



**Hertfordshire Armed Forces Covenant Board meeting**  
**Thursday 28 September 2023, 10:00-12:00**  
**Location: Ashbourne Room, County Hall, Hertford**

**Attendees**


- Vice Lord-Lieutenant of Hertfordshire Mr Anthony Chapman DL
- Cllr Fiona Hill, Chairman Hertfordshire Armed Forces Covenant Board
- Ashley Lamprell, Hertfordshire County Council
- Kate Brierley, Hertfordshire County Council
- Cllr Alistair Willoughby, North Herts District Champion
- Cllr Claire Parris, Stevenage District Champion
- Cllr Steve McNamara, Welwyn Hatfield District Champion
- WO1 Barry Smith, 254 Medical Regiment
- Col Clint Read, Northwood HQ
- Hugh Ottewell, SAAFA Herts
- Barrie Griffiths, East of England Veterans Advisory Pensions Committee
- Liz Burns, Veterans Support Group Abbots Langley
- Harper Brown, Herts and West Essex ICS
- Dr Oliver Pugh, HPFT
- William Brown, East Anglia Reserve Forces' and Cadet's Association Herts County Forum

**Apologies**

- Cllr Alpha Collins, Hertsmere District Champion
- Cllr Ajanta Hilton, St Albans District Champion
- Cllr Jon Tankard, Three Rivers District Champion
- Cllr Amanda Grimston, Watford District Champion
- Lt Cdr Ian Dorward, HMS Wildfire
- Paul Bishop, East Anglia Reserve Forces' and Cadet's Association
- Kristina Carrington, MOD Regional Representative
- Gail Jones, MOD Military Civilian Integration
- Andrew Huggins, Royal British Legion Herts
- Patricia Chadwick, Royal British Legion
- Cllr Teresa Heritage, SAAFA Herts
- Angela Fox, Citizens Advice Dacorum
- John Woodruffe, Hertfordshire Chamber of Commerce
- Leslie Billy, Viewpoint
- John Phillips, Project Nova
- Pete Frost, Hertfordshire Constabulary
- Louise Briggs, Veterans UK
- Susan Jones, DWP
- Katie Millman, HCT
- Vanessa Plumley, RAF Families Federation
- Cat Calder, Army Families Federation
- Nicola Thompson, Naval Families Federation
- Cllr Paul Seeby, Broxbourne District Champion
- Cllr David Andrews, East Herts District Champion

## Minutes

1	<b>Welcome from the Chairman and introductions</b>	<b>Actions</b>
	Cllr Fiona Hill welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made.	
2	<b>Apologies and substitutions</b>	
	Cllr Hill noted the apologies (listed above) and substitutions. Vice Lord-Lieutenant Anthony Chapman DL is attending for His Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of Hertfordshire Mr Robert Voss	
3	<b>Minutes and actions from the previous meeting help 9 March 2023</b>	
	Cllr. Fiona Hill introduced the agenda item and asked if members had any comments from previous meeting minutes help 9 March 2023 It was raised in that in Item 8, paragraph 5, the wording should be reconsidered. Current wording says "have you served in the Armed Forces or left the Armed Forces in the last 5 years". It was suggested by Barrie Griffiths that the phrase "or left the Armed Forces in the last 5 years" should be removed as <a href="#">The Statutory Guidance (SG) for the Armed Forces Covenant Duty</a> does not impose any time limit or local connection on members of the Armed Forces Community (SG para 4.15 refers). There is no 5 year time limit on ex-serving personnel making an application for social housing. New Housing Chairman and all District Champions asked to note this amendment. The minutes were approved.	Ashley to ensure new Housing Chair is aware of this amendment.
4	<b>Review of the Board's Terms of Reference</b>	
	Kate Brierley, Lead Officer, HCC introduced the item. The Board last reviewed the Terms of reference in 2021 during the last governance review. Some updates are necessary now to reflect recent changes in membership, changes to the NHS structure, updates to details at Northwood, recognition of the new Chairman and finally amending the review schedule to every two years. The Board are invited to endorse these Terms for the next two years.  Some changes to the draft TORs were requested. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Armed Forces Covenant Fund should read Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust.</li> </ul> Board members agreed these TORs with above changes.	

