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| Minutes  Rotherham Armed Forces Community Covenant Group (AFCCG) – 7th August 2023 | | | |
| **IN ATTENDANCE** | | | |
| Cllr Eve Rose Keenan (Chair) | | Armed Forces Champion, Rotherham MBC | |
| Emma Colley | | Member & Civic Support Officer, Rotherham MBC | |
| Kim Firth | | Homelessness Manager, 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 | |
| Neil Halsey | | Armed Forces Champion, Department for Work and Pensions | |
| Steve Lowe | | Regional Manager, Op Nova / Forces Employment Charity | |
| Malcolm Blease | | Chairman, Royal Airforce Association (Rotherham) | |
| Ron Moffett | | Member, Royal British Legion (Rotherham) | |
| Cheryl Jones | | Member, Royal British Legion (Rotherham) | |
| Pauline King | | Regional Employer Engagement Director, Reserves’ Forces & Cadets’ Forces Association for Yorkshire and Humber | |
| **APOLOGIES RECEIVED** | | | |
| Sandra Tolley | | Head of Housing Options, Rotherham MBC | |
| Vicky Hartley | | Member & Civic Support Manager & Armed Forces lead officer, Rotherham MBC | |
| Capt David Tomlinson | | 102 CS Bn REME | |
| Katie Merrills | | Cognitive Behavioural Therapist, Rotherham Doncaster & South Humber NHS Foundation Trust | |
| Steve Bentham-Bates | | Chief Executive Officer, Help 4 Homeless Veterans | |
| Chris Bradley | | Project Co-ordinator, Hidden Faces, Rotherham Military Community Veterans Centre | |
| Hannah Hall | | Engagement & Inclusion Lead, Patient Experience, Rotherham NHS Foundation Trust | |
| Richard Lenton | | Regional Employer Engagement Director, Reserve Forces' & Cadets' Association for Yorkshire and The Humber / Ministry of Defence | |
| 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 asked the group to stand for a moment of silence, for the passing of | |
|  | Frank Wells, who was well known within the Armed Forces Community. | |
| **2.** | **Minutes of the last meeting, 15th May 2023 and Matters Arising** | |  |
| **2.1** | **Paragraph 5.4** – It was not possible to arrange a signing with the Yorkshire Society as | |
|  | a result of them awaiting approval from the Ministry of Defence regarding signing a | |
|  | covenant in their own right so therefore not possible to arrange a co-signing with | |
|  | Rotherham. | |
| **2.2** | **Paragraph 6.3** - With regards to Employer Recognition Scheme Renewals, Rotherham | |
|  | Council at the end of July completed a survey for renewals / revalidation of Silver. | |
| **2.3** | **Paragraph 7.3** - As of 24th July, Rotherham NHS Foundation Trust had not received | |
|  | any update on the dentistry service van for veterans. As far as they know the plan is | |
|  | for this to start in September 2023. | |

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| **2.4**  **2.5** | **Paragraph 7.6** - The Royal Yorkshire Regiment were involved in Yorkshire Day – an email was sent out to the Covenant Group on 28th July confirming armed forces involvement in the day and photograph of the Armed Forces holding the flag in the Minster on 2nd August following the event.  **Paragraph 7.14** – Armed Forces Day in Rotherham was a success despite some negative feedback that has been portrayed in the Rotherham Advertiser recently. |  |
| **3.**  **3.1**  **3.2** | **Rotherham’s Refreshed Armed Forces Community Covenant Group Action Plan**  Cllr Keenan advised the group that the plan was now live on the Council website and opened up for any discussions / feedback on the plan. Major Hunt stated that the actions do not have completion dates against each activity. This would be updated.  Cllr Keenan stated that she had received positive feedback on the improved and refreshed Armed Forces pages on the Council website. Emma Colley confirmed that work was still ongoing and would welcome any further feedback. | Vicky Hartley / Cllr Keenan |
| **4.** | **Rotherham’s Homelessness Prevention & Rough Sleeper Strategy 2023-2026** |  |
| **4.1** | Kim Firth, Homelessness and Temporary Accommodation Manager, presented on the |  |
|  | Councils Allocation Policy to the group. Cllr Jones asked for the 5-year cut off for | Kim Firth |
|  | veterans to be looked at, Major Adrian Hunt agreed as he stated that the first 5 years |  |
|  | following discharge, are often taken up with finding new jobs, homes etc and after that |  |
|  | period, years 7, 8,9 or even 10 are when the difficulties arise. Kim Firth confirmed she |  |
|  | will discuss this with Sandra Tolley who writes the policies, Kim will also request that |  |
|  | Sandra attends the next group meeting. |  |
|  | *Post Meeting Update: Kim Firth has spoken to Sandra Tolley about the 5-year cut-off* |  |
|  | *for service leavers, Sandra will look at this as part of the “light” review on the current* |  |
|  | *allocations policy. An update will be provided at the next covenant meeting.* |  |
| **4.2** | Kim presented the Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeper Strategy to the |  |
|  | group. At present there are 146 temporary accommodations in Rotherham, 66 of which |  |
|  | are hotels and some of those are apartments outside of Rotherham. There are |  |
|  | currently 421 open homelessness cases made up of the following: |  |
|  | * 114 at the prevention stage (at risk of homelessness) |  |
|  | * 170 + 86 who are homeless. |  |
|  | * 50 cases which are being investigated. |  |
|  | Neil Halsey asked how much housing stock there is available across the Borough, Kim |  |
|  | confirmed around 25k. |  |
|  | *Post meeting as at 31/7/23* |  |
| **4.3** | Kim advised that they do not currently have any veterans who are flagged as |  |
|  | homeless. Cllr Keenan requested that this number is double checked due to sending |  |
|  | cases through recently. Steve Lowe asked if any background checks are carried out for |  |
|  | anyone presenting as homeless and a veteran, Kim confirmed that discharge papers |  |
|  | are requested. |  |
| **4.4** | Kim confirmed that a big problem with the temporary accommodation at present, is that |  |
|  | a number of them require updating, however due to the turnover and number of people |  |
|  | requiring them, it is not possible to take one out of rotation to update. Major Hunt asked |  |
|  | what the impact of Crisis Rotherham closing would be on the time, Kim confirmed it |  |
|  | would be minimal as they had only just started working with them. |  |

