



CABINET – 10TH JULY 2019

SUBJECT: ARMED FORCES - GUARANTEED INTERVIEW SCHEME

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR - EDUCATION AND CORPORATE SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To take a decision on implementing a Guaranteed Interview Scheme for Armed Forces service leavers, reservists, veterans and spouses if they meet the vacancy essential criteria.
- 1.2 To agree to engage with Career Transition Partnership (CTP) in the recruitment of service leavers.
- 1.3 The Scheme does not guarantee appointment to a vacant position. Selection procedures will still ensure the best candidate for the vacancy is appointed.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 Caerphilly County Borough Council is a signatory to the Armed Forces Covenant, launched in 2011 by the UK government, to promote and support the Armed Forces Community. The Armed Forces Covenant places an expectation on signatories that they will ensure that the Armed Forces Community are treated fairly and not disadvantaged as a result of their service. CCBC became a voluntary signatory to the Covenant in 2013.
- 2.2 The Defence Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS) comprises of Bronze, Silver and Gold awards for employers (including local authorities) that pledge, demonstrate or advocate support to defence and the Armed Forces Community, and inspire others to do the same. CCBC are currently holding the Silver Award. A supportive measure of this award, although not an essential requirement, is to implement the Guaranteed Interview Scheme for the Armed Forces Community. An application for the Gold Award has been submitted.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Cabinet are asked to:
 - a. Implement a Guaranteed Interview Scheme for service leavers, veterans, reservists and spouses
 - b. Agree to work with the Career Transition Partnership (www.ctp.org.uk), a no cost recruitment service for organisations seeking highly motivated and experienced veterans, who are leaving the Armed Forces.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 To demonstrate support for the Armed Forces Community and honour the spirit of the Armed Forces Covenant to which CCBC is a signatory. The authority has submitted an application to be a Gold Award holder on the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme.

5. THE REPORT

- 5.1 In Wales there are estimated to be 385,000 members of the Armed Forces Community, this equates to 12% of the population. This includes serving personnel, reservists and cadets as well as their families and ex-Service personnel. Many will have experienced conflict, directly or indirectly, and the challenges that can arise following this. It is known that 14,700 left the UK Regular Armed Forces in 2018. It is estimated 3000 settled in Wales.
- 5.2 The Armed Forces Covenant was enshrined in law in the Armed Forces Act 2011 and ensures that members of the Armed Forces community are not disadvantaged as a result of their service in accessing Government and commercial services. Special consideration is also appropriate in some cases, especially for those who have given most such as the injured and bereaved. The Covenant applies to serving and past Armed Forces community members and their families.
- 5.3 CCBC is the lead organisation in delivering on the Armed Forces Covenant at a local level. The Caerphilly Armed Forces Forum, comprising statutory and third sector organisations, is the delivery body. Administrative support comes via the Corporate Policy Unit.
- 5.4 The Armed Forces community is defined, for the purposes of the Armed Forces Covenant, as including all those towards whom the Nation has a moral obligation due to service in HM Armed Forces i.e. serving Regular and Reserve personnel, veterans, and their families.
- 5.5 We know that the majority of Service leavers settle back into civilian life effectively, using the wide variety of skills developed during their time in the Armed Forces to gain meaningful employment and contribute to their communities. However, there are those that will need extra support.
- 5.6 The Defence Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS) comprises of Bronze, Silver and Gold awards for employers (including local authorities) that pledge, demonstrate or advocate support to defence and the Armed Forces Community, and inspire others to do the same. In order to achieve Bronze CCBC were required to promote being Armed Forces-friendly and to be open to employing reservists, armed forces veterans (including the wounded, injured and sick), cadet instructors and military spouses/partners. CCBC goes beyond this and in 2018 achieved Silver Level. An application for the Gold Award has been submitted. Though not an essential requirement, the implementation of the Guaranteed Interview Scheme for the Armed Forces Community is an important supportive measure.
- 5.7 The most recent Welsh Government skills survey of Welsh employers showed that six per cent had at least one vacancy due to skill-shortage – equivalent to 9,000 vacancies across Wales. At a time of steadily rising employment, employers are crying out for skilled staff with the right attitude and attributes to support their growing businesses – and every year in Wales veterans are leaving the Armed Forces with exactly this mix.

