

CAERPHILLY ARMED FORCES FORUM

Meeting

At 10.00 am on Thursday 20th November 2014

in the Rhymney Room

Caerphilly County Borough Council Offices

Ty Penallta

1. Attendance, Apologies & Introductions:

Attendance: Howard Rees (CCBC Armed Forces Lead Officer & Chair), John Elliott (CCBC – Policy), Keith Sutcliffe & Chris Kirk (SSAFA Gwent Area), Captain Huw Williams & WO2 Mark Wilson (203 (Welsh) Fd., Hospital), Steve Keenan (GAVO), Ken Terry & Alison Parkinson (Royal British Legion), Andrew Bush (National Probation Service), Sgt. Rob Davies (Gwent Police), Laura Bryon (WLGA – Supporting Service Children in Education)

Apologies: Peter Evans & Peter Wilson (Royal British Legion), Brian Mawby (ABUHB Armed Forces Champion), Insp., K. Childs (Gwent Police), Hayley Lancaster (CCBC Corporate Communications), Abbie Morgan (Caerphilly & Blaenau Gwent Citizens Advice Bureau), Stephen Hughes (Reserve Forces' & Cadets' Association for Wales), Ceri Pritchard & Mike Jones (DWP), Maria Chapman (Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner for Gwent), Cllr Alan Higgs (CCBC Armed Forces Champion),

Introductions: HR welcomed everyone and introductions were provided, for this, the sixth meeting of the Caerphilly Armed Forces Forum (CAFF). He also mentioned that if members of the Forum were dealing with individual cases of veterans, reservists or serving personnel, who have issues/problems, which could be addressed by particular agencies on the Forum, then anonymised information should be used, with a view to obtaining advice and support.

2. Notes and matters arising from the meeting of 18th September 2014:

Notes were approved as a true record.

3. Presentation from Laura Bryon – Supporting Service Children in Education Wales:

Laura Bryon was appointed, in July, by the WLGA to develop the Supporting Service Children in Education Project. The WLGA had successfully made a bid to fund this post and the work, from funding by the MOD. The bid focused on the lack of data currently available regarding Service children, both on the

number and the location of this cohort, as well as developing an all Wales toolkit for Education providers across Wales. LB described the work of this Project in Wales.

As far as schools are concerned in England and Scotland, there is a more strategic approach to ensuring that places are available for service children in the Primary and Secondary sector. These places come with the added incentive that the school has funding for each service child attending their school, the Service Pupil Premium.

The funding from the MOD, has to be applied for by each school who expect to take service children. Not many schools in Wales have applied for this funding. Equally there is no accurate information on actual numbers and locations of service children in Wales. With a greater amount of research, it is hoped that there will be more bids from Welsh schools next year.

With detailed awareness work throughout those areas of Wales where there are significant military bases, it is expected that an All Wales Toolkit will be developed by next year. This will list detailed school information, of use to parents, describing such challenges as the Welsh Language in schools, and how the language is promoted and taught in schools, to hopefully provide a more inclusive picture across all of Wales.

The Wales Data Unit will run a tele-survey to look at a sample of schools in Wales, to ascertain some baseline evidence about what, if any, level of knowledge and awareness of Service Children there is, and if schools within service base areas are developing any methods of data collection. This information will be used to investigate how these children are registered/recognised in the schools' communities, and how readily they are integrated with the rest of the school pupils.

The 2011 census has some details on dependents aged 0-15 where the HRP (Household Reference Person) is in the armed forces. This data does not cover the 16-18 age range, or data from reservists and veterans. RCT County Borough Council have activated a tab on their schools information management system (SIMS), to identify Service children (including veterans and reservists) as part of their vulnerability profile toolkit.

Six engagement events are planned, for professionals, service families and young people to inform the development of a toolkit that reflects the needs and experiences of Service Children in Wales. The findings will be available towards the end of year one, i.e. June / July 2015.

LB intends to launch a website this week (Week ending 21st November) from which visitors can download various resources, take part in surveys, and check on any issues.

LB will be running engagement events for service families and their children, which will take place around Armed Forces Day 2015, and if there is any way that the Caerphilly Armed Forces Forum could assist with this, LB would be grateful.

The Supporting Service Children in Education Wales project includes armed forces bases covered by 160 Brigade HQ. These are, Beachley Barracks in Chepstow, St. Athan, Brecon and includes reservist bases that have permanent staff.

