

From: Linden Kemkaran – Leader of the Council
Amanda Beer - Chief Executive

To: County Council - 18 December 2025

Subject: 2025 Annual Report on the Implementation of the Armed Forces Covenant in Kent

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary:

This report provides a briefing on Kent County Council's work to support Kent's Armed Forces community and summarises key achievements during 2025.

Recommendation:

Members are asked to NOTE all that is being done to deliver the Armed Forces Covenant in Kent and to ENDORSE priorities going forward including promoting Kent County Council's status as the lead MoD Employers Recognition Gold Award Holder.

Members are requested to continue to support the Armed Forces Covenant across the county and to ENDORSE the Council's commitment to this work by engaging locally in Covenant efforts and Military related events.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Armed Forces Covenant outlines the moral obligation between the Nation, the Government and the Armed Forces. At a local level, Kent County Council (KCC) was one of the first Authorities to sign a Covenant, back in September 2011. In October 2017, a new combined Armed Forces Covenant including KCC, Medway, 11 Infantry Brigade and RSME was re-signed at the Kent and Medway Civilian-Military Partnership Board (KMCMPB).
- 1.2 The purpose of the Covenant is to encourage support for the armed forces community working and residing in Kent and to recognise, remember and honour the sacrifices they have made for us to keep Britain safe and free.
- 1.3 Parts of the Armed Forces Covenant were enshrined in law under the Armed Forces Act 2021. The measures in the Act came into force on 22 November 2022, meaning all Local Authorities and related public bodies are required to show 'due regard' when considering applications from the armed forces community (school places and transport), Healthcare (access to GPs and

hospital waiting lists) and Housing (homelessness and Disabled Facilities Grants) thereby ensuring that no one is disadvantaged by their service to the Nation. On 28 June 2025, the Prime Minister announced that legislation will be brought forward to bring the Armed Forces Covenant fully into law, placing the armed forces community at the heart of government decision-making.

- 1.4 In collaboration with our local partners, KCC continually revisits service processes and pathways to ensure they meet the needs of the armed forces community, and this is reinforced through regular awareness training for front line staff, senior officers and elected Members delivered by the Covenant Lead Officer. Additionally, the Civic Office and the Lieutenancy are well connected into the KMCMPB 's work.
- 1.5 The KMCMPB continues to oversee the implementation of the Covenant and meets twice a year under the chairmanship of the KCC Chairman with the Leader and Armed Forces Champion of Medway Council appointed as vice-chairman, supported by Task Groups covering the following themes:
 - Employment and Skills
 - Recognise and Remember
 - Unit Welfare Officers – a Joint Task Group involving KCC and Medway Council Lead Officers

2. Highlights of Kent County Council's Activities to support the Armed Forces Community during 2025

2.1 Kent & Medway Civilian-Military Partnership Board

- 2.1.1 In May 2025, we welcomed Cllr Richard Palmer as our new Chairman of KCC. Along with the Leader of KCC, Cllr Richard Palmer is a strong supporter of the Armed Forces. As Chairman of KCC, he automatically becomes Chairman of KMCMPB.
- 2.1.2 In October 2025, the KMCMPB welcomed Lt Col (Retd) Peter Conn MBE who took over the Chairmanship of the Employment and Skills Task Group following the retirement of Richard Lavender.

2.2 11th Kent and Medway Armed Forces Covenant Conference – Mid-Kent College, Maidstone

- 2.2.1 The KMCMPB held its 11th Annual Armed Forces Covenant Conference sponsored (for the second year running) by Mid-Kent College, Maidstone in June 2025. Our Guest Speakers included the Vice Lord-Lieutenant – Sir Hugh Robertson; Cllr Linden Kemkaran – Leader KCC and Cllr Vince Maple - Leader Medway Council. Cllr Richard Palmer was announced there as the new Armed Forces Champion for KCC.

