

General Scrutiny Committee 15th January 2021 Supplementary paper

Growth bid - Armed Forces Covenant Support Officer

It is the Council's responsibility to support the delivery of the Armed Forces Covenant in Herefordshire and more specifically to support the Covenant Partnership which is made up of representatives from a wide range of service providers, charities and stakeholders.

Historically there has been officer support available, in 2017 the Forces In Mind Trust's self-assessment tool identified that there were a few areas of weakness based mainly on the integration of the covenant into policy and service delivery and communication and publicity both internally and across the county. A successful cluster bid with Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin and Worcestershire, led by Herefordshire Council, was submitted to the Armed Forces covenant fund which enabled the employment of a support officer from November 2018 covering 2 days each week in Herefordshire and another 2 days each week covering Worcestershire. The job purpose is to support the work of the partnership in both Herefordshire and Worcestershire to ensure that they are meeting the aims of the covenant in those areas. The role specifically picks up crucial pieces of work being:-

- Development and delivery of Communication Plans;
- Armed Forces Needs Assessment development;
- Support the development of and delivery of the respective Action Plans;
- Support the set up and co-ordinate the delivery of the pilot Veteran Hubs.

Two years on, we've reviewed the self-assessment tool and can demonstrate the difference that this post has made to the partnership, addressing those identified areas of weakness and in addition, the development of a training package for all frontline staff, an increase of covenant signatories in Herefordshire's local business community from approximately 30 to 70, support to ensure Herefordshire Council achieved the Gold Award for the Employer Recognition Scheme, increased publicity through press and social media coverage, co-ordination of events and activities, cross border working and shared resources / links with Worcestershire.

This post attracted grant funding which comes to an end in March 2021. Worcestershire County Council has committed to funding the post at £10k with an annual review scheduled 31st December 2021, this growth bid is asking for Herefordshire Council to **match this funding with £10k revenue base budget.**

Retention of this post will enable:-

1. The council to meet its obligations for the Armed Forces Community identified as being up to 25% of our population in Herefordshire. Particularly as outlined within the Equality Policy, through roll out of the training package that has been developed for frontline staff and ensuring identification of those veterans, serving personnel, their families and carers;
2. In turn, this will enable the Council to also meet its obligations under the terms of the new Covenant Legislation which is due this year whereby we have to pay due regard to needs in particularly health, education and housing;
3. Maintain all communication channels internally and externally including webpages, social media, which in turn supports the visibility of how the covenant is being delivered in Herefordshire;
4. Review and refresh the Armed Forces Needs document and maintain the Partnership Action Plan based on the identified needs/issues;
5. Continuing the links with profiling Herefordshire Council's successful delivery of the covenant with the Office of Veteran Affairs and managing to gain regional and national presence of what 'good' looks like in the way that we are delivering;
6. Build on the benefits of cross-border working where we are jointly gaining knowledge and information, sharing best practice, etc.