

CAERPHILLY ARMED FORCES FORUM

Meeting

At 10.30 am on Thursday, 3rd December, 2015

in the Ebbw Room

Caerphilly County Borough Council Offices

Ty Penallta

1. Attendance, Apologies & Introductions:

Attendance: Howard Rees (CCBC Armed Forces Lead Officer & Chair), John Elliott (CCBC – Policy), Keith Sutcliffe & Bryan Tansley (SSAFA - Gwent Area), Insp. Russell Thomas (Gwent Police), Hayley Lancaster (CCBC Corporate Communications), Mike Jones (JCP – DWP), Julia Ferguson & Paul Harding (Change Step), Capt. Huw Williams (203 (Welsh) Field Hospital), Phil Williams (DMWS), Peter Wilson, Gareth Pennell & Ken Terry (Royal British Legion), Tim Grahame (614 Sqn., R. Aux. A F), Alison Griffiths (St. Loyes Foundation), Catherine Howells (First Choice Housing Association), Paul Hudson (CCBC – Events)

Apologies: Peter Evans & Alison Parkinson (Royal British Legion), Stephen Hughes (Reserve Forces' & Cadets' Association for Wales), Jo Dover (Defence Medical Welfare Service), Brian Mawby (ABUHB Armed Forces Champion), Mel Byles (Federation of Small Businesses), Denise Lovering (Caerphilly Business Forum), Michelle Allford (Wales Probation Service), Annabel Ingram (Army Families Federation), Cllr Alan Higgs (CCBC Armed Forces Champion), Mike Bailey (Veterans Welfare Service), Donna Lloyd-Williams (First Choice Housing Association), Jennifer Lilley (Hire A Hero), Steve Keenan (GAVO), Roy Fitzgerald (104 Rgt., R A)

Introductions: HR welcomed everyone and introductions were provided, for this, the eleventh meeting of the Caerphilly Armed Forces Forum (CAFF). He also mentioned that if members of the Forum were dealing with individual cases of veterans, reservists or serving personnel, or families who have issues/problems, which could be addressed by particular agencies represented on the Forum, then anonymised information should be used, with a view to obtaining advice and support.

2. Notes and matters arising from the meeting of 3rd September 2015:

- 2 a)** PW wished to point out that on page 7 of the minutes, it states that the DMWS have taken on volunteers, but those mentioned in the meeting are in fact paid members of staff.

- 2 b) KT said that the sentence on page 8, which mentions 'Ken Terry of the Newbridge Branch of the RBL,' should in fact be 'the Caerphilly Branch of the RBL'.
- 2 c) HR updated the Forum regarding the ceramic poppy display 'The Weeping Window,' at Caerphilly Castle. The actual siting of this structure may be changed, however the new position will be evaluated, and if feasible, a bid will be made for display of the structure sometime in 2017.

There were no other matters arising, and the notes were approved as a true record.

3. **South Wales Armed Forces Day 2016:**

The Chair explained that for the past nine years, the Armed Forces Day had been held in Cardiff. However, Caerphilly CBC had been approached earlier this year (2015) by members of the organising committee, namely Gareth Pennell (RBL), and the committee Chair Col. Phil Hubbard, with a view to organising this event in the town of Caerphilly on June 25th 2016. It was the Committee's view that the Armed Forces Day should be able to move around the South Wales, and not just stay in the Cardiff area. This will enable as many members of the public as possible to view the military parades and other events held on that day.

The event had become expensive to hold in Cardiff over the past years, and this had put more pressure on the Committee's available funding, and was proving difficult to bring in on budget.

The facilities offered in Caerphilly, including water and power outlets, either side of Crescent Road (Permanently installed for the Big Cheese event each year), plus other assistance offered 'in kind', assisted in Caerphilly being successful in holding this year's event. A planning meeting is to be held in January, to amongst other things, detail the publicity for the event.

There will be a build-up to the ceremonies for Armed Forces Day, in the form of flag raising ceremonies, which will be held at various locations across the county borough, in the week leading up to 25th June.

GP, who is also an Armed Forces Day Committee member, wished to express the Committee's gratitude to Caerphilly CBC for their enthusiastic support and help in bringing the Armed Forces Day to Caerphilly, for this year's event. The Chair thanked GP for his compliments, and he will ensure that the Local Service Board, at their next meeting, will be made aware of all of the details.

Support for publicity of this event was forthcoming from the Reserve Forces & Cadets Association for Wales (RFCA) and Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen & Families Association (SSAFA).