While many veterans go on to have successful careers after leaving the Service, this is not always the case. Veterans are comparatively under-represented in the general workforce and working age veterans are nearly twice as likely to be unemployed as civilians. Issues such as a lack of academic qualifications or difficulties for employers in recognising military experiences within corporate recruitment structures can be significant barriers to recruitment.

So while employers are struggling to recruit, Wales has a substantial pool of uniquely-qualified, high performing people who may just need a little extra support to bring them into the workforce. By working to increase sustainable employment opportunities, we can help to prevent the more serious social and health issues that come with unemployment such as homelessness and poor mental health.

- 5.8 Many employers are adopting the Guaranteed Interview Scheme for this cohort. Torfaen County Borough Council and Newport City Council have adopted the Guaranteed Scheme; with Monmouthshire and Blaenau Gwent agreeing in principle and are in the process of implementation. Many local authorities in England have successfully adopted the scheme including Buckinghamshire, Cumbria and Lancashire County Councils. Welsh Government has this under consideration at present.
- 5.9 After discussions with People Services it is proposed that the following paragraph is inserted into the revised Recruitment and Selection Procedure *'In support of the Council's voluntary pledge to support the Armed Forces, the recruiter must always be prepared to ensure that applicants who have identified themselves as members of the Armed Forces including Service Leavers, Veterans, Reservists or Spouses and who meet the essential criteria of the person specification, are offered an interview.'*

5.10 **Conclusion**

It is expected that expanding ERS membership, including the Guaranteed Interview Scheme, will strengthen the Council's standing amongst the general public, particularly the Armed Forces Community. It should increase recognition amongst the public about the actions the Council is taking as a signatory of our Armed Forces Covenant. ERS membership may also make the Council a more attractive place to work in future for members of the public who are reservists, ex-Armed Forces or their family members. The pool of applicants may increase, therefore may help us to employ the best candidate for a vacancy.

6. **ASSUMPTIONS**

- 6.1 No assumptions have been made.

7. **LINKS TO RELEVANT COUNCIL POLICIES**

- 7.1 Strategic Equality Plan 2016 – 2020.

7.2 **Corporate Plan 2018-2023**

Objective 2 - Enabling employment -The Council currently recognises that many of the skills that reservists gain during their training are transferable to the workplace. The Council assists reservists as far as possible, for example by taking into account unusual leave requirements or the need to amend working patterns. By expressing an interest in the ERS Gold Award affords the local authority the opportunity to obtain the recognition for the support given to defence.

- 7.3 Signatory of Armed Forces Covenant (2011).

8. **WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS**

- 8.1 The success of the ERS will help improve well-being and will therefore help to make a positive contribution to armed forces employees' connectedness. Implementing the Guaranteed Interview Scheme will contribute to the following well-being goals within the Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2016:

- A prosperous Wales
- A more equal Wales
- A Wales of cohesive communities
- A Healthier Wales

The scheme is consistent with the five ways of working as set out in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

9. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

9.1 An EIA screening has been carried out and there are no implications for equalities.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There would be the ability to advertise vacant positions through the Career Transition (CTP) website at no extra cost.

11. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

11.1 The pool of applicants to vacant positions may increase as a result of a demonstrable support for the scheme and the additional circulation of vacant positions through the CTP website.

12. CONSULTATIONS

12.1 The report reflects the views of the consultees.

13. STATUTORY POWER

13.1 The Armed Forces Covenant was enshrined in law in the Armed Forces Act (2011), however there is no statutory requirement to support the Armed Forces Community.

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Cllr. Andrew Whitcombe, Armed Forces Champion
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