

Report to the Cabinet

Meeting to be held on Thursday, 13 June 2019

Report of the Executive Director of Adult Services and Health & Wellbeing

Part I

Electoral Division affected:
All

Lancashire County Council and the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme

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Executive Summary

Lancashire County Council signed the Armed Forces Covenant in November 2013 and has since implemented a number of policies in order to live up to the commitment it made more than five years ago.

It is proposed to strengthen the county council's role as an employer of members of the Armed Forces community through the preparation of a formal expression of interest for a 2020 Employer Recognition Scheme Gold Award. Where appropriate, this process may involve the adoption of new procedures to promote the interests of the Armed Forces community in Lancashire.

This is deemed to be a Key Decision and the provisions of Standing Order C19 have been complied with.

Recommendation

Cabinet is asked to authorise officers to scope and prepare a formal expression of interest with the Ministry of Defence for a Gold Award under the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme 2020 with a request that officers provide a further report to Cabinet in 2019 to seek approval of the expression of interest, providing details on how the county council intends to meet the award criteria.

1. Background and Advice

[The Armed Forces Covenant](#) is a promise from the nation that those who serve or have served, and their families, are treated fairly. The Covenant's core value is that those who serve in the Armed Forces, whether regular or Reserve, those who have served in the past, and their families, should face no disadvantage compared to

other citizens. Lancashire County Council signed the Armed Forces Covenant in November 2013.

The Armed Forces community is defined by HM Government as service leavers, veterans, spouses and children, Reservists and Cadet Force instructors and volunteers, in addition to serving personnel.

The county council has lived up to its commitment to support the Covenant through a number of initiatives, including (partial list):

- The appointment of an elected member as Champion for the Armed Forces and Veterans. The Champion has an annual budget of £10,000 to support projects across the county.
- Support for members of the non-regular forces with two weeks leave with pay for the purposes of attending summer camp.
- Our award-winning and nationally-recognised Ex-Service Personnel Mentoring in Schools Programme.
- Hosting a number of cultural and educational events to commemorate the role of Lancashire's communities in World War One and other conflicts.
- Co-creating the Lancashire Armed Forces Covenant Hub, a recent beneficiary of a grant from the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust, in collaboration with Lancashire Care Foundation Trust, the University of Central Lancashire, and Army HQ North West.

This report has been developed under the direction of the county council's Champion for the Armed Forces and Veterans and in consultation with Army HQ North West, based at Fulwood Barracks, Preston, the Royal British Legion's Lancashire Area Manager and with the Ministry of Defence's North West Employer Engagement Director. Further support from these organisations will form part of this process, if approved.

2. Defence Relationship Management and the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme

[Defence Relationship Management](#) is an arm of the Ministry of Defence which helps organisations understand the value of signing the Covenant and building partnerships with the Armed Forces community. It provides support on employing Reservists, veterans, Cadet Force instructors and volunteers and military spouses, and improving fairness for the community.

The [Defence Employer Recognition Scheme](#) is a programme within Defence Relationship Management which recognises employer organisations that pledge, demonstrate or advocate support to the community. As a result of the county council's work to support the Covenant as an employee organisation, the Employer Recognition Scheme presented the county council with its Silver Award in 2016 following a nomination from Army HQ North West.

The county council remains strongly committed to the Covenant, both as an employer and as a provider of public services. This commitment can be further

demonstrated by completing a formal expression of interest for the county council to be considered for an Employer Recognition Scheme Gold Award in 2020.

In order to be considered for a Gold Award, the county council must meet the expected criteria, in addition to criteria already met as a result of receiving the Scheme's Silver Award. Examples of how the county council can meet the criteria are provided below and indicate which functions within the county council will be examined in preparation for any expression of interest in a Gold Award. Some examples may meet more than one criteria.

It should be noted that, as a large organisation with a number of functions and services, the county council may have already met some of these criteria. The steps toward preparing and completing a formal expression of interest, if approved by Cabinet, will necessarily involve a review and recognition of policies and procedures already in place to promote the interests of the Armed Forces community as well as identifying new areas where the county council can improve its approach.

3. Criteria for Nomination for a Defence Employer Recognition Scheme Gold Award

(i) Employers must proactively demonstrate their forces-friendly credentials as part of their recruiting and selection processes. Where possible, they should be engaged with the Career Transition Partnership (CTP) in the recruitment of service leavers.

