



## **GLOUCESTERSHIRE ARMED FORCES COVENANT NEWSLETTER 2019**

The Armed Forces Covenant (AFC) Champion for Gloucestershire County Council and a former reservist Cllr Shaun Parsons is pleased to share the news, activities and successes of Gloucestershire Armed Forces Covenant partners for 2018/19.

The year started positively with Gloucestershire AFC being successful in their joint bid with other local authorities in the south west for £150k of Covenant Funding to help fund initiatives to develop awareness and knowledge of the Covenant across front line public service staff to enable veteran and serving personnel to be better supported.

Later in October 2018, Gloucestershire County Council Armed Forces Covenant (AFC) Team successfully held an event bringing together district representatives and others from organisations including armed forces charities and NHS providers to hear about local and regional developments, to share learning and good practice and to agree a way forward for working together to embed the Covenant across Gloucestershire. Attendees received an update from David Wood (the South West Regional Project Coordinator) and also heard from education colleagues about an online survey of 30,000 Gloucestershire school pupils, which may provide valuable intelligence about the needs of and priorities for children living in armed forces families.

An update on the Armed Forces Covenant Fund was also provided announcing that bids of up to £20k of Covenant Grant Funding are available for digital development, community integration and local delivery of services.

Also at the event, partners provided updates on activities as varied as the Veteran's Gateway service (<https://www.veteransgateway.org.uk/>) and the Royal British Legion's "Count Them In" campaign to include a question on the armed forces community in the 2021 Census.

Following on from this successful event, the very first South West Armed Forces Covenant Champions Conference was held in November in Wiltshire, providing an update on the South West Regional Project. This event brought together nominated champions of Local Authorities along with military, charity and voluntary organisations and provided them with an update on the South West Regional Project and a positive discussion on the following six proposals:

1. **Understanding** – Enhancing the local understanding of the military community and better contribution through better identification of those who receive additional support and what their needs are.
2. **Awareness** – Upskilling LA front-line staff, to better enable them to meet their military community's needs. A training and awareness could include provision of the e-Module and a face-to-face training package for LA Members, Armed Forces Covenant Champions and LA staff.
3. **Network** – Creating an accredited Forces-friendly national network of champions, supplemented by options for developing a Forces Friendly Quality Mark.
4. **Collaboration** – Engaging public authorities, providers, private and third sector organisations, working collaboratively with LAs for the benefit of the SW Regional military community.
5. **Film** – Creating a film to provide a wider understanding of healthcare staff in NHS Foundation Trusts, Community Hospitals and General Practice Staff, including better identification and understanding of the needs of spouses of current serving, veterans and their families. This film can be widely used to complement other training.
6. **Web Portal** – Development of South West web portal to provide consistent access, support and prevention mechanisms across the SW Region. The offer of access to the Map of Needs and the Veterans Gateway through the SW portal will provide an opportunity to deliver a common resource while retaining Regional and county level control.

The discussion on the SW Project's proposals, and the response of those who attended the Conference, were positive and successful in progressing toward a more collaborative approach to delivering the Covenant.

In addition, many fantastic activities and events in respect of the Armed Forces Covenant have been taking place in districts and parishes around Gloucestershire during 2018/19 and here are a few to showcase:

## Tewkesbury Borough Council



### Environmental Projects

**Community Clean Up:** A joint military/civilian 'Community Clean Up' took place on the Imjin Playing Field and Ash Path. The event was organised by the Council and officers at Imjin Barracks and saw 50 people, from both military and local civilian communities, collecting rubbish from the Mod playing field and from the public right of way and water course running alongside the playing field.

**Shamrock Close Open Space:** The Council is working with Churchdown Parish Council and Imjin Barracks on a project which is looking to create a community garden on MoD owned open space, adjacent to Shamrock Close, Churchdown.

## **World War 1 Commemoration**

On 9 Oct 2018 Tewkesbury Borough Council organised and funded a memorial parade for Private William Edgar Holmes VC who had been awarded the Victoria Cross for conspicuous bravery in France exactly 100 years to the day of the parade.

The parade was held at Didbrook Church in the Parish of Stanway where Pvt. Holmes was born and raised before joining the Army in 1915 and fighting in WWI. The Council enlisted the help of the Grenadier Guards HQ in London, the local British Legion, Gloucestershire Association of Grenadier Guards and the local regiment at Imjin Barracks/ARRC.

Around 100 retired veterans and current serving soldiers attended the parade alongside surviving family members and local residents. Those present included the Regimental Adjutant and the Sergeant Major of the Grenadier Guards who both gave readings in church and at the memorial site. There were also members of the Grenadier Guards band, serving soldiers from Imjin Barracks/ARRC and many members of the British Legion alongside veterans of every conflict since WWII.