<p><b>5</b></p>	<p><b>Hertfordshire Armed Forces Covenant Board Action Plan 2023/24</b></p> <p><a href="#">To hear an update on progress on the 2023/24 action plan</a> and preparations for the annual report. Kate Brierley presented the following slides.</p> <div style="text-align: center;">         Item5.pptx     </div> <p>After the presentation there was some discussion about using the figure of <a href="#">nearly 26,000 veterans in Hertfordshire</a> and concern from some about not wanting to undersell the population the Board seeks to support in that the armed forces community is wider than the number of veterans. There was a concern with how accurate the number was due to some anecdotal evidence of veterans in Hertfordshire not “ticking” the box on the Census to say they had served.</p> <p>There were no comments about the progress achieved against the action plan.</p> <hr/> <p><b>Post meeting note</b></p> <p>Information here about how the ONS check the quality of and validate Census data: <a href="#">Quality assurance of Census 2021 - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)</a></p>	<p>Board members asked to recognise that the Census records the number of veterans rather than the armed forces community e.g. families</p>
<p><b>6</b></p>	<p><b>Standing item: The Military Perspective</b></p> <p><i>This item provides an opportunity for Board members to hear updates from military colleagues in Hertfordshire.</i></p> <p>Cllr Hill invited an update from the Vice Lord Lieutenant Anthony Chapman DL.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Vice Lord Lieutenant shared apologies from the Lord Lieutenant who was unable to attend the meeting. The Lieutenancy Military Committee continues to be involved with the armed forces community and hosted an event for veterans in the Arnhem room at Moorpark mansion. 60 veterans from all 3 services were in attendance.</li> <li>• There is a continued relationship with those currently serving. The Lord Lieutenant recently was invited to open the new Hitchin Army Reserve Centre.</li> <li>• The Lord Lieutenant appointed his Cadets for this year, increasing the number and including Army, Sea Cadets and CCF contingents.</li> <li>• The Lord Lieutenant will continue to support Remembrance ceremonies this year.</li> </ul>	

There was a question about if Cadets are covered by the Armed Forces Covenant and a brief discussion about the Government definition of a veteran. It was noted that the definition is to have served at least one day. Cadet instructors are included in the Armed Forces Covenant but not Cadets. The Cadet Association is a uniformed youth organisation and not an organisation to recruit for the Armed Forces.

Liz Burns expressed a high regard for the attendance of Cadets at events, noting its perceived value and benefits for veterans. The Vice Lord-Lieutenant mentioned that Lieutenancy will continue to support Cadets.

Cllr Hill invited Colonel Clinton Read to share his update from Northwood HQ.

- Staff efforts continue to support the UK contribution in Europe.
- Staff also involved in Operation Polar Bear, the evacuation of South Sudan including some deployments.
- The site continues to grow and therefore is under pressure with a workforce of 2,650 people in a small location. Some local tension regarding parking exists. Member of district council and the MP are tracking this closely.
- 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Volunteer Royal Navy Band association concert on 21 October at Waters Meet theatre in Rickmansworth.
- The Oxhey Jets host a memorial football match each year to honour the late Private Tom Lake who died in 2011. A different organisation is chosen to play them each year and this year it is Northwood HQ.
- Northwood is exploring opportunities with Forces United based in Watford.
- Northwood is happy to support another year of the Christmas Art competition and would like to invite Cllr Fiona Hill to attend the Day of Adventure next year.
- Northwood is undergoing some building works for the new NATO site which might cause more strain to the relationship with the local community.

Cllr Hill invited WO1 Barry Smith of the 254 Medical Regiment to share an update.

