

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Minutes  Rotherham Armed Forces Community Covenant Group (AFCCG) – 15th May 2023 | | | |
| **IN ATTENDANCE** | | | |
| Cllr Eve Rose Keenan (Chair) | | Armed Forces Champion, Rotherham MBC | |
| Vicky Hartley | | Member & Civic Support Manager & Armed Forces lead officer, Rotherham MBC | |
| Emma Colley | | Member & Civic Support Officer, Rotherham MBC | |
| Major Adrian Hunt | | Veterans Advisory Pensions Committee (VAPC) Member & SSAFA | |
| Cllr Ian Jones | | Chair, Rotherham Military Community Veterans Centre Executive Group | |
| Major MP Lynch | | The Royal Yorkshire Regiment | |
| Richard Lenton | | Regional Employer Engagement Director, Reserve Forces' & Cadets' Association for Yorkshire and The Humber / Ministry of Defence | |
| Hannah Hall | | Engagement & Inclusion Lead, Patient Experience, Rotherham NHS Foundation Trust | |
| Neil Halsey | | Armed Forces Champion, Department for Work and Pensions | |
| Steve Lowe | | Regional Manager, Op Nova / Forces Employment Charity | |
| Chris Bradley | | Project Co-ordinator, Hidden Faces, Rotherham Military Community Veterans Centre | |
| Katie Merrills | | Cognitive Behavioural Therapist, Rotherham Doncaster & South Humber NHS Foundation Trust | |
| Malcolm Blease | | Chairman, Royal Airforce Association (Rotherham) | |
| Ron Moffett | | Member, Royal British Legion (Rotherham) | |
| Steve Bentham-Bates | | Chief Executive Officer, Help 4 Homeless Veterans | |
| **APOLOGIES RECEIVED** | | | |
| Sandra Tolley | | Head of Housing Options, Rotherham MBC | |
| Capt David Tomlinson | | 102 CS Bn REME | |
| Elaine Mason | | Op Nova Case Worker, Op Nova / Forces Employment Charity | |
| Paul Johnson | | Group Partnership Manager, Department for Work & Pensions (North Central Group) | |
| Colonel (Retd) Jonathan Hunt | | Regional Chairman, SSAFA | |
| **Item** | **Title** | | **Action** |
| **1.** | **Welcome, Introduction and Apologies** | |  |
| **1.1** | Cllr Eve Keenan, Rotherham’s Armed Forces Champion & Chair of the Rotherham | |
|  | Armed Forces Community Covenant Group welcomed everyone to the meeting and | |
|  | apologies were noted. | |
| **1.2** | Cllr Eve Keenan also took the opportunity to acknowledge and pass on congratulations | |
|  | to the Royal Yorkshire Regiment who had recently being honoured with the ‘Royal’ | |
|  | prefix, by His Majesty the King in recognition of exemplary service to the Crown. All | |
|  | Members in attendance at the meeting passed on their congratulations. | |
| **2.** | **Minutes of the last meeting, 27th February 2023 and Matters Arising** | |  |
| **2.1** | Paragraph 4.4 - Major Adrian Hunt and Vicky Hartley had resolved the issue regarding the delay in the response to seek financial assistance from the Council’s Housing & Homelessness team to support a veteran. | |  |
| **2.2** | Paragraph 4.5 - Vicky Hartley, Rotherham MBC reported that the Council’s Housing & Homelessness Team have recently confirmed that the funding that was available to support homeless veterans in Rotherham has had to be returned to Sheffield City Region. Covenant Group Members had understood that this funding would be available until the end of this year (December 2023) and not to the end of the 2022/23 financial year as advised by the Council’s Housing and Homelessness team at the September meeting of the Covenant Group. Armed Forces Covenant Group Members raised their disappointment to hear this given a number of active individual veteran  cases that were being dealt with by Members of the Covenant Group. The Rotherham Armed Forces Champion would raise concerns direct with Sheffield City Region. | | Armed Forces Champion / RMBC Housing & Homelessness Team |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **2.3**  **2.4** | Paragraph 5.4 (Recognised Codes) – the Senior Contracting & Service Improvement Manager (Primary Care for Rotherham), NHS South Yorkshire Integration Care Board confirmed on 14th April 2023 that 26 of the 28 are on SystmOne and 2 are on EMIS, both of which use SNOMED codes.  Paragraph 9.1 (Proposal for Drop in Facility in Rotherham for Veterans) - Steve Bentham-Bates confirmed that the proposal for a drop-in facility in Rotherham Town Centre would not be progressed further given feedback from the Covenant Group and due to there being no demand given the number of drop-ins already available across the borough and support already in place and provided by local charities and organisations. |  |