The parade consisted of a formal church service followed by the laying of a memorial stone and then a celebration buffet. Music was provided by the Grenadier Guards Band, the Guard of honour by Imjin Barracks/ARRC and standard bearers from different arms of service. Several VIP guests attended including, the Lord Lieutenant of Gloucestershire, Dame Janet and the Earl of March, Lord Weyms. Local school children also performed readings and assisted in the unveiling of the memorial stone.

## **Armed Forces Day**

Tewkesbury Borough Council continued its support for Armed Forces Day on 29 June 2018 The ceremony took place at the council's offices on Gloucester Road and was led by the Mayor of Tewkesbury Borough, Cllr Ruth Hatton, and joined by representatives from Imjin Barracks/ARRC, as well as staff and councillors.

## **Community Safety**

The Council, working with the Welfare Team at Imjin Barracks, Gloucestershire Highways and Gloucestershire Constabulary, is seeking to improve road safety in and around the military/civilian housing areas of Innsworth. Improved signage has already been introduced and further improvements are being looked at subject to a traffic survey being undertaken.

## **Housing Services**

Under Homeseeker Plus members of the armed forces are given local connection to an area of their choice i.e. are effectively exempt from the connection criteria which apply to all other applicants for social housing in our area. The period of 'priority banding' for those leaving armed forces accommodation is six months covering the entire time from their certification of cessation until discharge from the services. During this period families and vulnerable members of the armed forces are awarded 'Urgent housing need' (Gold banding –which is equivalent to other households who have a full statutory homeless duty), and those who are not vulnerable are awarded 'significant housing need/threatened with homelessness need' (silver banding). This is a significant enhancement on all other households who receive notice to quit within the borough who would be awarded significant housing need (silver banding) when they are threatened with homelessness within 56 days.

Through homelessness, those armed forces households are also given comprehensive housing advice during this period.

Housing Services also work closely with the RBL and SSAFA to ensure that veterans receive all the assistance possible if they experience housing difficulties in the future.

## Cheltenham Borough Council



### World War 1 Centenary Commemoration

**Cheltenham Remembers** was a partnership project to commemorate the centenary of signing the Armistice that signalled the end of World War 1 and to say thank you to the men and women who gave so much and helped to shape the world as we know it today. The project incorporated a variety of commemoration activities, including the restoration of the War Memorial in the Long Gardens in 2016, supporting the restoration of the war memorial at St. Peters Church, in Tewkesbury Road, and culminating in a programme of events throughout the Borough during 2018.

The project was funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and Cheltenham Borough Council and commemorative events, activities, exhibitions, re-enactments, digital resources and plays were developed and delivered by Cheltenham Trust, Cheltenham Ladies College, Cheltenham Local History Society, Royal Air Forces Association (Cheltenham Branch), St Peters & The Moors Big Local, University of Gloucestershire and the Everyman Theatre.

The final events of the project took place on Remembrance weekend. The weekend commenced on the afternoon of Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> November with a Memorial March through Cheltenham town centre. 1278 men, women and children marched, one for each of the servicemen or women commemorated on Cheltenham War Memorial, wearing the name (and photograph where available) of one of the fallen.



On Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> November, one of the largest Remembrance Services Cheltenham has seen took place in the morning. The evening saw one of the highest impactful, poignant and unique events that Cheltenham has ever seen. Projected along the front of the Municipal Offices, was a 20 minute film of imagery and sound depicting the horror of war and involving actors, animation, poetry, sound and emotive music. The projection was replayed every 30 minutes. Representatives from Cheltenham's twin towns Annecy and Gottingen were here to experience the weekend's events.

### Victoria Cross plaque laying

A commemorative paving stone was unveiled on Sunday 2 September 2018 for Lt Colonel Richard Annesley West VC, DSO & Bar, and MC who was killed in Vaulx-Vraucourt in France on 2 September 1918 and awarded the Victoria Cross.

Cheltenham Borough Council also supported and hosted several other remembrance events, for Armed Forces Day, Battle of Britain Sunday and Aden Veterans.

## Housing

Cheltenham Borough Council has a Lettings Plan, which ensures that the 10 new homes for veterans which were recently built in Swindon Road are preserved for Veterans. (More information regarding this scheme is available below by Cheltenham Borough Homes)

## Cotswolds District Council



**CIRENCESTER came to a standstill on 11 November 2018, with more than 3,300 people taking part in the creation of a record-breaking Human Poppy.**

This collective act of remembrance broke the previous record of 3,000 in a human poppy and was a deeply symbolic tribute on the anniversary of the end of the First World War. Volunteers streamed into the Cotswold town market place to form a sea of red, green and black.