- The 254 Medical Regiment run the military village each year at Herts County Show. It is well attended by military units. Barry is able to offer free places to military related charities. It is preferred to not have organisations that offer paid memberships. Please be in touch with Barry if your organisation would like to have a stand at the County Show in May 2024.
- Official opening of the Army Reserve Centre in Hitchin took place 23 September 2023. It was attended by the Lord Lieutenant and 70 people. The opening coincided with the reformation of

Ashley to share details of the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Volunteer Royal Navy Band concert on 21 October

the hospital squadron who are working to get a foothold in the Herts NHS trusts. The squadron is formed but are still awaiting permanent staff. By the next Covenant Board meeting, Barry hopes two members of staff will be in post.

- 12 Reservists across the Regiment have been mobilised and 3 are Hitchin based.

Cllr Fiona Hill invited William Brown from the EAFCA Herts county forum to share an update.

- William Brown presenting the update for Paul Bishop who sends his apologies for this meeting.
- **Reserve strength** - The total strength of the Volunteer Reserve including all three services is 30,560, a decrease of 2,310 personnel (6.3%) in the last year. This comprises:

i. Maritime Reserves	2,760
ii. Army Reserves	24,940
iii. Air Force Reserves	2,860

3,590 individuals joined the Volunteer Reserves in the last year. This is a decrease of 1,810 (33.5%) compared to the previous year.

- **Use of Reserves** - Reservists continue to serve in support of operations worldwide, including providing support to the NATO Enhanced Forward Presence in Estonia and Poland, in Cyprus and Gibraltar, and as part of broader defence engagement activities including the Coronation.
- **Recruitment** - All the services are finding a very difficult recruiting environment:
  - The Maritime Reserves' recruitment campaign as mentioned at the last meeting started in early 2023. Accelerated programmes for both Officers (9 weeks) and Ratings (5 weeks) were introduced in the summer.
  - The Army has implemented an Engage to Recruit campaign (a concept already used in the Police) to improve the number of expressions of interest.
  - The RAF Reserve is in the process of rolling out Reserve Support Wings (RSW) following a successful trial in the North of England.
- **Medical Standards for Joining the Reserves** – Following a question at the last Board meeting, William reported that the standard requirement for joining the reserves is the same as to join the regular forces. Reservists are often employed within regular units and perform the same duties. More information is available online about the fitness tests and required standard.
- **Armed Forces Covenant signing** - Nationally the number of Armed Forces Covenant signings now stands at 10,484. The 10,000th AFC was signed on 27 March by John Lewis Partnership

PLC. Hensoldt UK of Waltham Cross (formerly Kelvin Hughes Limited, a world leader in maritime navigation and surveillance radar systems) has been awarded the Gold award.

The ERS Silver Awards Ceremony which is held regionally is due to be held on 19th Oct. at Madingley College, Cambridge. Successful Hertfordshire recipients are:

- Computacentre (Hatfield)
  - Fire Teams Solutions Ltd (Berkhamsted)
  - Smiths Detection (Hemel Hempstead)
  - The Rent Guarantee Company (Sawbridgeworth)
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- **Estates** - The official opening by His Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of the new building at Hitchin Army Reserve Centre took place last Saturday 23 Sep. Obtaining funding for the rebuild has been an EARFCA goal for many years, and it was finally completed during lockdown.
  - **Cadets** - The Department of Education (DfE) has stated that it will no longer match the Ministry of Defence daily allowance for Combined Cadet Force (CCF) adult instructors in State Schools (even though their published Academies Planning Calendar shows the payments scheduled for Nov. 2023 and May 2024).

Removal of this funding may well affect schools' ability to retain these instructors, who are almost invariably veterans.

Lt Cdr Ian Dorward, HMS Wildfire was unable to attend the meeting. He shared a written update prior to the meeting which is included here as a post meeting note.

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#### **Post meeting note**

Lt Cdr Ian Dorward, HMS Wildfire was unable to attend the meeting, he has shared this update.