The Armed Forces Day planning intends to have minimal use of the castle. It is expected that there will be a parade of 800 personnel, who will muster at St. Martin's School on Mountain Road. The parade will then march down through

the town centre, with the salute being taken near the Cenotaph. The main body of the parade will continue to march to the road junction at the Piccadilly, and left into Nantgarw Road, and then left into Crescent Road to their allotted positions onto the grass area (Horn works) where a Drum Head Service will be held.

HL said that on Saturday 25th June, there is an annual Menter Iaith event in Caerphilly Castle which celebrates Welsh language, culture, arts & crafts, and dance performances, attended by people from across South Wales. This is a very popular event and by working together with the Armed Forces Day event could, attract a large audience for both events.

Radio Wales, Saturday morning programmes – Owen Money and Rhod Gilbert, may be asked to publicise the event and Radio Wales may have a presence on site.

4. Welsh Government Armed Forces Champions Event: 18th November 2015:

This event was held at Dering Lines in Brecon and was well attended, by Local Authority Champions, and officers, together with Senior Military representatives from 160 Infantry Brigade, and senior officers from many statutory and voluntary organisations. There were a number of interesting presentations:-

- From 160 Infantry Brigade, explaining the training functions provided from the Dering Lines Base.
- There was an informative update from the RFCA, some of which was presented by a young woman who had joined the Army Cadets while still at school, and went on to achieve a senior rank in the Cadets. She explained the many fulfilling exercises and visits abroad in which she and her fellow cadets were involved, sometimes as leader of a team.
- Dr Neil J. Kitchiner, Principal Clinician, Veterans NHS Wales gave a presentation relating to the treatment of and conducting research into traumatic stress symptoms.
- Probation and the Criminal Justice system. Presentation regarding veterans in the CJS.
- A presentation was given by Major Craig Middle on the new Covenant Funding, the criteria, and the process for bids for small and large grants.
- The workshops in the afternoon were based on questions around the type of applications which may be submitted to the Covenant Fund.

The Chair offered to e-mail the PowerPoint presentations to those who expressed an interest in receiving them.

5. New Armed Forces Covenant Fund:

The Covenant Fund was set up by UK Government to distribute £10 million per annum in perpetuity, from 2015/2016 onwards, in order to fund projects which support the aims of the Armed Forces Covenant and in particular

projects which support the Armed Forces Community locally, regionally, and across the whole of the UK. The priorities for this funding were developed in consultation with the Covenant Reference Group (CRG)

The Covenant Fund is now directed to establish a lasting legacy for the work and principles of the Armed Forces Covenant. It is therefore important that funding is focussed and directed equitably. The CRG identified four overarching themes that the Covenant Fund must take into account now and in future years when making decisions. These are:-

- Non-core healthcare services for veterans;
- Removing barriers to family life;
- Extra support after service for those that need help; and
- Measures to integrate military and civilian communities and allow the Armed Forces community to participate as citizens.

The Covenant Fund will consult the CRG on priorities which will support one or more of the themes on an annual basis.

The strategic oversight and decision making as to recipients of the funding shall be undertaken by the Covenant Fund Panel made up of duly appointed members.

The day to day operation and management of the Covenant Fund will be undertaken by an executive grant making team.

The Covenant Fund will make grants (capital and/or revenue) to organisations in response to applications and the grants will be allocated according to clear, set and transparent criteria following a decision making process agreed in advance with the Covenant Fund Panel.

For the financial year of 2015/2016, the Covenant Fund is directed to fund projects that support:-

- The co-ordination and delivery of support to the Armed Forces Community;
- Local Armed Forces Community integration projects; and
- Veterans in the Criminal Justice system.

There are two funding routes:-

- small grants, for applications up to a maximum of £20,000 and
- large grants, for applications of between £20,001 and £500,000.

The Regional Devolved Administration Board, managed by 160 Infantry Brigade and Headquarters, in Wales will receive Welsh local applications for consultation and discussion amongst regional and local Armed Forces fora, to determine suitability and need.

The final decision on suitability will be made by the MoD Covenant Board following advice and feedback from the Regional Devolved Administration

Boards. See link:-

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/453307/RDA_Board_areas.pdf

In this funding round new applications to the Covenant Fund are now closed.

The full timetable and new priorities for 2016 will be published at the start of March 2016, with the application portal open at the start of May and the deadline for applications in late June. All these dates and more will be clarified in March.