| **3.** | **Rotherham’s Refreshed Armed Forces Community Covenant Group Action Plan** |  |
| **3.1** | Vicky Hartley, Rotherham MBC presented the refreshed Rotherham Armed Forces Community Covenant Group Action Plan which had been circulated to all Members on 21st April seeking comment and feedback ahead of this meeting. |  |
| **3.2** | Vicky Hartley confirmed that the new Action Plan now incorporates further detail on what should be covered by the new Armed Forces Duty and details how Rotherham meets these legal requirements aligned to the Covenant. She confirmed the Council would be doing more work internally to further promote the Covenant and exploring the possibility of mandatory training / e-learning across the whole Council given the importance of the Covenant. Members welcomed the refreshed Action Plan. | Vicky Hartley, Rotherham MBC |
|  | ***Post Meeting Update***  [*Action Plan now published on Rotherham Council’s website.*](https://www.rotherham.gov.uk/downloads/file/918/rotherham-armed-forces-community-covenant-action-plan-2019-2024) |  |
| **4.** | **Rotherham’s Homelessness Prevention & Rough Sleeper Strategy 2023-2026** |  |
| **4.1** | This item could not be discussed and was therefore deferred as a result of a Housing & Homelessness representative from the Council not being able to attend this meeting. |  |
| **4.2** | Vicky Hartley, Rotherham MBC confirmed that she would seek an update / briefing from the Housing and Homelessness team and circulate this to all Members and ensure that a representative attend the next meeting in August.  ***Post Meeting Update***  *Briefing produced by Sandra Tolley, Head of Housing Options, Rotherham MBC and circulated to all Members via email on 5th June with the minutes of this meeting.* | Vicky Hartley, Rotherham MBC |
| **5.** | **Proposed Re-signing of Rotherham’s Armed Forces Covenant in August 2023** |  |
| **5.1** | Vicky Hartley, Rotherham MBC proposed it would be timely to have the Yorkshire |  |
|  | Society sign the Armed Forces Covenant on Yorkshire Day (1st August) which is being |  |
|  | hosted in Rotherham. |  |
| **5.2** | It was also suggested that the Council use the opportunity to arrange a full re-signing |  |
|  | given it is just over 5 years since a full re-signing of the Covenant took place. |  |
| **5.3** | All Members agreed it would be a unique opportunity, however, important to understand how and what each organisation, charity or partner brings to the local Covenant. | Vicky Hartley, Rotherham MBC |
| **5.4** | Cllr Ian Jones, Rotherham MCVC also stated that it would be timely due to the |  |
|  | Yorkshire Day going back to its roots as a military tradition. |  |
| **6.** | **Defence Employer Recognition Scheme – Applying for Gold Status in 2024** |  |
| **6.1** | Vicky Hartley confirmed that the current silver status will be re-applied for this year and |
|  | that going forward there are plans to apply for Gold status early next year. |
| **6.2** | Covenant Group Members were very supportive of this. |
| **6.3** | Richard Lenton, Regional Employer Engagement Director, Reserve Forces' & Cadets' |
|  | Association (RFCA) for Yorkshire and The Humber / Ministry of Defence (MoD) who |
|  | plays a key role in managing the applications process advised of the importance of |
|  | demonstrating advocacy as part of the application and the role of the local Covenant |
|  | Group in supporting the application that would be submitted by the Council. |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **7.**  **7.1**  **7.2**  **7.3**  **7.4**  **7.5**  **7.6**  **7.7**  **7.8**  **7.9**  **7.10**  **7.11** | **Covenant Group Member Updates**  **Neil Halsey, DWP**  Currently working on a Work & Health Fair for partners and employers. They are looking to run one in a central South Yorkshire location and will keep the Covenant Group updated as plans develop.  **Richard Lenton, RFCA / MoD**  Gold awards have already been submitted for 2023, the first round of applications are being sifted through. They are working on a new database for the silver awards, to make the renewals process automatic and easier to manage.  **Hannah Hall, Rotherham NHS Foundation Trust**  Currently working towards Employer Recognition Scheme silver status and pushing out training to all staff. Also working towards trying to make the training mandatory where appropriate. Shilo are currently operating a community dentistry service ‘van’ which is a service funded until December 2023 and available to veterans. Dates of when the van will be available throughout the borough will be provided to Members of the Covenant Group. The Trust is also in the process of submitting a bid to apply for funds to recruit a temporary Armed Forces Support worker.  