

SUBJECT:	Guaranteed Interview Scheme for service leavers, spouses, reservists and veterans
MEETING:	Cabinet
DATE:	3rd July 2019
DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED:	All

1. PURPOSE:

For Cabinet to consider the Armed Forces recognition work across Monmouthshire and also to agree to progress implementation of the Guaranteed Interview Scheme (GIS) for service leavers, spouses, reservists and veterans.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

To introduce a Guaranteed Interview Scheme (GIS) for service leavers, spouses, reservists and veterans, as long as they meet the essential criteria of the person specification/job description.

To continue to develop themes of this work as part of the revision to our Recruitment & Selection Policy and associated work streams.

3. KEY ISSUES:

The Armed Forces Covenant is a promise by the nation ensuring that those who serve or who have served in the armed forces, and their families, are treated fairly.

A Community Covenant is a voluntary pledge to encourage charities, local authorities, businesses, communities and individuals to work together with the military to offer support to service personnel and their families as well as reservists and veterans. Monmouthshire County Council was one of the first local authorities in Wales to sign a covenant – in October 2012 - with the Ministry of Defence to recognise the county's long and proud association with the armed forces.

The Armed Forces Community Covenant is made between the serving and former members of the Armed Forces and their families, working and residing in Monmouthshire. The Monmouthshire Armed Forces Community Covenant is a voluntary statement of mutual support between a civilian community and its Armed Forces community at the local level.

The purpose of this Community Covenant is to encourage support for the Armed Forces community working and residing in Monmouthshire and to recognise and remember the sacrifices made by members of this Armed Forces community, particularly those who have given the most.

This includes current service and ex-Service personnel, their families and widow(er)s throughout Monmouthshire.

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. Each Award lasts for three years.

In Gwent: Torfaen, Newport, Monmouthshire and Caerphilly councils have all applied to the ERS. Caerphilly, Torfaen, Newport and Monmouthshire have all received the Silver Award. The scheme has also gained momentum recently in wider South Wales. Merthyr Tydfil is currently at the Bronze level, Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan councils have both received the Silver Award, and RCT was presented with the Gold Award by Prince Harry in October 2017. Swansea gained Gold 2018.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/defence-employer-recognition-scheme/defence-employer-recognition-scheme>

The Welsh Government are also currently looking into a GIS for service leavers, spouses, reservists and veterans across Welsh Public Service along with Aneurin Bevan University Health Board (ABUHB) who have applied for the Gold award this year.

The criteria for Gold is as follows. Gold award holders:

- must have signed the [Armed Forces Covenant](#)
- employers must have an existing relationship with their National Account Manager/REED/appropriate defence representative
- the employer must have already stated their intent to be supportive by using the ERS website to register at the Bronze level
- the employer must proactively demonstrate their forces-friendly credentials as part of their recruiting and selection processes. Where possible, they should be engaged with [Career Transition Partnership](#) (CTP) in the recruitment of service leavers
- employers must employ at least one individual from the armed forces community category that the nomination emphasises. For example, an employer nominated for support to the Reserves must employ at least one Reservist
- the employer must actively ensure that their workforce is aware of their positive policies towards defence people issues. For example, an employer nominated for support to the Reserves must have an internally publicised and positive HR policy on Reserves
- the employer must be exemplary within their market sector, advocating support to Defence People issues to partner organisations, suppliers and customers with tangible positive results
- within the context of Reserves the employer must have demonstrated support to mobilisations or have a framework in place. They must provide at least 10 days' additional leave for training, fully paid, to the Reservist employee
- the employer must not have been the subject of any negative PR or media activity

The activities of Monmouthshire County Council, with the support of the Armed Forces Covenant Liaison Officer and the HMF Education Support Officer, are over and above the criteria necessary to achieve Gold status.

4. EQUALITY AND FUTURE GENERATIONS EVALUATION (INCLUDES SOCIAL JUSTICE, SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING):

Implementing the GIS will highlight Monmouthshire County Council as an Armed Forces friendly and understanding employer.

5. OPTIONS APPRAISAL

N/A

6. EVALUATION CRITERIA

Applicants for posts within the Local Authority will be monitored to assess the impact this decision has made to the Armed Forces Community within Monmouthshire.

7. REASONS:

The Monmouthshire Armed Forces Forum has been re-established to help ensure the aims and objectives of the Armed Forces Covenant are fulfilled. The forum members consist of a broad spectrum of local authority departments, 3rd Sector organisations, Reserve Units, Armed Forces Family Federations, Veteran groups, RFEA, Career Transition Partnership and local armed forces associations. All applications to the Armed Forces Covenant Trust are debated and endorsed through a Local Covenant Partnership.

The Armed Forces Covenant sets out the commitment the local authority has in supporting the Armed Forces Community including serving military, their families and children, spouses and dependent relatives and also veterans who have given service to their country.

Since the inception of the Regional Armed Forces Covenant Liaison Officer post in September 2017, members of the local authority have benefited from bespoke training on the Armed Forces Covenant. Identifying a need MCC and Newport City Council have been successful in applying for funds through the Ministry of Defense Education Support fund to employ an HMF Education Support Officer who will support service families and schools across the two Councils.

MCC employment policies need to reflect and complement the work that is being undertaken by Joe Skidmore and Lisa Rawlings (as detailed in brief throughout this report).

Within its geographical boundary, the county of Monmouthshire has two MOD barracks.

The joint approach across the 5 SE Wales Local Authorities reduces risk of 'postcode lottery' for service leavers.

The introduction of a guaranteed interview scheme will help MCC to achieve the gold award as part of the Employer Recognition Award Scheme.

8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

Additional costs likely to be trivial and will be met from within existing budgets

9. CONSULTEES:

SLT

Royal British Legion

Welsh Government

Monmouthshire Armed Forces Forum (MAFF)

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

A guide for local authorities: how to deliver the covenant in your area

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/655596/Booklet - Local Authority Guide - Overview.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/655596/Booklet_-_Local_Authority_Guide_-_Overview.pdf)

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