

By: Linden Kemkaran – Leader of the Council
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To: Personnel Committee

Date: 14th September 2026

Subject: Cadet Force Adult Volunteers Special Leave – Revised Paper

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:

- 1 **AGREE** the proposal at paragraph 5.2 to introduce a formal special leave entitlement of up to two weeks per leave year for Cadet Force Adult Volunteers to support Kent County Council's Gold Employer Recognition Scheme award, effective from 1st October 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.
- 1.4. At its meeting on 25th March 2026, Personnel Committee considered a proposal to introduce a special leave entitlement for Cadet Force Adult Volunteers. Members requested further information regarding the financial implications of the proposal and the rationale for restricting eligibility to Cadet Force Adult Volunteers rather than extending the entitlement to a wider range of volunteer groups. This report provides that additional information and seeks a decision on the proposal.

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. Officers have considered the potential impact on Kent County Council's Employer Recognition Scheme Gold Award status. While the proposed entitlement is not a mandatory requirement of Gold accreditation, enhanced support for Cadet Force Adult Volunteers demonstrates a strong commitment to the Armed Forces community and would strengthen KCC's position during future Gold Award revalidation. Members are advised that the proposed provision goes beyond the recognition requirements of the covenant and any statutory duties of the council.
- 4.3. 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.
- 4.4. 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).

4.5. 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. Financial Implications

6.1. The 2025 Kent County Council Armed Forces Survey identified two respondents who described themselves as Cadet Force Adult Volunteers. As participation in the survey was voluntary and respondents self-identified their connection to the Armed Forces, this figure should be treated as an indication of currently known eligibility rather than a definitive measure of the total number of eligible employees.

6.2. Based on the employees identified through the survey, the proposed entitlement of up to two weeks (10 working days) special leave per leave year would equate to a maximum of 20 working days leave annually if both employees utilised the full entitlement. Using current average salary costs, the maximum estimated annual value of the leave entitlement is therefore approximately £2,900 per annum. This estimate is based on the currently known level of eligibility identified through the 2025 Armed Forces Survey and would be subject to future uptake should additional eligible employees come forward.

6.3. The proposal would not result in a direct additional salary cost, as employees would remain in receipt of their normal contractual pay whilst undertaking approved Cadet Force Adult Volunteer activities. There may, however, be an indirect impact on service capacity during periods of absence. Any additional costs associated with providing cover would be dependent on the role undertaken, operational requirements and the duration of the leave requested.

6.4. Actual take up is likely to be lower than the maximum entitlement, as eligible employees may not require the full allocation of leave in any given year, particularly as some Cadet Force Adult Volunteer activities are likely to take place outside normal working hours. Requests would also remain subject to the

normal process for agreeing leave and consideration of operational service requirements.

- 6.5. Given the small number of employees currently known to be undertaking Cadet Force Adult Volunteer duties, the financial impact of the proposal is expected to be minimal and manageable within existing service budgets.

7. Consideration of Wider Volunteering Groups

- 7.1. Personnel Committee requested that officers consider whether a future scheme should include arrangements for other youth-related volunteer groups.
- 7.2. Officers have considered the potential benefits of extending the proposed entitlement more broadly, and there has been representation from The Scout Association (Appendix F).
- 7.3. KCC do not collect information that would allow us to fully estimate the number of staff likely to be in scope for a further extension to other youth-related volunteer groups. Similarly, existing access to leave provision for volunteering is managed on a local basis with managers and not recorded to consistently include the type of volunteering.
- 7.4. To achieve information to inform further proposals for other youth-related volunteer groups, a survey would need to be developed and sent to all staff. Given additional resourcing pressures, such a step has not been taken yet and officers can discuss this further with Members at Committee, if desired.
- 7.5. This proposal has been developed specifically to support Cadet Force Adult Volunteers in recognition of Kent County Council's commitments under the Armed Forces Covenant and the contribution made by cadet forces to developing young people and supporting national defence objectives.
- 7.6. The proposal also aligns with Kent County Council's Employer Recognition Scheme Gold Award status and complements the support already provided to members of the Armed Forces community through existing employment policies.
- 7.7. Extending a separate leave entitlement to other volunteering groups would significantly broaden the scope of the proposal and is likely to increase the number of employees potentially eligible for additional paid leave. Such an approach would require further consideration of eligibility criteria, operational impacts and financial implications.
- 7.8. Employees who volunteer with other organisations continue to be able to access the Council's existing volunteering and leave arrangements, subject to the requirements of those policies and further guidance and support can be given to managers to promote these policies and guidance to staff.

Personnel Committee is asked to:

AGREE the proposal at paragraph 5.2 to introduce a formal special leave entitlement of up to two weeks per leave year for Cadet Force Adult Volunteers to support Kent County Council's Gold Employer Recognition Scheme award, effective from 1st October 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/>

Appendix F – Representation from The Scout Association