The Armed Forces Champion, Cllr Keenan offered to provide a supporting statement to accompany the bid.  **Major MP Lynch, The Royal Yorkshire Regiment**  The Regiment were awarded the status of ‘Royal’ in line with the Coronation celebrations. They have just deployed their company to Iraq and have 3 Battalions busy supporting National Armed Forces Day events across the region (Wakefield, Halifax and Beverley).  They would like to have some involvement in Yorkshire Day on 1st August which is being hosted in Rotherham.  **Cllr Ian Jones, Rotherham MCVC**  MCVC have a lot of upcoming events and were working hard regionally and nationally. Christine Bradley, Rotherham MCVC / Hidden Faces Project lead confirmed that the Hidden Faces project was still going well and that an application to extend the funding for this project had been submitted. The MCVC outreach van was getting prepped ready for summer and volunteers were assisting with this and some admin functions for the charity. An application has also been submitted to the National Lottery for additional funding.  **Steve Lowe, Op Nova / Forces Employment Charity**  Confirmed Project Nova is now running as Op Nova and is running nationally with very strong links in the region.  **Malcolm Blease, Royal Air Force Association**  Confirmed dealing with a veteran welfare case that has been ongoing since the last meeting and received an additional case within the last week. Cllr Keenan, Armed Forces Champion requested the case details so that the Council can look at what support can be offered.  **Royal British Legion**  The National Conference is planned in for the coming weekend, with 20 motions to be heard. RBL are also looking at implementing “One Legion” and bringing together the RBL and the RBLI. Last year’s Poppy appeal raised £47 million with approx. £187k coming from Rotherham.  **Steve Bentham-Bates, Help 4 Homeless Veterans**  H4HV are now running over the 4 Yorkshire Counties and Lincolnshire, rather than the whole of England. Over winter, H4HV gave out 80 £100 grants for fuel. The 1st birthday of the Barnsley drop-in hub was celebrated – food parcels, vouchers, hot meals and camaraderie can all be found at this hub. H4HV are currently looking at the prospect of gaining a “crash pad” for the immediate use of people who are homeless, rather than funding a hotel. | Neil Halsey, DWP  Hannah Hall, Rotherham NHS Foundation Trust  Cllr Eve Keenan, Rotherham MBC  Vicky Hartley, Rotherham MBC  Malcolm Blease / Cllr Keenan |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **7.12** | **Major Adrian Hunt, SSAFA Charity / Veterans Advisory Pensions Committee**  Major Adrian Hunt reported that SSAFA’s AGM took place last week. |  |
| **7.13** | On behalf of the Yorkshire and Humber VAPC’s Committee he would be sending out a letter to the Covenant Group shortly seeking feedback in relation to local practice to assist with feeding into their annual report requesting feedback by mid-June. |  |
|  | ***Post Meeting Update***  *Email sent out on behalf of Major Adrian Hunt on 23rd May requesting feedback direct to* [*vicky.hartley@rotherham.gov.uk*](mailto:vicky.hartley@rotherham.gov.uk) *by 15th June.* | Major Adrian Hunt, VAPC / Vicky Hartley, Rotherham MBC |
| **7.14** | **Vicky Hartley, Rotherham Council**  Plans were underway for this year’s Armed Forces Day taking place on 24th June in Rotherham Town Centre. The new Mayor of Rotherham, Cllr Robert Taylor will be appointed on 19th May and will lead upcoming armed forces civic events. |  |
| **8.** | **Any other Business** |  |
| **8.1** | Steve Bentham-Bates, Help 4 Homeless Veterans raised concerns regarding the way a recent case had been managed by the Council’s Housing and Homelessness team and the barriers he had come up against to provide support to a homeless veteran. |  |
| **8.2** | The Rotherham’s Armed Forces Champion and lead officer for Armed Forces were doing everything they can back in the Council to support the veteran and confirmed that they would be escalating the issue to senior management in the Council immediately following this meeting. | Cllr Eve Keenan & Vicky Hartley, Rotherham MBC |
| **9.** | **Future Meetings**  These would all be held in person at Rotherham Town Hall (2-4pm) on Mondays:   * Monday, 7th August 2023 * Monday, 30th October 2023 |  |
| **9.1** |