MoD Covenant Fund Main Page

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/covenant-fund>

Covenant Fund – Small Grants Guidance

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/460522/Covenant_Fund_small_grants_guidance.pdf

Covenant Fund – Large Grants Expression of Interest Guidance

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/457235/20150828_Covenant_Fund_large_grants_Expression_of_Interest_guidance.pdf

Any Covenant Fund applications from organisations in the Caerphilly CBC area would benefit by seeking endorsements from the Caerphilly Armed Forces Forum, in that it would add strength to the bid, when submitted to the RDA Board.

6. **Membership of the Caerphilly CB Armed Forces Forum:** There have been requests from individuals representing several branches of veteran's organisations, in the CCBC area, for representation on the Armed Forces Forum. Requests were received from some RAFA Branches, and there was also a request from the South Atlantic Medal Association.

The Chair wished to obtain the views of members of the Forum on these requests to sit on future Forum meetings. Following discussion members felt that it would be impracticable for every Armed Forces organisation to be represented on CAFF. Therefore it was suggested that from the point of view of RAFA one person could represent their interests (and cascade information to branches) and this could be Mrs Barbara Howells (RAFA Area Welfare Officer, Wales) and is based in the Memorial Hall in Newbridge.

(Mrs Howells confirmed that she would be interested in attending future meetings – 21/12/15)

The Forum members agreed that representation on the Forum may be reviewed at any time, but the overall requirement is that organisations

represented should participate and bring ideas, opinions, and support to each meeting, rather than just be a passive attendance.

7. Feedback from Gwent Armed Forces Forum, 5th November 2015:

The main item on this Forum's agenda was Major Craig Middle, who described the new procedure and requirements of the Covenant Fund and the involvement of the RDA Board (160 Infantry Brigade), much of which has been described in Point 5 above.

8. Update from Cllr Alan Higgs (Caerphilly Armed Forces Champion):

HR updated the Forum on some of the work with which Alan is involved. He is heavily involved in casework which he has received either directly from veterans, or via referrals from other agencies. He attended the dedication of a memorial to commemorate the death of a Canadian Pilot who crashed into Caerphilly Mountain, during WW2. The site was near the St. Martin's Church and the Golf Club.

As Remembrance Day approaches Alan has been involved in the organisation of parades at various sites in the county borough.

9. Update from Members of the Forum:

- 9 a) 203 (Welsh) Field Hospital:** The 203 has been very busy this year with detachments to Gibraltar, Corsica and Oakhampton in Devon. The work goes on into 2016 when the 203 has to take part in training exercises with the US Army Medical Corps in Colorado!!

Five of 203's personnel have been heavily involved with medical personnel in Sierra Leone, West Africa, during the Ebola outbreak.

Personnel from 203 have taken part in various services of commemoration, and will take part in Remembrance Services in the county borough, and in the flag raising ceremonies, together with an RAF contingent.

Capt. Mark Gold will receive the George Medal, tomorrow, the 4th December 2015, at a ceremony in Windsor Castle.

- 9 b) The Royal British Legion (RBL):** The RBL continues to provide outreach sessions at Penallta House, by appointment. They are currently undertaking a campaign on behalf of veterans who have worked with asbestos in their military career, and who now have asbestosis and other related diseases. The campaign seeks comparable compensation, aligned to that of civilians who suffer from these diseases as a result of civilian employment. The RBL are keen to make greater reference to their manifesto principally because of the forthcoming Assembly Elections in May. On the 26th January, 2016 the RBL will launch their Welsh Assembly Election Manifesto at the Senedd in Cardiff Bay.

- 9 c) SSAFA:** KS reported that there have been some changes in personnel within Gwent SSAFA. The Chair had resigned and has now been replaced by The

Venerable John Blackburn, Chaplain General to the Army (Rtr.)
C.B. Q.H.C. F.R.S.A. N B.A. B.Sc. The new President of Gwent SSAFA will be the John Child, the Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Gwent.

The Caerphilly CB area still has the highest number of cases referred to the ABUHB for treatment, but it does have the largest population of authorities in Gwent. Bankruptcies are on the rise and in many cases SSAFA refer these to the CAB for financial resolutions. 'Step Change' is also used by SSAFA in some cases which devise payment plans for those in financial difficulties, particularly funeral costs.

SSAFA continue Prison Visiting at HMP Usk. There are 270 prisoners in Usk, of which 10% of the prison population are forces veterans, between the ages of 21 – 86.