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|  |  | **NORTH** |  |  | **SOUTH** |  |  | **Grand Total** |  |  |
| Bedsit | 59 | | | 15 | | | 74 | | |  |
| Bungalow | 2,033 | | | 2,767 | | | 4,800 | | |
| Flat | 3,201 | | | 1,931 | | | 5,132 | | |
| House | 5,232 | | | 4,486 | | | 9,718 | | |
| Maisonette | 149 | | | 62 | | | 211 | | |
| **Grand Total** | **10,674** | | | **9,261** | | | **19,935** | | |

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| **4.5** | Kim confirmed that a new Assistant Director, James Clark, had taken up post and was looking at recruitment for the service. Due to pressures within the service, staffing was currently an issue. Issues with rent reform and private landlords selling off properties were also impacting on the way the service was running. Kim is working to reduce the number of hotels used as temporary accommodation, however the forecast for spend by the end of the next financial year is around £1.2m. | Emma Colley |
| **4.6** | There is a Homeless prevention grant which is available, this is to provide rent in advance or a security bond for rented properties. Emma Colley to pull together information and distribute to the group.  *Post meeting update: For households who are at risk of homelessness or homeless, we have allocated government funding – Homeless Prevention Grant. This funding is* |  |
| **5.** | **Covenant Group Member Updates** |  |
|  | **Royal British Legion** |  |
| **5.1** | There is a Veterans seminar planned for early October – Ron to provide further details to Members. | Ron Moffett |
|  | *Post meeting update: Information circulated to Members on 22/08/23t.* |  |
|  | **Cllr Jones/ MCVC** |  |
| **5.2** | Drop-in sessions have increased to 2 per week. MCVC have run some successful |  |
|  | events and trips for veterans, including to Armed Forces Day in Cleethorpes and |  |
|  | Doncaster. Currently doing outreach work with a lot of partner organisations. MCVC |  |
|  | have also recently been awarded the ERS Silver award. |  |
|  | **Major Hunt** |  |
| **5.3** | Major Hunt has been busy supporting the battalions with exercises in Belize and Kenya |  |
|  | with training and supporting other units. SSAFA will be holding an event at the Cutlers |  |
|  | Hall in September with the Coldstream Guards Band. |  |
|  | **Neil Halsey – DWP** |  |
| **5.4** | Senior management have been looking to increase Neil’s role from 2.5 days a week to |  |
|  | full time on the Armed Forces role, this should be confirmed in the next week. There |  |
|  | are a lot of planned projects subject to this change. Neil confirmed they have been |  |
|  | looking at the new veterans passport and trying to streamline the service. Kim asked if |  |
|  | this could be used by housing allocations as it would be a useful tool. Neil advised the |  |
|  | passport is available now, it just requires some further work and he will provide an |  |
|  | update on the progress for the next meeting. |  |
| **5.5** | **Pauline King – MOD**  Pauline confirmed that of the applications for the ERS Silver, there had been 32 |  |
|  | successful applicants, 7 of which were from South Yorkshire. For the ERS Gold award, |  |
|  | there had only been 3 successful applicants. The opening for ERS Gold will be early |  |
|  | 2024. |  |
|  | **Malcolm Blease – RAF** |  |
| **5.6** | Malcolm would like to thank Steve Bentham-Bates and the Council’s housing team for |  |
|  | assisting with supporting a homeless veteran to get housing. |  |
| **6.** | **Any other Business** |  |
| **6.1** | **Remembrance Sunday** - Cllr Keenan confirmed that planning was already underway |
|  | for the Remembrance Sunday Parade at Clifton Park in November and that the South |
|  | Yorkshire Police Band will be supporting. |
| **7.** | **Future Meetings** |  |
| **7.1** | These would all be held in person at Rotherham Town Hall (2-4pm) on Mondays:   * Monday, 30th October 2023 * Monday, 19th February 2024 * Monday, 3rd June 2024 * Monday, 18th September 2024 * Monday, 27th November 2024 |

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| *to help prevent or relief homelessness. We can use funds from this budget to help a* | | |
| *household with rent in advance and bond to secure accommodation in the private* | |  |
| *sector. The new property does have to been deemed as suitable and affordable* | *.* | |