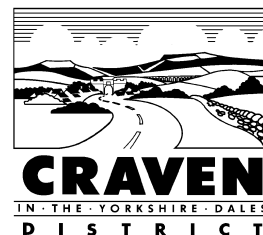


Policy Committee – 17th June 2014

Armed Forces Veterans Charter 2014



Report of the Select Committee Chairman

Ward(s) affected: Not applicable.

1. **Purpose of Report** – To present recommendations of the Select Committee proposing the creation of a joint working group with the local Royal British Legion Committee in order to produce an armed forces veterans charter for Craven and organise an annual armed forces day in Craven.
2. **Recommendation** – That Policy Committee is recommended to take steps to establish a joint working group with the local Royal British Legion Committee in order to produce an armed forces veterans charter for Craven, and organise an annual armed forces day in Craven commencing in June 2015.
3. **Report**
 - 3.1 On 14th April 2014, the Select Committee met Mr Alex Bentley, representing the Veterans Advisory and Pensions Committee for Yorkshire and Humber, together with a number of representatives of the local Royal British Legion Committee, who had been invited to the meeting to discuss the Council's role and involvement with matters concerning armed forces veterans.
 - 3.2 In addressing Council in February 2014 Mr Bentley had asked the Council to adopt Armed Forces Day. In response the Leader of Council indicated that the Council would consider the issue and discussions would be held with Mr Bentley / the Veterans Advisory and Pensions Committee for Yorkshire and Humber, as appropriate, however at that point it was not possible to make any promises. Mr Bentley was subsequently invited to attend a meeting of Select Committee.
 - 3.3 In addressing the Select Committee Mr Bentley together with Mr Barry Blood of the Local Royal British Legion Committee re-iterated points raised at Council on 25th February 2014. In particular they urged Members to
 - a. adopt a veterans' charter and put in place a system to be used to inform veterans of information relevant to them and their needs in accessing help and support, and.
 - b. to consider agreeing to the Council taking over responsibility for the organisation of Armed Forces Day.

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- 3.3 It was pointed out that the Council was a signatory to the North Yorkshire Armed Forces Community Covenant, adopting a local veterans charter would build on that initiative and may also help support any application the Council may submit under the Community Covenant Grant Scheme 2011-2015 – A scheme established to financially support projects at a local level which strengthened ties or mutual understanding between members of the armed forces community and the wider community in which they lived. As a rule armed forces veterans charters recognised that service veterans may have issues which impacted on their health and wellbeing, and that of their families. By adopting a local charter the Council and any co-signatories would typically amongst other things, be signalling their intention to provide joined up signposting of information, and to brief appropriate staff on relevant issues and where specialist charitable assistance may be available. Two examples of veterans' charters are appended to this report.
- 3.4 The Committee also heard that in February 2006 the Government had established Armed Forces Day to commemorate the service of men and women in the armed forces and local authorities were asked to support the annual event held in late June. It was understood that financial assistance of up to £10,000 was available from the Ministry of Defence for local events providing that Ministry funding accounted for no more than 50% of the total cost.
- 3.5 The Skipton Branch of the Royal British Legion had, to date, organised the event on a budget of £1,500 from fund raising, but it was becoming increasingly difficult and an event would not be held in 2014. The Council was respectfully asked to take on responsibility and help stage, and finance future armed forces day events in conjunction with the local Royal British Legion Committee.
- 3.6 As can be seen from the recommendation at Paragraph 2, Members of the Select Committee were supportive of the request, however in considering whether to adopt that recommendation Policy Committee need to be mindful of potential resource implications, particularly in relation to armed forces day. Select Committee has not explored the resource implications in any depth. It may therefore be prudent in the first instance if agreeing to establish a joint working group to ensure that the resource implications are explored and identified before committing to actually organising the event, and to make that position clear. Members would also need to be appointed to the working group and Council Leadership Team would also need to identify which department is best placed in terms of the necessary skills and experience to work with the group in organising the event.

4. Implications

- 4.1 **Financial and Value for Money (vfm) Implications** – There would be a cost associated with officers and members involvement in a joint working group, however the costs associated with accepting responsibility for armed forces day cannot be quantified as in many respects this will be dictated by the extent of the event planned and resource requirements. The position with regard to Ministry of Defence funding beyond 2014 would also need to be clarified.

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- 4.2 **Legal Implications** – None directly in relation to this report, however it would be necessary to explore any implications associated with accepting responsibility for Armed Forces Day particularly in relation to any events planned.
- 4.3 **Contribution to Council Priorities** – The Council priorities of most relevance are those of “Working with Communities” and “Enterprising Craven”.
- 4.4 **Risk Management** – None directly in relation to this report, however, as indicated above the level and nature of any risks would be dictated by the type of event planned
- 4.5 **Equality Analysis** – Not applicable – Report does not concern any new policy or practice with equality implications.
5. **Consultations with Others** – None.
6. **Access to Information : Background Documents** – Royal British Legion / Local Government Association Best Practice Guide to Community Covenants.
7. **Authors of the Report** – Chris Waterhouse, Committee Officer, Telephone 01756 706235; e-mail:cwaterhouse@cravenc.gov.uk
8. **Appendices**
- Appendix – Copies of Armed Forces Veterans’ Charters adopted by Wiltshire and Thurrock Councils