

**TELFORD & WREKIN COUNCIL  
 CABINET 17 MARCH 2022  
 THE DELIVERY OF THE ARMED FORCES COVENANT INCLUDING CALM CAFES FOR VETERANS  
 LEAD CABINET MEMBER: CLLR PAUL WATLING: CABINET MEMBER FOR STRONGER AND SAFER COMMUNITIES  
 REPORT OF ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR: POLICY & GOVERNANCE**

**PART A) – SUMMARY REPORT**

**1. SUMMARY OF MAIN PROPOSALS**

1.1. This Report provides an update on the work of the Council’s Commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant including the delivery of the Calm Cafes for Veterans. To build on the success of the Calm Cafes for Veterans, it is proposed that the funding is provided to enable them to continue for a further two years from January 2023.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that Cabinet:

2.1. Notes the achievements of the Council in relation to the delivery of its Armed Forces Covenant commitments.

2.2. Endorses the allocation of additional funding for the Calm Cafes for Veterans to continue for two years from January 2023 as set out in the report.

**3. SUMMARY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

<b>COMMUNITY IMPACT</b>	Do these proposals contribute to specific Co-Operative Council priority objective(s)?	
	Yes	<i>This proposal supports the Council’s priority that every child, young person and adult lives well in their community. It promotes activity which will help to reduce health inequalities within our armed forces population.</i>
	Will the proposals impact on specific groups of people?	
	Yes	<i>The proposals contained in this report positively impact on armed forces communities, veterans and their families.</i>
<b>TARGET COMPLETION/DELIVERY DATE</b>	Extend delivery of AFC Calm Cafes until December 2024.	
<b>FINANCIAL/VALUE FOR MONEY IMPACT</b>	Yes	The cost of continuing the provision of the Calm Cafes for Veterans over a two year period, as detailed in section 7, is estimated to be £22,320.

		This cost will be funded from the Covid Recovery and Regeneration Reserve created at the end of 2020/21. TAS 28.2.22
<b>LEGAL ISSUES</b>	Yes	<p>The Armed Forces Act 2021 has enshrined the Armed Forces Covenant in law. It requires local authorities to have due regard to the unique obligations of, and sacrifices made by, the armed forces.</p> <p>The Covenant recognises that it is desirable to remove disadvantages arising for service people from membership, or former membership, of the armed forces. It further sets out that special provision for service people may be justified by the effects their service with armed forces has had on them.</p> <p>The Council has the legal power to fund the Calm Cafes and they are one way in which the Council can demonstrate that it is meeting its legal obligation to give effect to the Armed Forces Covenant. RP 1/3/22</p>
<b>OTHER IMPACTS, RISKS &amp; OPPORTUNITIES</b>	No	
<b>IMPACT ON SPECIFIC WARDS</b>	No	<i>Borough-wide impact.</i>

## **PART B) – ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

### **4. INFORMATION**

#### **5. The Armed Forces Covenant in Telford & Wrekin**

5.1. The Armed Forces Covenant is a promise by the Nation that those who serve, or who have served, in the Armed Forces, and their families, will be treated fairly and will not be disadvantaged as a result of their military Service when accessing public and commercial goods and services. It also allows for special provision for those who have sacrificed the most, such as bereaved families and those who were injured.

5.2. The Armed Forces community includes Regular Serving Personnel, Reservists, Veterans (those who have served for at least one day) and their families. It should be noted that as eligibility to join the Reserve Services begins at 15 years and 9 months some Volunteer Reservists may be in state education. Also, in England, where statutory education lasts until 18 years of age, veterans might also require state-provided education should they be released from service before they are aged eighteen.

5.3. In 2012, Telford & Wrekin Council signed the Armed Forces Community Covenant to pledge its support to its local Armed Forces communities. The Council subsequently re-signed the Covenant in 2020.

5.4. In July 2020, Telford & Wrekin Council was awarded the Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS) Gold Award by the Secretary of State for Defence. The Gold Award demonstrates that Telford & Wrekin Council is an exemplar employer advocating support to defence people issues to partner organisations, suppliers and customers with tangible results. The Award formally recognised the Council's continued support to the local Armed Forces community and acknowledged our advocacy work in encouraging other organisations to sign the Covenant and to engage in the ERS.

## **6. Impact of the Armed Forces Covenant in Telford & Wrekin**

6.1. A key focus of the Armed Forces Covenant is to increase the number of local organisations that are signed up to the Covenant commitment. To date, seventy-six organisations in Telford and Wrekin have signed the Covenant (this figure has doubled in the last eleven months) including twenty-four out of the twenty-seven Parish and Town Councils who have signed since the 1st April 2021. [FOR SMT ONLY: two of the three remaining are committed to do so in the next couple of weeks and the third will discuss the matter in May]. It is anticipated that, by the summer, Telford & Wrekin Council will be the first in the country to achieve the position of having all Town and Parish Councils signed up to the Covenant – this position has received excellent feedback from the Chief Executive of the West Midlands Reserve Forces & Cadet Association.

6.2. Organisations can benefit significantly from membership to the Covenant scheme which offers an opportunity to build a reputation as being Forces-friendly when public support for the Armed Forces is at an all-time high. Recently, a small Pet Services business in Telford reported that, since signing the Covenant, they had seen a significant increase in the number of customers and many of them had directly referred to this declared support to the Armed Forces community. The Armed Forces Covenant Co-ordinator works closely with Inward Investment & Business Support and regular Business Engagement events are held across the Borough. The last event was at The Royal Yeomanry, in Dawley, on the 22nd February 2022. Annex A contains further cases studies on the impact of the Armed Forces Covenant.