- 2.2.2 Claire Lilly Founder - The Forcer Protocol spoke movingly of on Suicide Prevention. The Forcer Protocol is a tool used by the Police to ensure key information is available to them when they are searching for serving and ex-service veterans who are lost or have gone missing or at risk. It is named after Alan Forcer who suffered with complex PTSD and debilitating depression following service in Northern Ireland and Kosovo during the height of the conflicts, subsequently taking his own life. Service veterans, their informal and professional carers, family members and friends can complete a form which records vital information in relation to the veteran in case they go missing. Kent Police signed up to it last November, with Ch Insp Gary Woodward speaking on Kent Police's complementary role in saving lives.
- 2.2.3 Cdre Tim Green ADC Naval Regional Commander – London and South East delivered a fascinating brief on the recently published Strategic Defence Review 2025. He warned of generational challenges with the UK under daily attack particularly from cyber-attacks. He called for the need to reconnect Defence with Civil Society. He concluded by saying that nothing happens without people.
- 2.2.4 Lt Col Tim Petransky – SO1 HQ SE - Aldershot spoke on the Army commitments within Kent and how nearly 50,000 Ukrainian Recruits had been taught basic soldiering skills including weapon handling, marksmanship and self-defence in and around Kent under Op INTERFLEX and the MoD Covenant Team. Canon Peter Bruinvels spoke on the latest developments with the expansion of the Armed Forces Covenant and how well Kent was responding to them. The National Covenant Lead described KCC as an “exemplar” in just how well it delivered the Covenant.

2.3 MoD Employer Recognition Scheme

- 2.3.1 The Annual Gold Awards were held on 23 September at The Army Flying Museum Middle Wallop. The two Gold Kent recipients were, Kent and Medway NHS and Social Care Partnership Trust and Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust.
- 2.3.2 One of the benefits of being an Employer Recognition Scheme Gold Award holder is that KCC were able to send six members of staff from the KCC Dynamic Support Service to the 2025 Army Leadership Challenge Day in October. Feedback received from the staff that attended was that it pushed them out of their comfort zones, built up their confidence, and strengthened their skills, all of which are transferable skills that they have brought back to the KCC workplace.

2.4 Welfare Support

- 2.4.1 KCC and the Armed Forces Champions continue to provide case work support for both service personnel and ex-service personnel and their families. Cases cover a range of topics such as obtaining a bus pass, school admissions, library fines whilst on active service, job introductions and housing provision.
- 2.4.2 The tri-Annual Unit Move between Shorncliffe and Brunei took place in August 2025 and involved 2RGR swapping with 1RGR who then returned to Sir John Moore Barracks, Folkestone, which included approximately 1500 people. KCC appointed a nominated officer to support the school admission process, and the switch went really well. Work to update a school's handbook was completed ahead of the full move.
- 2.4.3 During 2025, KCC's Financial Hardship Programme allocated £29,350 in food and/or energy vouchers to veteran homes via the government funded Household Support Fund. There were 315 awards given during the summer scheme which provided supermarket vouchers to support with food costs, and 100 awards provided during the winter scheme which allowed beneficiaries to select food or energy vouchers. 41 veterans were supported through the Kent Advice Hub and Money and Mental Health projects, delivered in partnership with Citizens Advice North West Kent.
- 2.5 The Full 2025 Annual Report - Implementation of the Armed Forces Covenant in Kent.
- 2.5.1 The full 2025 Annual Report can be found as appendix 1 attached to this report.

3. Looking Ahead to 2026

- 3.1 The Recognise & Remember Task Group will continue to publicise the military events calendar (including veterans' activities and their Hubs) in conjunction with the Lieutenancy Officer to celebrate Armed Forces Day 2026 as well as commemorating Armistice Day and Remembrance Sunday 2026 and encourage KCC Members to support all the local events.
- 3.2 The Strategic Partnerships Team will analyse the results from the November 2025 KCC Member and Officer survey, to help understand how many people within KCC have an Armed Forces connection and what KCC may be able to do to connect or support them even better.
- 3.3 Armed Forces Awareness Training will continue throughout 2026 in person and online.
- 3.4 Ahead of KCC's revalidation of its Employers Recognition Gold Award in late 2026, the Strategic Partnerships Team will continue to review KCC policies to

ensure it maintains the Gold Award status.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

Recommendation:

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