

## **Motion 1**

### Enhancing Support for Veterans and the Armed Forces Covenant

Proposed by Cllr Dave Taylor Armed forces Champion

Seconded by Cllr Justin Thompson

#### Background

The residents of Redcar and Cleveland have consistently demonstrated deep respect and gratitude for the Armed Forces community. This is evident in the strong support for Remembrance events and Armed Forces Day. Nationally, 1 in 25 people is a veteran, but in Redcar and Cleveland, this statistic is believed to be even higher, reflecting the area's strong connection to the Armed Forces.

In 1963, the final National Service conscripts were discharged, and the 2021 census revealed that 31% of veterans are now over the age of 80. Since the Afghanistan conflict started over 140,000 British military personnel have served there many on multiple tours, and with over 58,000 serving in Iraq many now transitioning to civilian life. A significant portion resides in Redcar and Cleveland, alongside veterans from a wide range of historical conflicts, including: (information only)

- WW2 (1939–45)
- Palestine (1945–49)
- Indonesia (1945–49)
- Vietnam (1945–49)
- Malayan Emergency (1948–60)
- Yangtse Incident (1949)
- Korean War (1950–53)
- Kenya Emergency (1952–60)
- Cyprus Emergency (1955–59)
- Suez Crisis (1956)
- Dhofar Rebellion (1962–75)
- Malaysia Confrontation (1962–66)
- Aden Emergency (1963–67)
- Northern Ireland Troubles (1969–98)
- Falklands War (1982)
- Gulf War I (1990–91)
- Bosnia & Kosovo (1992–2006)
- Sierra Leone (2000)
- Afghanistan (2001–20)
- Iraq War (2003–09)

The Armed Forces Covenant is a national promise to ensure fairness and respect for those who serve, veterans, and their families. Its core principle is that no one should be disadvantaged due to their service.

Veterans face unique challenges, including:

- Housing and homelessness issues.
- Mental and physical health concerns.
- Social isolation and financial difficulties.

National statistics further emphasize the need for action:

- Two-thirds of UK veterans face mental health challenges
- Nearly half experience PTSD, anxiety, or depression.
- Veterans under 25 are four times more likely to take their own lives than their civilian peers.

In 2021, this Council reaffirmed its commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant, achieving Silver Standard. However, a recent review identified areas for improvement, as some previous practices have lapsed.

### Best Practice Example

Cheshire West and Chester Council exemplifies best practice by:

- Offering 12 days of paid annual leave for Reservists to undertake training.
- Actively promoting the Armed Forces Covenant to thousands of businesses.
- Providing weekly drop-in sessions for veterans and their families, including gym memberships and swimming sessions.
- Operating a Guaranteed Interview Scheme for ex-service personnel meeting essential criteria.
- Offering guidance on housing, homelessness prevention, and other critical support areas.

Other councils have also secured funding to support Sure Start services for Armed Forces families, enabling children aged 0–4 to attend nursery and freeing parents to work during deployments.

### Proposal

Building on our existing commitment, this Council resolves to enhance support for Armed Forces personnel, veterans, and their families by:

#### 1. Raising Awareness

- Promoting the Armed Forces Covenant across Council departments, private sector businesses, and community organisations through posters, social media, and websites.
- Encouraging more organisations to sign the Covenant.

#### 2. Strengthening Leadership

- Reconfiguring roles to appoint a dedicated full-time Armed Forces Lead, unlocking potential grant funding opportunities.
- Developing clear job descriptions for Armed Forces Champions in both Councillor and Officer roles.

### 3. Promoting Existing Services

- Running high-profile campaigns to raise awareness of veteran services, including health services, social prescribing, and sports facility discounts.
- Supporting families of Forces personnel during long-term deployments.

### 4. Enhancing Housing and Financial Support

- Providing or signposting comprehensive guidance on housing options, homelessness prevention, and support from military charities.
- Offering detailed advice on benefits and debt management for veterans and their families.

### 5. Supporting Employment

- Strengthening the Guaranteed Interview Scheme for Forces leavers and veterans meeting essential criteria, ensuring this is included in job application details.

### 6. Recognising Reservists

- Increasing awareness across departments to ensure Reservists are supported and effectively signposted through the Armed Forces Lead and updated websites.
- Enhancing access to safe spaces and clear guidance for veterans, Reservists, and their families.

## Conclusion

This Council pledges to reaffirm and strengthen its commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant, aspiring to achieve Gold Standard status. By adopting these proposals, we ensure that veterans, serving personnel, and their families receive the support, respect, and fairness they deserve.

## Motion

This Council resolves to adopt and action the proposals outlined above, enhancing support for the Armed Forces community and progressing toward Gold Standard implementation of the Armed Forces Covenant.