Each representing a named fallen soldier from around the Cotswolds, or an unknown soldier, this was a chance for the community to come together and unite with one common cause, in an event that will surely be remembered for years to come. Organisers came up with the ambitious plans under the umbrella 'We Remember 1918'.

Daisy May Cooper from the hit BBC hit comedy 'This Country' helped to promote the event, with a video a few days before urging people to take part. Speaking to the Standard after the event, she said: "I am in shock and so moved that this many people have turned up." Geoffrey Clifton Brown MP also took part in the record breaking Human Poppy as well as Earl and Countess Bathurst. Lady Bathurst said: "This is an extraordinary event. It goes to show what a close knit community Cirencester is and how highly we regard the past. It is quite emotional to see so many of our town and other areas coming together to commemorate this special event."

Speaking after the event, Councillor David Fowles, Acting Chairman of one of the organising bodies, the Cirencester Community Development Trust, said: "Cirencester is amazing. I am speechless and so proud that the young and the old have come out to commemorate and to celebrate. This shows such community spirit. It has been very moving." Barn Theatre artistic director Iwan Lewis was instrumental in making the Human Poppy a success.

He said: "This has been unbelievable. We ran out of ponchos. It has been a huge success. "Although it will take a few weeks for Guinness to verify the record, this is an amazing and epic event."

Pat Day from Cirencester was there "because we should never forget. It is great to see so many people here, including children. It is a real community event."

Dawn Witt from Stratton had come to take part with her husband Simon. "We have come to be a part of the Remembrance," she said. "This is also personal for me as I lost someone in

the Great War - Sidney Rowe was killed in Kefalonia. This is lovely to see everyone coming together. It is really special."

## Cirencester Town Council



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Over the past year, Cirencester has been at the forefront of remembering and acknowledging the significant sacrifices made by the Armed Forces.

Through a wide range of events and activities Cirencester Town Council have provided opportunities for the Armed Forces to engage with the local community. Promoting an understanding and awareness across the community about issues affecting the Armed Forces and helping Armed Forces families feel a truly valued part of the community was at the very heart of our 'We Remember 1918' commemorations.

The commemorative events were co-ordinated by the Cirencester Community Development Trust with invaluable input from The Barn Theatre and cast of 'This Country' and support from the Town Council, Cotswold District Council and Parish Church. The programme of events in November included 'The Eleventh Hour' music and local readings by Coln Choir, a Royal British Legion remembrance concert, a community awards evening and the spectacular creation of a human poppy in the Market Place.

There are also a number of other ways in which there is reciprocal support and collaboration. For example, the 29th Regiment based at the Duke of Gloucester Barracks in South Cerney, in providing volunteers to support events such as the Advent Festival and the Local Information Centre at Bingham House, Dyer Street selling poppies.



Cirencester Town Council has supported Cotswold District Council with the funding of a number of memorial plaques and benches across the community, in Chesterton, Four Acres and Watermoor.



Whilst we have looked back over the past 12 months, we trust that in looking forward we will continue to live out the covenant in practical and meaningful ways.'

## Ashchurch Parish Council



At a local level, the armed forces community is included in everything Ashchurch Parish Council (APC) do to raise local awareness with regard to their activities as a Parish Council and notices/invitations are delivered personally to the service quarters.

In terms of remembering sacrifice, APC arrange for the maintenance of the war memorial grounds throughout the year and especially prior to remembrance. Poppy wreaths are obtained annually for APC and on behalf of Wheatpieces Parish Council and take part in the local service of remembrance.

APC donate funds in addition to the cost of the wreaths which not only support the workers at the Ashford Poppy Village but also make a contribution to the welfare and support of beneficiaries nationally, (any of whom could be members of Ashchurch local service community).

Councillor Dave Street, a member of Ashchurch Parish Council and also the RBL District Chairman representing over 23,000 members or 10% of the RBL membership, donates his time to support the armed forces community, whether that is nationally, within Gloucestershire County or locally within the Borough and Parish and he never passes up on opportunities to promote Ashchurch as a caring Parish, standing ready and willing to assist veterans and service personnel.

## Quenington Parish Council

Quenington Parish Council has been regularly maintaining the war memorial and a poppy wreath are placed on it for Remembrance Day. Poppy crosses are also placed on the graves of ex service men.