- 9 d) **ABUHB:** Although the Caerphilly CBC area has the highest number of forces veteran referrals, Gwent wide, currently there is no waiting list for treatment for those diagnosed with PTSD or severe stress related illnesses.
- 9 e) **Gwent Police:** Insp. RT said that he would wish to be involved with the arrangements for the South Wales Armed Forces Day event scheduled for 25th June, to ensure that the policing element is satisfactorily covered.
- 9 f) **Reserve Forces & Cadets Association:** MJ reported that there was currently a competition underway for the Cadets. It involves each cadet branch creating a presentation on a WW1 famous person, each of which will be presented at 160 Infantry Brigade's HQ to decide the winners. The prize will be a trip to France, to include a visit to the WW1 Memorial at Mametz Wood. The engagement was fought by the 38th (Welsh) Division of the British Army during the First Battle of the Somme, 7th July 1916.
- 9 g) **Probation Service/Community Rehabilitation Company, Wales:** No report available.
- 9 h) **Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations (GAVO):** No report available.
- 9 i) **Caerphilly Business Forum & Federation of Small Businesses:** No Report available.
- 9 j) **Caerphilly & Blaenau Gwent Citizens Advice Bureau:** No report available.
- 9 k) **Job Centre Plus:** MJ reported that the DWP now states that people can now claim Universal Credit at 80% of all Job Centres. Currently this includes Blaenau Gwent, Newport and Blackwood. Through the Blackwood Office there have been two veterans who have been successful in setting-up their own businesses.
- 9 l) **Veterans UK:** No report available.

- 9 m) Defence Medical Welfare Service (DMWS):** PW said that Jo Dover had now moved from Exeter and was now based in Preston and will provide DMWS cover in the North West. Most referrals are now coming from Forces Veterans rather than serving personnel.
- 9 n) Caerphilly County Borough Council:** CCBC has provided WG with some details on the Covenant and other activities undertaken to the UK Government's Armed Forces Report. In particular this described the CCBC and RBL partnership approach to establishing a 'Drop-in Centre', based in Bargoed Library, and 'Outreach Sessions for Veterans' at Penallta House. Also submitted to this report was the partnership between the council and the United Welsh Housing Association, which at a new development in Bedwas, has set aside two new houses for Armed Forces Veterans and their families.
- 9 o) 614 (County of Glamorgan) Sqn. RAFR:** The squadron was reformed in March 2014, with a volunteer reserve of 120. The Government's target for the whole of the RAF Reserve was 1,800 to 4,500 with personnel coming from all walks of life.

HR reminded the Forum that the Big Cheese event was a very successful event for recruiting.

- 9 p) First Choice Housing Association:** CH reported that there were now two houses in Cardiff providing several forces veterans with supported accommodation in conjunction with Alabaré. There is also accommodation available in Wrexham for veterans with higher support needs. It is anticipated that in 2016 there will be a self-build scheme for veterans.
- 9 q) Army Families Federation (AFF):** The Army Families Federation has a new Chief Executive. They continue to work with Local Authorities in Wales and are well supported, in particular with partnerships to include Education and Health.
- 9 r) St. Loyes Foundation:** AG said that they have had referrals from the RBL and other organisations. St.Loyes is running a Mental Health First Aid course which has proved popular with over 34 requests for places. Most spaces were allocated to forces veterans or those caring for veterans.
- 9 s) Change Step:** JF reported that two mentors were now working from the base in Caerphilly for Change Step. They are Paul and Sarah. Newport is being also covered. The mentor meetings are still continuing at a room in Caerphilly Library on Wednesdays.

A question was asked on two Change Step flyers circulating in RCT with contact information for the RCT area only. It would be useful if these flyers, in future, could also contain the Caerphilly contact information. JF will look into this.

10. **Caerphilly Armed Forces Activity Programme:** An updated copy of the current programme was sent out with the papers for this meeting for information and comment. It highlights the work of the CAFF, that of the Welsh Government, and internally within the council, including the Corporate Management Team. The Caerphilly LSB also receives the Armed Forces minutes and progress reports.

11. **AOB:**
KS said that the RBL in Risca has collected the significant amount of £19,000 through fund raising.

The chair congratulated both KT and KS on their recent awards at the Caerphilly Voluntary Sector Achievement Awards at a ceremony held at the Blackwood Miners Institute in September, 2015. HR commented on how richly deserved both awards were, properly recognising the unstinting service and support. KT announced that his award was for "his much valued work in organising parades and ceremonies" and commented that he very much appreciates the award. KS announced that he was very proud to have received his award.

12. **Date of next meeting:** At 10:30 am on Thursday, 3rd March, 2016 in the Sirhowy Room, Ty Penallta.