WILDFIRE continues to punch above its weight both within the Maritime Reserve and in our wider community. It was very pleasing to see so many community leaders and representatives at our Annual Ceremonial Divisions (Parade) within the NORTHWOOD site in June this year. We will build on these links over the coming year. Not least because one of my Command Priorities is to build stronger more valuable connections and engagement with the communities around us. My small team are working on ways we can do this to achieve meaningful experiences between my Ship, local employers and people.

	<p>The Maritime Reserve recently appointed a new Commander, Commodore Jo Adey RN ADC. The new 1* commander has set priorities that include increased community engagement, so I am thrilled that my own priorities are in step with those of my Senior Command. This will help me to create impact over the next 12 months.</p> <p>WILDFIRE continues to provide support to the Royal Navy and our esprit d'corps remains to be ready and in service of the Nation. I achieve this by providing and facilitating relevant training experiences and opportunities. This in turn ensures morale at WILDFIRE is high with engaged officers and sailors that are available to serve the Royal Navy as and when needed.</p>	
7	<p><b>Update: Health Subgroup progress report</b></p>	
	<p>Cllr Hill invited Harper Brown, Chair of the Health Subgroup to share progress made by the health subgroup of the Board.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Health group priority on Primary Care engagement</b> - There now 40 (32 in Hertfordshire) Veteran Friendly accredited GP practices across the Herts and west Essex ICB. Slightly short on the Covenant Board's target of 1 accredited practices per PCN.</li> <li>• There are 3 veterans leading work with social prescribers in Herts. Social prescribers are the key link between GP practices and the voluntary and community sector.</li> <li>• <b>Single point of contact</b> -The single point of contact service is now called Op COMMUNITY which is an NHS pilot improving service for serving families. This follows an NHS survey done during the pandemic to find the needs of serving families. Hertfordshire was one of the first 3 to pilot the idea. There are now 7 pilots across the country. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ This pilot formally ends in November 2023, but there is enough budget to continue to March 2024 when the pilot will be required to report.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>NHS has a number of specialised services</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Op Courage is run by Essex University Partnership Trust and is the name for the Mental Health and Wellbeing service</li> <li>○ Op RESTORE based at Addenbrookes is the new name for Veterans trauma for physical health</li> <li>○ Op NOVA provide support for veterans in criminal justice system in 7 regions</li> <li>○ Op COMMUNITY is a telephone line for the armed forces community to offer support and guidance around navigating NHS services and advice regarding other services that can offer support.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	

- **Wider NHS context** is that each Integrated Care Board is going through a restructuring and running cost reduction programme. Dental and optometry will be managed by ICB which presents opportunity for collaboration and more efficiencies for how contracts are managed.
- **Identifying needs of armed forces community** – The Health Subgroup has been working with Hertfordshire Public Health on a JSNA. Last year a JSNA Lite Bite was published. There are plans to build on that and work with welfare and medical officers to have a JSNA by March 2024 to have a more accurate baselines around clinical and social needs.
- **Areas of work to explore**
  - improving maternity care for Regular, Reserve and veteran families at a local level in terms of risk assessment and providing coordinated care particularly when moving from one unit to another.
  - encouraging GP practices to identify family members of serving personnel and encouraging them to join Patient Participation Groups to help build a network to improve services.
  - 170 support services for Armed Forces Community in Hertfordshire have been mapped and shared with Herts Help. There are plans to add these services to Veteran’s Gateway however this website is currently under review by Office for Veteran Affairs.
  - Work is underway with Hertfordshire suicide prevention board and a national pilot, run by the police, that can improve the how we can react more quickly to veterans who go missing. Currently a national protocol is being developed that is completed by family if they are at risk of going missing. Protocol will be held by charity “Safe and Found online”. Protocol can be accessed by police and has been tested by Greater Manchester Police. Hertfordshire policy is interested in taking on this protocol.
- **Challenges** – Harper mentioned that due to the ICB reorganisation, there currently isn’t an Armed Forces Lead in each area but hopefully they will be identified soon. There is a desire to create a strategic team across NHS in East of England and have better oversight between Covenant Boards, NHS and the voluntary sector.

