

From: Brian Collins – Deputy Leader of the Council

Ben Watts – Deputy Chief Executive

To: Personnel Committee – 25 March 2026

Subject: Cadet Force Adult Volunteers Special Leave

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary: This paper sets out a proposal to introduce a formal special leave entitlement for Cadet Force Adult Volunteers who support the armed forces youth cadet organisations including: the Sea Cadet Corps, Army Cadet Force, Combined Cadet Force, and Royal Air Force Air Cadets.

Recommendation: Personnel Committee is asked to approve the proposal described in section 5.2, which introduces a special leave entitlement for employees who serve as Cadet Force Adult Volunteers, effective from 1st April 2026.

1. Background

- 1.1. Kent County Council has long championed the Armed Forces Covenant and is a Gold Employer Recognition Scheme award holder.
- 1.2. In preparation for the revalidation of KCC's Gold Award in late 2026, a review of current policies has identified an opportunity to strengthen support for employees who serve as Cadet Force Adult Volunteers by enhancing leave entitlements.
- 1.3. Cadet Force Adult Volunteers play a vital role in planning, delivering and supervising training for young people in the Sea Cadet Corps, Army Cadet Force, Combined Cadet Force, and Royal Air Force Air Cadets. Their contributions include annual camps, field training, first aid, STEM activities, leadership development, and community engagement.

2. Current Leave Entitlement

- 2.1. Currently employees who are members of the Reserve Forces, such as the Army Reserve, are entitled to take up to two weeks paid leave per leave year. This entitlement is designed to support participation in activities including annual training camps.
- 2.2. Cadet Force Adult Volunteers do not have a dedicated special leave entitlement. However, they may use their general volunteering leave allowance, which provides two paid days per leave year.

3. Benchmarking

- 3.1. Benchmarking across the public sector indicates a growing trend towards dedicated special leave for Cadet Force Adult Volunteers, typically in the range of 5 to 10 paid days per leave year, sometimes supplemented by unpaid or flexible working options.

- 3.2. National best practice includes Milton Keynes City Council (10 paid days) and West Northamptonshire Council (5 paid days), with several other councils offer similar or slightly lower entitlements.
- 3.3. Local authorities such as Medway, Essex, and East Sussex currently offer 0 to 2 paid days per leave year, some with no distinct policy or only general volunteering leave.
- 3.4. A full summary of benchmarking findings is provided in Appendix A.

4. Rationale for Change

- 4.1. Adopting a distinct leave allowance for Cadet Force Adult Volunteers will strengthen KCC's case for maintaining Employer Recognition Scheme Gold status at the 2026 re-validation, going above the requirement to "allow flexibility for employees who are Cadet Force Adult Volunteers to fit their working hours in with their volunteering" (Appendix B).
- 4.2. The Strategic Defence Review 2025 (Appendix C) and the Government's '30 by 30' campaign (Appendix D) set targets to increase Active Reserves by 20% and Cadets by 30% by 2030. Both initiatives highlight the role of Cadet Force Adult Volunteers as key engagement tools to connect Defence with the community. Increasing adult volunteers, including streamlined processes for new volunteers and fast-track opportunities for veterans, is central to these ambitions, with employer support through paid leave identified as a key enabler.
- 4.3. At the SERFCA Lord-Lieutenant Awards on 12th November 2025, His Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of Kent highlighted the vital role of the Reserves in national security and the importance of community and employer support in enabling their service. The Lord-Lieutenant also emphasised the need to encourage more Adult Volunteers to support the Cadet Forces, ensuring more young people can benefit from the opportunities they offer (Appendix E).
- 4.4. There are an estimated 1,120 Cadet Force Adult Volunteers in Kent across the Cadet Forces (Combined Cadet Force adults 259; Sea Cadet Corps 319; Army Cadet Force 250; Royal Air Force Air Cadets 291). While only a fraction will be KCC employees, this scale demonstrates the county-wide reliance on adult volunteers. Even a modest uptake among KCC employees can have a significant positive effect on youth cadet activities and community engagement.

5. Proposal

- 5.1. It is proposed that KCC introduces a special leave entitlement for employees who serve as Cadet Force Adult Volunteers supporting recognised armed forces youth organisations, including the Sea Cadet Corps, Army Cadet Force, Combined Cadet Force, and Royal Air Force Air Cadets.
- 5.2. The recommended entitlement is up to two weeks (10 working days) paid special leave per leave year, matching the provision currently available to members of the Reserve Forces. This leave would be specifically for participation in cadet-related activities such as annual camps, training, leadership development, and community engagement.

5.3. The policy would apply to employees volunteering with armed forces cadet organisations only (Sea Cadet Corps, Army Cadet Force, Combined Cadet Force, and Royal Air Force Air Cadets), not to non-military youth groups.

6. Recommendation

6.1. Personnel Committee is asked to approve the proposal described in section 5.2, which introduces a special leave entitlement for employees who serve as Cadet Force Adult Volunteers, effective from 1st April 2026.

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Appendices

Appendix A - Benchmarking Findings

Appendix B - MOD Employer Recognition Scheme – Gold Award Criteria:

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

Appendix C – The Strategic Defence Review 2025: [The Strategic Review 2025 - Full Document](#)

Appendix D - The Government's '30 by 30' campaign: ['30 by 30' - New funding to boost cadet force by over 40,000 by 2030 - GOV.UK](#)

Appendix E - SERFCA Lord-Lieutenant Awards: <https://kent-lieutenancy.org.uk/kent-county-events/serfca-lord-lieutenant-awards/>