## Charlton Kings Parish Council



Charlton Kings Parish Council continues to be responsible for the Charlton Kings War Memorial and pays for the planning and management of spring and summer flowers in the area around it. In 2018, Charlton Kings Parish Council took a leading role in organising the annual Charlton Kings Remembrance Day Commemoration Service in which a number of our Councillors participated.

Through their Community Grants programme, Charlton Kings Parish Council has provided financial support to the Air Cadets 125 Squadron Air Training Corps.

## Cinderford Town Council



After signing the Armed Forces Covenant in 2015, Cinderford Town Council has continued to work with the Cinderford British Legion in supporting their annual Poppy Appeal and ensuring the Remembrance Day Event continues to grow and attract people to what has now become such a successful event, with people and children of all ages attending.



Last year Cinderford Town Council produced a cascade of poppies in the Town Centre and at the Service in the Town Centre on Remembrance Day, they had poppies blowing from rooftops, which was really poignant.



Cinderford Town Council hope that by doing this, they ensure that their local parishioners enjoy coming out to show their respects and that they all do 'Remember them'.

## Cheltenham Borough Homes



Cheltenham Borough Homes have developed a scheme to utilise a former car mechanics yard, owned by Cheltenham Borough Council into homes for veterans. The scheme provides the construct of ten new homes, comprising a mix of one and two bedroom flats and two bedroom houses.



In a move, the first of its kind for Cheltenham, these 10 new council owned homes were offered first to veterans and their families and all ten properties have been allocated to forces veterans.



The new properties are located in the town centre and support CBH's objective of developing high quality affordable accommodation.

Each home has been designed to meet Housing Quality Indicators, Building for Life Bronze, Lifetime Homes and the Code of Sustainable Homes Level 3. All homes include high performing boilers, are highly insulated and have solar photovoltaic panels on the roof which will generate electricity reducing tenant's energy bills.

The homes have been delivered in partnership between Cheltenham Borough Council and Cheltenham Borough Homes



## Gloucestershire County Council and the Armed Forces Covenant Funding

In December 2012, the importance of the covenant was highlighted as a result of the decision of the Chancellor to transfer £35 million from fines levied on the banks for attempting to manipulate Libor to the Ministry of Defence (MOD) for use in supporting the armed forces community.

In 2015 the Covenant Fund was launched and programmes over the years have included support for ex-service personnel in the criminal justice system, the Veterans' Gateway and supporting serving families encountering difficult periods through the Families in Stress programme.

For the first 3 years, the Covenant Fund was based within the Ministry of Defence, and during that time local applications for grant funding were submitted via Gloucestershire County Council for approval and comment prior to being forwarded onto the MOD for the final decision. However, in April 2018, following a decision that it should become independent, the Covenant Fund and its management moved to the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust.

Today, the Council has little or no involvement in the grant application process as all grant applications are now submitted directly through to the Armed Forces Covenant Trust for approval. However, GCC as Covenant signatories are always happy to support partners to develop and submit grant funding applications. Gloucestershire County Council also continues to support employees who are reservists and adult cadet instructors by allowing two weeks paid leave for military duties.

The application process has also changed over the years and you no longer need to draft your application in a Word document, in order to copy and paste your answers into the online form. The new, easier to follow process allows you to view all questions, input, save and return to your work.

The Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust has £10M a year to fund projects that support the Armed Forces Community and local grants of up to £20,000 are made available for local projects that support Community Integration and/or Delivery of Local Services.

In the first round for 2019-20, a total of 32 grants worth £526,243 have already been awarded nationally. The full list of those awarded for this year can be viewed [here](#).

You can also read about grants that were awarded by the Covenant Fund in earlier years below:-

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|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| <a href="#">2018/19</a> | <a href="#">2017/18</a> | <a href="#">2016/17</a> | <a href="#">2015/16</a> |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|

It is worth noting that the Armed Forces Covenant Local Grants Programme is now in its fifth year. Last year £2,446,199 was awarded to 150 projects. The 2019/20 round will be the final year of the current Armed Forces Covenant Local Grants Programme. Plans for a future grants programme will be announced in early 2020. Click [here](#) for further details on how to apply.

Finally, many of you will remember the signing of Gloucestershire Armed Forces Covenant back in 2012 and 2015. As many of the nominated champions and signatories have changed over the years, it has become necessary to re-visit and update the current membership of Gloucestershire Armed Forces Covenant. It is therefore our intention to hold an event in Spring 2020 to re-vitalise and promote the Covenant. Invitations will be sent to partners in due course.



For more information regarding the Armed Forces Covenant please see (Appendix A) or for any other questions, please contact the Armed Forces Covenant team at [afcovenant@gloucestershire.gov.uk](mailto:afcovenant@gloucestershire.gov.uk)

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