The Chair mentioned that he could inform the Local Service Board with details on this project, which may assist.

There will be press releases on this work and it may be featured in local newsletters. A comment was made that LB may wish to have the assistance of the RBL and that she should contact Peter Evans regarding this matter.

Contact details for those who wish to reach Laura Bryon are:-

The All Wales Project Officer for Service Children in Education

Tel: 029 20 468616 Mob: 07769 724392 E-mail: laura.bryon@wlga.gov.uk

Website: www.sscecymru.co.uk

The Chair said that following discussions he has had with 160 Brigade at Brecon, the expected number of veterans returning to the Caerphilly C B area, are low and in the region of 15 people. Some of these may have families but due to the low numbers it is expected that the council can absorb all aspects of their return should they require the services i.e., Housing and/or Education.

LB said that one example she had encountered was that of a serving soldier, currently based in Scotland and who is likely to be posted to Brecon. He was concerned about the progress of his children locally in Scotland and had concerns about the differences of the same year group, being taught in Wales.

4. Update from Gwent Armed Forces Forum - 15th October 2014:

Andrea Barr the Admissions Officer for Usk and Prescoed Prison said that there were a number of ex-armed forces personnel, serving sentences in the Category C, Usk Prison. The Forum was offered the opportunity that after the next meeting in February 2015, for those who wish, there will be a tour of Usk Prison. The WW1 exhibition, made by prisoners is apparently impressive.

5. Welsh Government Armed Forces Champions Network – 27th November 2014:

The above event was attended by several members of the Caerphilly Armed Forces Forum. There were various presentations to identify issues/experiences of the Armed Forces community in Wales, and the initiatives/actions being taken to support the Armed Forces community,

including the school children of Armed Forces personnel. Mr Tom Dalby, from the Defence Discount Service, was launching the Discount Card in Wales which is available for Serving and Reserve Armed Forces, and veterans. The Defence Privilege Card is a card that members of the armed forces community can take into participating shops, restaurants and venues and receive a discount. It can also be used when purchasing online.

The card is valid for 5 years and costs £4.99. New companies are added daily to the service.

The event was an excellent opportunity to network with members of the armed forces and other representatives from some councils around Wales. Some useful information was obtained by all from the workshops.

Special note was made about the Welsh Government 'Expert Group' which asks for official updates from Foras in LHB areas, but which never seems to provide Foras with information, i.e. no free flow of information, both ways.

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

It has been a very busy time for me and I have really enjoyed all the events that I have attended or have taken part in.

I attended:-

- the launch of Centenary Fields in October, and also the RBL Poppy Appeal Launch on HMS Somerset.
- The Veterans Mental Health Support Meeting held at Maindy Barracks.
- I attended the unveiling of a Plaque in Fochriw which commemorated 17 service men who were killed in WW1, where I read out their names. Also on the Plaque were the names of 108 Miners who were killed in the coal mines around Fochriw in 1914-1918. Their names were read out by the local School Children, it was a very moving event.
- I also attended an unveiling of a Plaque at Tir-y-Berth with the local Councillors and 3 of the residents, who had the names of 6 service men who were also killed in WW1.
- I was asked about three weeks before Remembrance Day if I could assist in organising the first remembrance service that Fochriw had ever had.

I would like to thank all of those who helped me make the service possible. The RBL for providing Three Standard Bearers and taking charge of the Parade, the 203 (Welsh) Field Hosp., who were asked to attend, but with out any warning of taking part in the parade (true professionals), Pastor Stephen Williams from Hills Community Church, Aberbargoed, who at very short notice, read the Service of Remembrance.

Maesycwmmmer's councillor, Cllr Robin Woodyatt got in touch to ask if he could have a Standard Bearer for the Remembrance Sunday service starting at Noon. Blackwood Army Cadets provided the Standard Bearer and Four Cadets.

Once again a massive thank you to you all for your support in those three villages, and can someone pass on my thanks to Blackwood ACF for their continuing support.

I also had to organise my own village, Aberbargoed's remembrance service, from road closure, guests, church venue, etc.. Again I would like to thank all of those people who attended and who made this one of the best remembrance services that our village has ever had.

203 (Welsh) Field Hosp., Sgt Nigel Smith who laid a wreath.

