied on station. There are some reciprocal benefits that accrue to the Service such as access to venue hire and training courses on either a cost-recovery basis, or for a nominal fee.

Risk management:

Delivery of the Armed Forces Covenant will contribute toward ensuring the Service maintains its promise through the People Strategy. This commits the Service to actively supporting the armed forces community. It acknowledges that we recognise the value serving personnel, reservists, veterans and military families can bring to the Service. It also indicates that we will, through our business dealings, work to ensure they are treated with fairness and respect within both the local community and wider society and help remove any disadvantages they may encounter in their day-to-day lives. The Covenant formally recognises our commitment to supporting both the physical and mental wellbeing of this often-unrecognised part of our community and will endeavour to support those who have served, those who are currently serving, and all those connected with the Armed Forces.

Failure to deliver the pledges of the Armed Forces Covenant could lead to serious reputational risk of Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority as both the Silver and Gold awards are reviewed annually and can be withdrawn.

Legal implications:

Third party liability insurance covers the attendance of Veterans and the welfare providers on the Services sites, this is subject to them being escorted by a member of

the Service. All of the events held on the Services sites are attended by members of the Service and no event will go ahead without a Service representative.

Privacy and security implications:

The Armed Forces Covenant does not appear to raise any immediate privacy or security issues. No information is processed or stored reference the attending Veterans.

Duty to collaborate:

Although the Authority has committed to a default position of collaboration with Thames Valley Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs). The Armed Forces Covenant relates specifically to BFRS activities; however we are collaborating with a vast array of partner agencies including both Milton Keynes and Buckinghamshire councils and the NHS.

Health and safety implications:

No adverse Health and Safety implications identified.

Environmental implications:

There are no adverse environmental implications associated with this report.

Equality, diversity, and inclusion implications:

No immediate issues identified in relation to the Armed Forces Covenant, however, IIAs and DPIAs will be completed for any changes that result from any subsequent activity, where there is the potential for equality, diversity and privacy issues to arise.

Consultation and communication:

The Business Transformation Board were provided with a verbal update on progress in relation to the Armed Forces Covenant at their 6 January 2022 meeting. Also, consultation has been held throughout, engaging with a variety of stakeholders throughout the Service.

Background papers:

- <https://www.armedforcescovenant.gov.uk/#:~:text=The%20Armed%20Forces%20Covenant%20is%20a%20promise%20by,their%20families%2C%20are%20treated%20fairly.%20About%20the%20covenant.>
- <https://vcn.org.uk/>
- <https://veteranaware.nhs.uk/op-courage/>

Appendix	Title	Protective Marking