

Champion for Armed Forces and Veterans

Report on Expenditure from 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018

To assist the Leader and appropriate Cabinet Members to work with the organisations that support ex-servicemen and women to work even more closely together and to ensure that veterans and their families get the support they deserve'

There is great deal of hard work and enthusiasm in the Armed Forces Community throughout Lancashire and I am determined to support the great work that is being carried out. One factor that needs to be taken into account in the budget of 2017/18 and 2018/19 is that funding will be used towards the marking of the 100 year anniversary since the end of the First World War. This is vital to remember the sacrifice made and to educate current generations.

Activities Supported from my 2017/2018 Budget:

Dig In North West (Preston) £2,900 – Plants and marketing material to promote exhibits

The Dig In North West team sought financial support for plants (many of which they grew themselves), marketing material to promote the exhibits throughout the show, timber and other materials for the general construction. These were shown at RHS Tatton, and the Chorley Flower Show. The exhibits showed a 6'x4' shed (provided by RHS) remodelled into a tank, camouflaged in carpet bedding and bearing a replica of the Dig In North West logo planted in carpet bedding and a representation of the Free Sailors and Soldiers Buffet at Preston Railway Station. This was modelled out of willow, with a variety of planting as the backdrop. This was a joint project with both military veterans and children aged 7-16.

Benefits achieved as a result of the project were many including, increased confidence within not only the veteran team, but the children, young people and older people that they were working alongside, a sense of pride and achievement for all involved, something that these particular groups often miss out on, an opportunity to promote Dig In North West as an organisation, encouraging other veterans facing their own challenges to access their service. Feeling like 'the only one' experiencing the mental injuries of active combat can be isolating and debilitating. Reluctance to access traditional therapies as the first step can be a barrier to recovery. By promoting a positive side to living as a veteran, no matter what difficulties are being faced, can encourage someone to make that first step into seeking help, a chance to show the wider public that veterans with 'hidden wounds' as they are often described, are people not to be pitied or surrounded in sympathy – but people with a great set of skills, a huge amount to offer the whole community and a creativity that is often overlooked.

By doing a small bit to change public perception of veterans, into a more realistic understanding, hopefully they will be able to play a more practical role in supporting ex-military personnel as they adjust to civilian life.

I visited the Chorley Flower Show and experienced for myself the positive effect of the displays.

Fylde Veterans CIC £1,500 – Maintenance work to Veterans Café

This bid included the following work; building works, electrical, plumbing, wall covering, carpeting and decorating, rebuild counter area and installation of a coffee machine - £300. Rewire the seating area, install carpeting, floor covering, hotplates and till - £500. Refurbish the ladies and gents toilets - £300. Install sinks, shelving, fryers and backsplash to kitchen - £400.

I attended the official opening of the NAAFI Café, and was very impressed by the amount of hard work that had gone into it and the positive impression it has made in the local area. The benefits were clear to see, it is a veterans centre for the Fylde Coast and Lancashire in general. It will self-finance and support the Armed Forces Community. It acts as an outreach centre for veterans help including RBL, Pennine Care NHS veterans Service, SSAFA and the veterans Agency and has the potential to provide emergency accommodation for up to three homeless veterans and permanent accommodation for a volunteer veteran.

Lancashire Army Cadet Force (Fylde) £1,200 - All weather shooting range

I have visited this unit several times and will visit again when the range is finished. They aim to build an all-weather, outside shooting range that will be dual purpose and allow cadets to practice both archery and air rifle shooting.

The benefit for the air rifle shooting range is that the cadets can start their shooting training with air rifles in a safe, local environment before moving on to small and full bore weapons. The range will become a great asset to the unit who intend to make it available to other cadet units and youth organisations as well as the wider armed forces community. They intend to make the range a unit asset and ensure they have suitably qualified instructors. In the long term I hope this range will attract more cadets to join and provide a safe area where air rifle shooting and archery can be enjoyed.

Banks Brass Band (West Lancashire) £2,000 – New uniforms and instrument repairs for the trip

The Band will travel to France on Friday 28th Sept 2018 in order to commemorate the signing of the Armistice in 1918. They have secured permission from the Commonwealth War Graves Commission to play in two cemeteries where Banks soldiers are buried/commemorated and at the Memorial to the missing of the Somme at Thiepval.

Banks Brass Band was formed in 1875 and remains a village band providing three formal concerts per annum (the proceeds of one are donated entirely to local cancer/hospice charities), music for a number of church walking days in the West Lancashire area and playing at Remembrance Sundays at Banks and Burscough.

The band are a not-for-profit organisation, no one receives any remuneration, all are volunteers relying on donations for the purchase/repairs of instruments, music and uniforms.

They have visited this area of the Western Front previously in 2012 & 2014 playing short services at the graves/memorials of the Banks soldiers who lost their lives in World War 1. They have played at the Thiepval Memorial to the Somme Missing in 2014 and at the Saturday evening service at the Menin Gate on both occasions. During the visit they will be flying the flag for Lancashire and paying their respects to those who made the ultimate sacrifice. This will be an amazing experience for all involved and will ensure the local area is well represented.

Cleveleys Community Centre Naafi Café (Wyre) £500 – Kitchen equipment

I attended the opening of this venture, the funding was for the provision of equipment for the setting up of a “NAAFI” Café (Veterans café) at the Cleveleys Community Centre. The money was used for the purchase of table cloths, flags, a portrait of the Queen and crockery with a poppy motif. It was also used to purchase a sign and advertising banners for placing outside the building. The Centre provides a local meeting place for veterans to enjoy discounted food and the company of fellow veterans. There will also be regular help available from local agencies, councils etc. social events and talks will be arranged.

Wheelton and Rural Branch of the Royal British Legion (Chorley) £1,320 - Appreciation Dinner

I met with members of the branch who were keen to host any veterans and current serving personnel from the local area to a dinner to thank them for their service, pay tribute to the fallen of WW1 on behalf of all the community and raise the profile of the branch and the services it offers.

It is extremely important to bring veterans together and connect with the wider Armed Forces Community as often as possible in order to identify need. Royal British Legions branches are a good vehicle for this.

***County Councillor Alf Clempson
Champion for Armed Forces and Veterans***

Schedule of Expenditure for 2017/18

Schedule of Expenditure for 2017/18	
County Councillor Alf Clempson – Champion for Armed Forces Veterans	
Applicant	Amount of Grant
Dig In North West (Preston) Plants and marketing material to promote exhibits	£2,900
Fylde Veterans CIC (Fylde) – Maintenance work to Veterans Café	£1,500
Lancashire Army Cadet Force (Fylde) – All weather shooting range	£1,200
Banks Brass Band (West Lancashire) – New uniforms and instrument repairs	£2,000
Cleveleys Community Centre Naafi Café (Wyre) – Kitchen equipment	£500
Wheelton and Rural Branch of the Royal British Legion (Chorley) – Appreciation dinner	£1,320
TOTAL SPENT	£9,420