Private Lewis Edwards, 2 Battalion Royal Welsh, 4xGold Medal winner (Swimming) as part of the British Armed Forces team at the Invictus Games.

Aberbargoed Primary School who read out the names of over 80 service men killed between 1914 -1918 WW1.

Bro Sannan Primary who wrote and recited a poem, and the three children who proudly laid a wreath.

A big thank you to Lewis Boys School for sending one of their pupils to play the Bugle.

The setting was the centenary of WW1 but not forgetting all other conflicts since. Between 150 to 200 people turned out at the Aberbargoed Remembrance Sunday Service .

7. Update from Members of the Forum:

- 7 a) **203 (Welsh) Field Hospital** Personnel from 203 have been networking with the representative from GAVO. The 203 have been busy over the past couple of months in particular supporting Cllr Alan Higgs and others for remembrance ceremonies around the county borough. The 203 have are working towards their recruiting targets placed on them by the MOD, as do other units of the Army, Navy and Air Force, for the recruitment of reservists. Capt. Huw Williams said that the new CO for the 203 (Welsh) Field Hospital, Colonel Smith, was interested in attending a future meeting of this Forum.
- 7 b) **The Royal British Legion** (KT) updated that the RBL had now moved into their new offices, a shop unit at 18 - 19 High Street, Cardiff, CF10 1PT. The new 'Pop In Shop' was opened in October and receives between 20 and 25 enquiries per day, which rose to a peak of 125 as Remembrance Day

approached. The poppy collections went well which showed an increase of 20% UK wide, and an increase in Caerphilly county borough of 55%.

The RBL has now produced its Manifesto 2015. There is a shorter version, which details the RBL's top five policy recommendations. The Chair reminded the Forum that he had produced a report for the Council's Corporate Management Team, which was submitted before the Forum's last meeting in September, which endorsed the fact that Caerphilly County Borough was following the RBL's top five policy recommendations, in accordance with the Welsh Government guidelines.

The Chair stated that the RBL is offering veterans awareness training for front line staff, and said that he was keen to extend this training opportunity to other organisations across the Caerphilly Armed Forces Forum, and wider if required. The RBL training would be 2 to 3 hours duration.

- 7 c) **SSAFA** (KS & CK) updated the forum on developments. They are aware that Newport Housing have a flagging system which indicates, for call backs, that the client is a veteran. The Chair said that although the development of statistical information could be useful, the more pressing need is for the provision of adequate council services, and not on numbers alone.

A disabled local RBL veteran had won six medals in the recent Invictus Games.

The case load being dealt with by SSAFA has risen, some of which had been referred to SSAFA from Help for Heroes, who only deal with Veterans with post 2002 service. Unusual requests recently have been for adapted wheelchairs for particular, court sports, use. Other cases include monetary assistance for rent and council tax arrears. There was some concern in this case as to POVA (Protection of Vulnerable Adults) issues.

However, SSAFA caseworkers are now able to follow-up cases at Usk and Prescoed prisons, as they can now authorised to visit these premises.

- 7 d) **Aneurin Bevan University Health Board (ABUHB)** Noted by the ABUHB that the Caerphilly County Borough area was the largest within the old county of Gwent, followed by Newport, Torfaen, Blaenau Gwent and Monmouthshire, so proportionally veteran referrals will be greater from the CCBC area.

The Homelessness surveys currently being carried out by councils, may be an opportunity to assess how many of these people are Veterans. This may also apply to those using the Christmas, Church Night Shelters.

It was mentioned that elsewhere in the UK, when visiting a GP if a veteran states to the GP that they are ex- armed forces, then the waiting list for that person is dramatically reduced.

The Chair mentioned that the ABUHB has now developed a comprehensive Neighbourhood Care Network.

- 7 e) **Gwent Police:** (Sgt. RD) Reported that the Police were heavily involved in the Remembrance Day parades. He said that as with other organisations Gwent Police are undergoing reorganisation. RD said that he had been on an excursion to the WW1 battle fields and visited the recently erected new memorials.

This, the 100th Year commemoration of the outbreak of WW1 was reflected in the intense interest of many visitors to the battlefields, with many full coaches.

The Chair reminded the Forum that there is an excellent WW1 exhibition at the Winding House Museum in Phillipstown, with the title 'Our Duty to Bear', which displays many artefacts from WW1, and has a walk through exhibit of a sand bagged trench.

