

CAERPHILLY ARMED FORCES FORUM

At 10.30 am on Thursday, 1st September, 2016

The Ebbw Room, Ty Penallta

1. Attendance, Apologies & Introductions:

Attendance:

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| Kathryn Peters | CCBC Armed Forces Lead Officer & Chair |
| Cllr. Alan Higgs | CCBC Armed Forces Champion |
| Keith Sutcliffe | SSAFA - Gwent Area |
| Brian Tansley | SSAFA – Gwent Area |
| Mandy Keenan | Corporate Policy, CCBC |
| Steve Keenan | GAVO |
| Lisa Rawlings | Remploy |
| Jim Whitworth | Muni Project |
| Axle Rees | Hire A Hero |
| Alison Griffiths | Help For Heros |
| Anthony Metcalf | RBL |
| Abi Wrigley | AFF Wales Co-ordinator |
| Tom Doe | 203 Field ~Hospital |
| Huw Williams | 203 Field Hospital |
| Gareth Jones | Torfaen CBC |
| Tricia Bailey | Alabare |
| Jackie Steven | Alabare |
| Hayley Lancaster | CCBC, Corporate Communications |
| Dianne Webb | CCBC |

Apologies:

| | |
|-----------------|----------------------|
| Jennifer Lilley | Hire a Hero |
| Michael Jones | DWP |
| Peter Evans | Royal British Legion |

KP thanked everyone for their attendance and asked for introductions around the table.

2. Notes and matters arising from the meeting of 2nd June 2016:

Page 2. Inspire 2 Work Project has been approved by the Welsh Government for the grant money to extend to the 24+ age group.

Page 3. The minutes have been received and issued

Page 4. Mk has updated the organisation list

Page 5. Mk sent the details of the Cadet of the year to HL to produce a Newline article

Page 7. The referral form for the Work Choice Programme has been received and circulated.

Page 7. The website has now been updated

The notes were approved as a true record.

3. Update from Welsh Government Armed Forces Team:

TD stated that Ministerial responsibilities have now changed.

The Armed Forces Conference is to take place in Cardiff on the 15th September 2016.

The 2014/15 report has now been circulated

4. Armed Forces Covenant Fund

This matter has been discussed at a previous meeting. There has been no previous bid from Caerphilly and the current intention is for 1 Council to tap into the Wales wide funding on behalf of the whole of Wales.

A document was circulated prior to this meeting in regard to the proposal to appoint dedicated Covenant Development Officers, in the East, West and North regions of Wales. JW asked is this would be double hatted role if a LA employee was given the role or whether this post would be open to veterans.

It was agreed that feedback to the MOD would be sent regarding opening to a veteran on someone with a services background.

MK suggested that the person appointed should be able to network on a large scale. KP stated that an all Wales Board will be set up to manage the project and representation will be sought from all 3 areas of Wales, mirroring the All Wales Forums. SK suggested that there should be 4 areas as East will be far too big to be managed by one person. LR asked when is the cut-off date and how soon will this take place. KP stated that the cut off is October and March should see Board set up

It was agreed to feed back that there should be 4 areas and not 3.

AM asked what will happen after the 2 years of the project expires. Is there a need to define the purpose. SK stated that short term is the way of the world at the moment but there should be an exit strategy and definable outcomes within the plan. KP ran through the summary of potential activities and asked that any comments be sent to MK by end of day tomorrow. MK stated that training should be replaced with train the trainer. Many veterans do not have access to the information or are unaware that it exists. A website with links would enable access and access in private if appropriate, for example researching PTSD. KP stated that a sum of 2million has been made available to the MOD for the Gateway Project. JW stated that when you are demobbed there is no information available and if there was you would not know what information you need until the time comes. There is a need for a type of directory as minimum to be issued when you leave by the MOD. TD stated that information goes out of date so quickly, sometimes due to the short term funding discussed earlier. People do not want to scroll through screens and pages. All the links should be on the front page. The hits data could be captured and used to highlight the most common problems, capture the data and highlight the gaps. AG stated that help is often advertised from charities that have no real professionals in the field and don't really help.

5. Updates

5a 203 Battalion

TD stated that the battalion was part of the Armed Forces Day in Caerphilly which was far better organised than in North Wales.

Also attended was the Flag raising in both Caerphilly and in Rhymney on both occasions battling pouring rain.

The battalion will be part of an Integrated Support Exercise in the Nevada Dessert from the 9th October to the 31st October 2016. Both the BBC and ITV have been approached to cover this exercise and produce a couple of short articles.

5d SSAFA

Keith Sutcliffe reported that Michelle Williams has taken over from Mike Bailey

John Prosser has been invited on board HMS Monmouth

Tanya Strange from the ABHB has been invited to join this group

The biggest enquiries this year concern debt and funding of funerals. The maximum grant for funerals is now £600 but the average cost is £2500

The Royal Welsh Regiment will be giving a concert in the Memo on the 24th September 2016.

A Meeting of the Forum is to take place in the Castle on the 5th October

An information day is to be held on the 8th October 2016 for the over 50's

There was a recent conference in London at which the Gurkha Welfare Trust gave a presentation. The trust only supports Gurkas in Nepal and not in the UK. Interpreters are also a problem for them.