After Harper’s presentation, the following points were raised:

- Cambridge and Peterborough ICB will include parts of Hertfordshire. It was raised if this area was included in the Subgroup’s work. Harper said he doesn’t currently have a name for an Armed Forces lead there but will try to reconnect with the ICB.
- Barry Smith and Harper will connect offline about how the 254 can help promote Op COMMUNITY and the work of the Covenant Board particularly in GP surgeries.

Harper to reach out to Cambridge and Peterborough ICB

Barry Smith and Harper to connect about how the 254 can help promote Op COMMUNITY to GP surgeries



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bassingbourn near Royston, Hertfordshire was mentioned as another site to connect with. Barry Smith has a contact and will share with Harper.</li> </ul>	Barry Smith to share his contact at Bassingbourn with Harper
<b>8</b>	<b>Housing Subgroup and Education Subgroup</b>	
	<p>Cllr Fiona Hill introduced this item and informed the Board that the Chair of both the Housing and Education Subgroups have resigned.</p> <p>Liz Burns volunteered to be the Chair of the Housing Subgroup and Ashley will take that forward. There was a brief discussion about different ways Liz Burns, and colleagues working on Op COMMUNITY have found of supporting veterans in need of housing.</p> <p>There were no volunteers in the meeting to chair the Education Subgroup. Ashley Lamprell will email all members to ask for those interested in Chairing. There was a brief discussion about the current membership of the Education Subgroup comprising of those who are knowledgeable about education policy within HCC and therefore this would not necessarily be required of the new Chair.</p>	<p>Ashley to take forward Housing Subgroup with Liz Burns as Chair.</p> <p>Ashley to email Board members to seek volunteers to Chair the Education group</p>
<b>9</b>	<b>Close</b>	
	<p>Cllr Fiona Hill brought the meeting to a close and officially thanked Councillor Terry Douris for his previous Chairmanship of the Board.</p> <p>Cllr Hill invited Board members to share any other business.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Liz Burns shared that the Abbots Langley Veterans Support group has won an award. The group has helped veterans to receive 2.5 million pounds that they were not aware they were entitled to.</li> <li>Cllr Willoughby asked about how Board members can join the subgroups. It was explained that it is on a voluntary basis, and we look to ensure that the knowledge held by the membership of each group is balanced. Groups may wish to investigate or commission a report to gather any evidence of need.</li> <li>Colonel Read shared that Northwood has a positive experience in terms of accessing education and it only gets complicated when they are dealing with other local authorities outside Hertfordshire.</li> <li>There was a brief discussion about using the list of Armed Forces Covenant signatories to find organisations who support the Armed Forces community. The list of signatories is available on the MOD website <a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/search-for-businesses-who-have-signed-the-armed-forces-covenant">https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/search-for-businesses-who-have-signed-the-armed-forces-covenant</a>. The MOD Employer Recognition Scheme recognises how employers support their employees from the armed forces community.</li> </ul>	<p>Ashley to include link to Covenant signatories in next HH newsletter</p>

Cllr Fiona Hill announced that the next meeting will be on 14 March 2024 from 10:00-12:00 and closed the meeting.	
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**For Information:**

- The Hertfordshire Heroes Christmas Art Competition 2023 has been launched. Hertfordshire Heroes is encouraging all Key Stage 2 pupils in Hertfordshire to take part in the annual Christmas Art Competition by 20 November 2023. This year, we invite children to create artwork to bring cheer to military personnel for their chance to win a day of adventure at the UK military's strategic headquarters, Northwood HQ. A winner will be chosen from each year group in Key Stage 2. Please do promote the competition with schools in your network. [All information is available on our website.](#)

**Commemorative events 2023– for information only:**

- Armistice Day is Saturday 11 November 2023 and Remembrance Sunday 12 November 2023