

FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

REPORT TO: **EXECUTIVE**

DATE: **27 MARCH 2012**

REPORT BY: **CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

SUBJECT: **FLINTSHIRE ARMED FORCES DAY AND THE
CREATION OF AN ARMED FORCES COMMUNITY
COVENANT**

1.00 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.01 To update Executive on the possibility of the Council hosting an Armed Forces Day event in Flintshire, and the adoption of an Armed Forces Community Covenant.

2.00 BACKGROUND

2.01 At its meeting on the 31st January, 2012, the County Council received a Notice of Motion from Councillor A.P. Shotton about Flintshire Armed Forces Day as follows:

"We welcome the announcement by Carl Sargeant AM, Welsh Government Minister for Local Government to fund an Armed Forces Day event in North Wales and call upon this Council to prepare a bid to host an Armed Forces Day event within the County of Flintshire".

2.02 The Council resolved:

"That the Council welcomes the announcement by Carl Sargeant AM, Welsh Government Minister for Local Government to fund an Armed Forces Day event in North Wales and calls upon this Council to prepare a bid to host an Armed Forces Day event within the County of Flintshire and, parallel to that activity, to undertake the creation of an Armed Forces Community Covenant between Flintshire County Council and its local armed forces community, such as already exist in Hampshire, North Yorkshire, Oxfordshire, Portsmouth and the Vale of Glamorgan, so that such Armed Forces Community Covenant could be formally launched at the proposed Armed Forces Day Event."

Armed Forces Day

2.03 This year's Armed Forces Day (AFD) 2012 will be held in Cardiff on 30th June 2012. This will be the seventh year having begun in 2006 with a simple Veterans badge presentation; the event has grown year

on year with increased public support.

- 2.04 This Council's interest in hosting the 2013, or a subsequent event, has been formerly registered with the Welsh Government (WG) and the current organising committee although the detail has yet to be agreed around the establishment of a North Wales Organising Committee and the bidding process. Funding of up to £10,000 can also be applied for following the recent announcement by the Local Government Minister.
- 2.05 Armed Forces Day is celebrated on the 30th June of each year. AFD is not only an opportunity for the general public to show their appreciation towards members of the Armed Services, it is also a day in which the whole family can join in and enjoy the many and varied displays that will be taking place.
- 2.06 The programme of events is likely to include a Flag Raising Ceremony, military displays, individual and team competitions with sponsorship from local companies, where applicable, together with a public parade, possible veteran badge presentations, refreshments and entertainment. Various organisations and charities may also be invited to exhibit display stands.
- 2.07 It is anticipated that the Flintshire event will also include the launch of the Community Covenant.

Community Covenant

- 2.08 A Community Covenant is a voluntary statement of mutual support between a civilian community and its local armed forces community. It is intended to complement the Armed Forces covenant which outlines the moral obligation between the nation, the government and the armed forces, at a local level. At present, there are four English authorities who have signed covenants and one Welsh, the Vale of Glamorgan.
- 2.09 In the document Welsh Government Package of Support for the Armed Forces Community in Wales, the Welsh Government has stated that it is committed to supporting the Armed Forces Community in Wales and endeavours to ensure that they suffer no disadvantage in accessing public services in Wales.
- 2.10 The Armed Forces Bill will place a statutory duty on the Secretary of State for Defence to lay before Parliament an annual Armed Forces Covenant report. In doing so, the Secretary of State will be required to obtain and include the views of the Welsh Government.
- 2.11 In Wales, there are estimated to be at least a quarter of a million members of the Armed Forces Community, which includes serving personnel, reservists and cadets as well as their families and ex-service personnel. As part of the Welsh Government's commitment

supporting the armed forces, June Milligan, the Director General, Local Government and Communities has been appointed as the 'Welsh Armed Forces Advocate' to represent Wales within the network of Armed Forces Advocates in Government Departments and the Devolved Administrations. To maintain a high profile, Champions for veterans and armed Forces have been established in every Health Board and Trust in Wales. Their role is to advocate for veterans and service personnel to ensure that their needs are reflected in local service plans and will improve links between health and social care, veterans' groups and the UK government to the benefit of veterans. In North Wales, Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB) has appointed the Rev Hywel Davies, who is an independent board member as the armed forces champion.

2.12 At its Council meeting on the 24th February 2012, the WLGA presented a report about a proposal for a Memorandum of Understanding between Welsh Local Government and the Armed Forces Community in Wales. The purpose of the report was to inform Members about the UK Government's Armed Forces Covenant and the Welsh Government's Package of Support for the Armed Forces Community in Wales and sought the opportunity to develop covenants.

2.13 The report also sought views on a proposal to develop a Memorandum of Understanding between Welsh Local Government and the Armed Forces Community in Wales. A copy of the WLGA report is attached as appendix to this report; a formal resolution is awaited.

3.00 CONSIDERATIONS

3.01 The starting point for any Community Covenant is signing the Community Covenant pledge. This document sets out what a Community Covenant seeks to achieve in a particular area and is essentially the establishment of a partnership agreement which is signed by representatives from all parts of the community. The lead signatories are a senior representative(s) of the Local Authority and one from the Services, on behalf of the armed forces community. The pledge may also be signed by those representing veterans, such as the Royal British Legion.

3.02 Elements of a Community Covenant from a local authority point of view could include ensuring that members of the Armed forces community do not face disadvantage in accessing school places, social care, housing and health care. What can actually be included will differ from authority to authority. It is suggested that a task group be set up to ascertain what Flintshire would be able to include as our 'Community Covenant offer' which could then be discussed with Armed Forces and Veterans' representatives.

4.00 RECOMMENDATIONS

4.01 The Executive is recommended to:

- (i) note the Council's intention to submit a bid to host the 2013 event; and
- (ii) endorse the approach to create an Armed Forces Community

5.00 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.01 None directly associated with this report. In the event of a successful bid to host the 2013 event, funding up to £10,000 can be applied for to assist with the organisation/publication of the event, direct from Welsh Government.

6.00 ANTI POVERTY IMPACT

6.01 None.

7.00 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

7.01 None.

8.00 EQUALITIES IMPACT

8.01 None.

9.00 PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

9.01 None directly associated with this report.

10.00 CONSULTATION REQUIRED

10.01 As outlined within the report.

11.00 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN

11.01 None.

12.00 APPENDICES

12.01 Appendix 1 - WLGA report: "Proposal for a Memorandum of Understanding between Welsh Local Government and the Armed Forces Community in Wales"

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT) 1985 BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Welsh Government Package of Support for the Armed Forces Community in Wales ISBN 978 0 7504 6726 1

Contact Officer: Sharron Jones
Telephone: 01352 702107
Email: sharron.jones@flintshire.gov.uk