<http://your.caerphilly.gov.uk/windinghouse/exhibitions/exhibitions>

When asked whether individuals held in Custody Suites are routinely asked if they are Veterans or Serving Armed Forces Personnel, the answer was no.

However the Police & Crime Commissioner has declared an interest in this subject and may get involved in the future. Comments from various members of this Forum supported the use of single point of contact (telephone numbers) leaflets or cards, for use to include Custody Suites.

- 7 f) **Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner for Gwent** We were advised that the commissioner is very supportive of the work being undertaken by the Forum, and that he could assist by signposting projects and initiatives, in the future.

- 7 h) **Probation Service:** (AB) Andrew Bush represents the National Probation Service. This service is undergoing fundamental reorganisation and AB apologised for the lack of attendance for the recent past meetings. The service is to be divided into two agencies, with the National Probation Service dealing with serious crime ex-offenders, and a Community Rehabilitation Company who will deal with the medium to low risk ex-offenders.

A recent count on the allocation of offenders reveals that there are a total of 2,500 offenders covered by the service in our area, 1,500 by the Community Rehabilitation Company, and 1,000 by the National Probation Service. The number of veterans within this population is unknown. The Integrated Management Scheme may deal with this statistic in the future, and how the service links with the stages of sentencing and pre-sentencing. AB said that it would be useful to add Terry Reddington of the Wales Probation Service to the circulation list.

- 7 i) **Voluntary Sector** (SK from GAVO) explained that his organisation was still undergoing a very rigorous reorganisation. The main GAVO office in Caerphilly county borough was now closed and that he and other Development Officers were working from a variety of offices, some also third sector organisations, around the county borough. GAVO's main office is now in Newport. SK said that possibly the UK Household Survey may contain information on numbers and locations of veterans.

- 7 j) **Caerphilly Business Forum** apologies were noted.
- 7 k) **Caerphilly Citizens Advice Bureau** apologies were noted.
- 7 l) **Job Centre Plus** apologies were noted.
- 7 m) **Veterans UK** (Formally the SPVA) apologies were noted.
- 7 n) **Caerphilly County Borough Council updated:**
- There are listings on the council's website of a number of WW1 commemoration events, which are being operated throughout the coming year. A notable and very informative new exhibition called "Our Duty to Bear" - the First World War and Caerphilly county borough is now open. This exhibition allows people to discover more about the impact of the War on men, women and children of the local area, with powerful and poignant items loaned from the wider local community playing a central role. This exciting exhibition is at The Winding House Museum, Cross Street, New Tredegar, NP24 6EG Telephone 01443 822 666
<http://your.caerphilly.gov.uk/windinghouse/>
 - Caerphilly County Borough Council continues to provide accommodation at Ty Penallta for the RBL to deliver a fortnightly outreach service for clients who have booked to see RBL personnel. This service runs from 9am to noon every other Thursday. These sessions can be as simple as general information on services which can be accessed from the RBL, to confidential advice on a one to one basis in a private room.
 - HR will be liaising with Peter Evans (RBL) in relation to the provision of RBL Awareness Training for frontline Council Staff.
 - The Council already has a virtual network called the Caerphilly Armed Forces Network. This is made up of members of the public who have pledged support for the principles of the Armed Forces Community Covenant, and who have agreed to be e-mailed information on Council and other Partnership Agencies', projects, ceremonies or initiatives.
 - It is intended that the feasibility of establishing a CCBC Employee Veterans Network will be undertaken. This network will assist in supplying those employees, with support on any identified needs or issues. GP said that a Veterans' Staff Network had been set up in the Office for National Statistics in Newport.

8. **Caerphilly Armed Forces Forum Activity Programme:**

The updated "Timeline and Activity" document had been circulated with the agenda and reported on during the course of the meeting.

9. **Armed Forces Community Covenant Grant Scheme:**

The next submission date to the Regional Panel is 16th January, 2015 with the Panel decision in February 2015. Currently there have been no requests for

this funding from any organisations in Caerphilly county borough. It was suggested that since the above dates will be the last known dates for this scheme in its present format (Due to change from April 2015) that we follow HL's advice and organise some major publicity to encourage take up from that scheme.

10. **AOB**: None.

11. **Date of next meetings** (at CCBC Offices Ty Penallta):

- 10am on Thursday, 12th February, 2015, Ebbw Room.