Service leavers and veterans often find it difficult to translate the skills and training they gained from their military experience into a civilian context. This criteria involves demonstrating to potential employees transitioning from the Armed Forces community that the county council is a positive employer that seeks to actively engage with the community because it values their skills, experience and ethos. Examples of meeting the criteria include:

- Adoption of a Guaranteed Interview Scheme for service leavers and veterans who meet the essential criteria for county council posts. This is a good example of combatting the disadvantages experienced by members of the Armed Forces community seeking civilian employment and clearly demonstrates that the county council welcomes members of the Armed Forces as employees.
- Using official Armed Forces Covenant branding in our recruitment and selection materials, including our web page, acting as a quality standard of our status as a "force-friendly" employer.
- Advertising available jobs through the MOD's [Career Transition Partnership](#), giving us access to a wider pool of potential recruits at no additional cost.
- Ongoing briefings for HR managers and recruitment officers from Defence Relationship Management/Defence Employer Recognition Scheme staff.

(ii) Organisations must employ and support individuals from the Armed Forces and actively ensure that their workforce is aware of their positive policies towards defence people issues.

Examples of meeting the criteria include:

- A specific question on the county council's anonymous Staff Survey to determine the current number of employees from the Armed Forces community.
- An internal communication campaign backed by senior management expressing support for employees from the Armed Forces community and featuring individual employees who serve in the Reserves or Cadet Forces.
- A dedicated intranet site emphasising the council's positive approach to employing members of the community, including details of available supports and benefits (e.g. a positive HR policy on Reserves).
- Support for new employees from the Armed Forces community at induction and ongoing support via an internal network of veterans, Reservists, Cadet Instructors, etc.
- A "wear your uniform to work day" on Reserves Day each year, potentially including benefits such as a free meal in the Reflections café.
- Ongoing recognition of the community by the Chairman and other elected members.
- Formal re-signing of the Armed Forces Covenant by the county council.
- Promoting adult volunteer opportunities within the Reserves and Cadet Forces via the Lancashire Volunteer Partnership or through the provision of time off in lieu (TOIL).

(iii) Must be an exemplar within their market sector, advocating support to Defence People issues to partner organisations, suppliers and customers with tangible positive results

Examples of meeting the criteria include:

- Encouraging other councils and businesses in Lancashire to engage with Defence Relationship Management.
- Influencing our supply chains by encouraging organisations with whom we do business to sign the Covenant or engage with the Defence Employer Recognition Schemes.
- Amending our Social Value Policy so that recruitment from the Armed Forces community is identified as a positive contribution to the local economy.
- Hosting events with Defence Employer Recognition staff to encourage recruitment of Reservists.

(iv) Employers must have demonstrated support to mobilisations or have a framework in place with at least 10 days' additional paid leave for training to the Reservist employee

Due to the support currently in place, it is likely that this criteria is being partially met. However, there may be some scope to provide additional supports for Reservists in terms of leave or support during mobilisation and through benchmarking our policies and procedures against best practice standards developed by Defence Relationship Management.

(v) Must not have been the subject of any negative PR or media activity

This criteria is currently being met.

4. Expected benefits to the county council

There are a number of potential benefits in encouraging job applications from the Armed Forces community, including addressing skills shortages and improving in the skills profile of our workforce in the following areas:

- Organisation, motivation and commitment
- Problem solving and adaptability
- Leadership and management
- Health and safety
- Security awareness
- Team working
- Communication

This process could also help the county council meet a number of its strategic objectives, including improving employment opportunities for an under-represented group, improving and demonstrating the county council's social responsibilities and acting as an exemplar for other employers in the North West, which remains a significant area in terms of recruitment to the Armed Forces and a home to thousands of veterans and their families.

Defence Relationship Management staff have committed to providing ongoing consultative support to the county council to help the county council achieve its aspirations. A wider range of Human Resources support is also available from the Ministry of Defence to help employers meet their obligations to their employees in this area.

Consultations

This report has been reviewed by the Royal British Legion Lancashire Area Manager, Army HQ North West based at Fulwood Barracks, Preston and by the Defence Employer Engagement Director for the North West.

Implications

This item has the following implications, as indicated:

Workforce

Identifying, recognising and supporting members of the county council workforce who are also members of the Armed Forces community will play a part in wider efforts to promote employee wellbeing and help our employees to be productive and positive about their work

Financial

Meeting some of the criteria outlined above may result in additional activities being undertaken by specific county council teams. However, these activities are likely to be absorbed within the regular day-to-day work of these teams (e.g. Human Resources and recruitment). Any additional costs likely to accrue to the county council as a result of improving support for the Armed Forces community will be identified through researching and preparing the expression of interest and presented to Cabinet for approval prior to implementing any new support.

Equality and Diversity

Membership of the Armed Forces community is not a protected characteristic under the law. However, the key component of the Armed Forces Covenant (signed by the county council in November 2013) is that no member of this community should suffer disadvantage as a result of their service. As such, providing additional support for this community – subject to further approval by Cabinet prior to implementation – will reflect positively on the county council's wider corporate commitments to serve the people of Lancashire in a fair and equitable manner.

Risk Management

N/A

List of Background Papers

Paper	Date	Contact/Tel
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None

Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate

N/A

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