## **7. Calm Cafes for Veterans**

7.1. On the 10th January 2022, the Council launched Calm Cafes for Veterans following the receipt of a grant of £6,250 from the Sustaining Delivery of the Armed Forces Covenant Trust Fund. A condition of the grant award is that the funding has to be spent before the end of November 2022.

7.2. The Calm Cafes, delivered by Telford Mind, provide an opportunity to offer an early intervention service to those who are experiencing poor emotional wellbeing and mental health. They are available on a drop-in basis for Veterans and aim to fill the void caused by isolation and detachment after Service life. The Cafes also provide a platform for social interaction and comradeship whilst providing mental health and wellbeing support for those who may require it.

7.3. The Calm Cafes have, so far, proved to be very successful and, after the initial launch, a larger venue had to be sourced due to high attendance numbers. At present, the Cafes are held twice a month at Dawley House however, there is recognised demand for further ones to be held across the Borough and during the evening for working veterans. The Cafes have garnered significant local interest including a feature on BBC Midlands Today.

7.4. Whilst the Council works closely with its partners to keep costs to a minimum, the delivery of the Calm Cafes for Veterans does incur costs. These costs include:-

- Staffing costs (with specialism in combat training)
- Volunteer expenses, to include DBS check and to secure additional support for the delivery of the Calm Cafes
- Refreshments for those in attendance
- Venue Hire

It should be noted, however, that wherever possible, the Council seeks accommodation from our partners on a free of charge basis – this is the arrangement with Great Dawley Town Council in respect of Dawley House. Having said that, given that there is a desire to roll out the Calm Café's across the borough, there may be times when it is necessary to pay for accommodation.

7.5. The Armed Forces Coordinator has also commenced a piece of work to identify how we can secure additional support from volunteers. Further, as commitment to the Armed Forces covenant increases throughout the Borough, it is anticipated that there will be additional opportunities to support the work of the Calm Café through our partners.

7.6. It is proposed that funding for the Calm Cafes continue from January 2023 for a further two years. To facilitate three Cafes a month (one during the evening) over a two year period, the total sum equates to £22,320 which is based on a cost of £310 per session. It is proposed that the funding is secured through the Council's Covid Recovery and Regeneration Fund which is intended to address, amongst other things, inequalities.

## **8. PREVIOUS MINUTES**

N/A

## **9. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

N/A

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**CASE STUDIES: IMPACT OF THE ARMED FORCES COVENANT**

**Case Study 1: Interview with a local veteran on Calm Café's**

In 2013, I got diagnosed with PTSD and went through all of the treatments that you can think of. I went to Audley Court (Combat Stress at Newport) for their six weeks in-house programme. I also had Eye Movement Desensitization & Reprocessing (EMDR) and Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT). So when I heard about the Calm Cafes for Veterans, I thought it was a fantastic idea. At the time, I would've loved to have been somewhere where I could just go and have a cup of tea with somebody, instead of getting drunk.

Even if it was just to go and have a cup of tea with somebody telling them about my nightmares at night. How my wife has to wrap me up like a sausage at night time because I punch out and I scream and shout and sweat in my sleep. That would have helped me to talk to somebody about that and somebody who wasn't a therapist.

Some experiences that you have in the Army are so unique, even when you're in there, you can't understand it. It's when you leave and you don't have it anymore – that's when it becomes apparent. To have that with somebody that also understands what you're saying without any fear of judgement, any fear that if you say something then someone's going to run away and without self-destructing yourself in any way.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/uk-england-shropshire-60159337>

**Case Study 2: Rodington Parish Council (from the Parish Clerk)**

Since signing the Covenant in 2021, Rodington Parish Council has taken stock of their commitments and accessed not only what they should do, but what they could do. This means not only publishing the signed Covenant and saying all the good things but also acting on their commitments in the local community.

Rodington, which has only 7 Councillors and 1 Clerk and a small precept has;

- Reinvigorated the remembrance services across the parish (there is one in each of the two villages) and we now send a Councillor to lay a wreath at each service.
- Purchased two sets of both a woman and man "Silent Soldiers" to be presented in both villages for all to see the respect and commitment to our armed forces personnel.
- Begun the investigations into installing a permanent War Memorial in the parish.
- Appointed an Armed Forces Champion whose details are published in a quarterly magazine to every household in the parish, encouraging a private and anonymous call-in line to speak with the Armed Forces Champion whom was selected carefully as they are also someone who has significant links within the armed forces in their own family, meaning that they are likely to understand the challenges that armed forces personnel experience.

- We have plans to include the local armed forces at every event we can throughout the year, for recruitment and awareness campaigns.
- We are looking at ways where we can use Reserve Soldiers from the Royal Yeomanry and other units to work on local projects in the parish, with the parish council volunteers partnering with them.

This is all in tribute to the Covenant giving the council a real kick of positivity toward their commitments to what is often considered the "hidden community" as we know that not many past or present personnel will speak of their service actively, so often go unnoticed.

### **Case Study 3: Individual Veteran (from Armed Forces Covenant Co-ordinator)**

The Armed Forces Covenant Co-ordinator received a referral, from a local GP, for a veteran who was awaiting admission to a rehabilitation clinic (at the Princess Royal Hospital) for alcohol addiction. He had become extremely isolated (was unable to leave his flat due to health issues) and had built up significant debt. He was also unable/unwilling to speak to anyone on the phone. We contacted the West Midlands Royal British Legion Team who sent round a case worker and put in place a befriending service which enabled him to leave his flat as he was accompanied. As he had fairly recently left the Services, we also contacted the Defence Transition Services (DTS) who were able to support him with his financial difficulties and provide debt counselling.

DTS was established in October 2019, as part of the Ministry of Defence's new Holistic Transition Policy. They exist to provide information and support for those Service leavers, and their families, who are most likely to face challenges as they leave the Armed Forces and adjust to civilian life during the first two years of transition.