The work with prisoners continues and new figures suggest that 10% are sex offenders, 2 of which are in this area.

KS to send details of events to MK for circulation

6 SWAF Day and Big Cheese

Cllr Higgs stated that a press release has been issued supporting the RBL campaign

The Gun salute was attended on the 24th June 2016 with one of his clients.

The invitation from HMS Dragon was cancelled due to commitments.

An invitation from the Royal Welsh RBL was also received but due to work commitments was unable to attend.

The Caretaker from Aberbargoed School has recently cycled to the Somme battlefield to raise awareness and raise funds.

There has been a meeting with the Lord Lieutenant and other champions of Forums across Wales

The Wales Festival of Remembrance will take place on the 5th November 2016 this year.

A World War 1 bronze plaque has been found in Rhymney. It was previously in the institute and we are looking for funding and /or volunteers to re-mount it at Rhymney

Comprehensive School.

102 Asked that Cllr Higgs send him the details

8s MK asked that the group assist her in reporting the tangible benefits of this forum to WAG which may develop into a funding opportunity.

Networking – Face to Face information sharing

Contacts – previously unknown projects discovered

Signposting – transmission improvement

Experience – different people and parts of the community

Duplication of services

MK presented the photographs of recent activities to the group. She suggested that a Facebook page for Caerphilly Armed Forces might be established if supported by the group however this would only be possible if one or two group members were prepared to volunteer to manage the page re posting the pictures and relevant information.

7. Update from Cllr Alan Higgs (Caerphilly Armed Forces Champion):

Cllr Higgs thanked everyone who took part in the Armed Forces Day and the Big Cheese.

(s) HL stated that organisations see this as a big success and we have already been approached to hold the event next year.

The South Wales Volunteer Awards have also been entered.

A Merchant Navy Day will be held on the 3rd September 2016 when the flag will be raised at 9.00am here at Ty Penallta.

8 Update from Members of the Forum:

8b **614 Squadron** – No information received

8c **RBL** – AM stated that he is new to the post and your support in the Count me in Campaign is appreciated. AM's and MP's have sign up to it. The National Housing Pathway Document has been drafted and will be launched on the 15th September for consultation. Hopefully the actual launch will take place around the time of the Festival of Remembrance. The Poppy appeal will begin in the 27th October 2016 and will also be sold during the Wales V Australia game.

KS stated that Risca have designed their own badge and he has recently discovered that 10,000 poppy ladies have resigned following an article in the Daily Mail on the 28th August 2016 stating that monies collected formed part of the wage bill for the charity.

- (d) **SSAFA**
 KS reported that SSAFA is as busy as usual and gave example of activity including, attending funerals, prison visits and success in securing HGV driving courses for prisoners as part of their resettlement process through retraining for release.
- (i) **Probation Service/Community Rehabilitation Company, Wales.**
 There is an Armed Forces section in Parc Prison where prisoners are sent just before release
 An ADHD training day will be held in Wrexham
 The Llanfrechfa site is now being cleared to make ready for the building of the specialist unit.
- (j) **Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations (GAVO).**
 The deputy CEO of GAVO has resigned and will be leaving soon but there has been no replacement yet appointed.
- (q) **First Choice Housing Association.**
 The response from the housing survey from the tri services was phenomenal. The data is still awaited. JW suggested that service personnel should be put onto the housing register prior to leaving the service. AM stated that the point has been raised in the report which will be circulated following the meeting on the 15th September 2016.
- (r) **St Loyes Foundation**
 Funding has now ended and the project no longer exists.

 A premises has been identified in Treforest Industrial Estate. All veterans are now accepted whereas previously only Afghanistan and Iraq veterans were able to engage.
- (t) **Muni Project**
 Community Meetings have taken place at Job Centres who did not know where to send people for support. Leaflets have now been sent to every Job site in RCT with a view to issuing in Caerphilly Borough asap.
 The Combat Stress Workers Posts have been cut due to funding, which will leave a massive void.
 Project Bright Horizons are renovating a Guildhall using vets who are now self-employed instead of the bigger building firms.

 TB stated that Floating support and outreach have taken on some of that work. A drop in Centre will be opening soon in Merthyr .
- (t) **Hire a Hero**
 AR stated that he left the services in May and had no idea of what is available and therefore it is vital to give out information.
 Attended Armed Forces day but was aware of something going on behind which distracted people. MK stated that feedback in that regard has already been received. AR asked that next year, a better position would be sought.
 A pilot programme with Change Step will be taken to Usk prison where they have a specialist vets wing. The biggest concern from the prison is housing.
- (w) **Remploy**
 LR stated that there is a need to promote good news stories and the Bright Project is ideal.
9. **Caerphilly Armed Forces Forum Activity Programme.**

MK requested that if the Forum members had any events/ activities coming up to let her know, to make sure they can be added to the spreadsheet and therefore keep the website up to date.

11. AOB:

Cllr Higgs stated that he would like to visit the individual projects to see for himself exactly what is being done.

12. Date of next meeting:

At 10.30 am on Friday 2nd December 2016 in the Ebbw Room, Ty Penallta. Tredomen Park, Ystrad Mynach , HENGOED CF87 7PG