

From: Leyland Ridings, KCC's Armed Forces Champion
David Cockburn, Corporate Director of Business Strategy & Support

To: Policy & Resources Cabinet Committee 22 April 2015

Subject: Update on the Kent and Medway Armed Forces Community Covenant

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary: This report provides an update on Community Covenant activity since the last report to the Committee in January 2014, including the implications for Kent of the Government's strategic changes to the armed forces and examples of initiatives undertaken to date.

Recommendation

The Cabinet Committee is asked to note progress and comment on the priorities for future activity.

1. Introduction

1.1 As Members will recall, the Armed Forces Community Covenant is a voluntary statement of mutual support between a civilian community and its local Armed Forces Community. It is intended to complement the Armed Forces Covenant, which outlines the moral obligation between the Nation, the Government and the Armed Forces, at the local level. Kent County Council was one of the first authorities to sign a Community Covenant, back in September 2011. The purpose of the Covenant is to encourage support for the Armed Forces Community working and residing in Kent and to recognise and remember the sacrifices made by members of this Armed Forces Community. The Kent & Medway Civilian Military Partnership Board oversees the implementation of the Covenant, and its current members are listed at Annex 1. It now meets three times a year, with work being undertaken by sub-groups across the key Covenant themes of:

- Health and wellbeing
- Integration (this includes support for service children, and promoting stronger, safer communities)
- Housing
- Employment, Economy and skills, and
- Recognise and Remember

1.2 This report sets out the context in which the Covenant now operates, including the implementation of the government's plans to re-base the armed forces, and proposed changes to the Community Covenant Grant scheme, then provides a summary of the key issues that came out of the January 2015 Conference, and outlines some of the successes achieved to date against each of the Covenant themes, and the priorities for the future.

2. Update on the impact of national changes in Kent

2.1 Considerable progress has been made nationally in implementing the Government's *Strategic Defence and Security Review*. In Kent, 2 (SE) Brigade has now been stood down, and the new 11 Brigade established with Brigadier Andrew Hughes as the Commander, based in Aldershot. Annex 2 shows the total area covered by 11 Brigade and the lead Regiment Commanding Officers for community engagement across the different parts of Kent. The County and District councils have worked closely with the army to support the redundant soldiers into civilian life, and the final tranche of redundancies impacting on Kent takes effect this summer (June 2015). Even when all the redundancies have been implemented, there is still likely to be an ongoing churn of several hundred soldiers a year in Kent leaving the army and wanting to move into other employment. Kent remains a popular destination for service leavers.

2.2 Another key element of the army transformation is the expansion of the Reservists. Reservists are no longer to be used sporadically for national emergencies, but to be used more frequently and predictably as part of a seamless army. This will require significant and ambitious recruitment, training and public relations work, placing a greater stress on individuals, their families and their employers. Currently, there are 412 Reservists in Kent (compared to 2,148 regular army personnel). We are supporting the army to promote the benefits to business of employing Reservists, and this is one of the areas the Employment and Skills subgroup is focussing on.

2.3 Changes are also being made over time to expand the army cadets, and encourage a broader range of young people to become involved. There are 940 Army Cadets and 2,793 Combined Cadets across the county. Annex 3 shows the 39 ACFs and 18 CCF bases in Kent, along with the bases for the regular army and the Reserves in Kent.

2.4 In Kent, the army presence dominates amongst the three armed forces services, but we do also have 457 Navy personnel living in the county, and there will be veterans from all three services living here.

2.5 We have been fortunate indeed that 2 (SE) Brigade under the command firstly of Simon Wolsey and then Chris Claydon has worked so closely with the County

Council and the Board over the last three years. The new Commander of 11 Brigade, Andrew Hughes, has assured us that either he himself, or his Deputy, Andy Barr, will attend Board meetings and support the community engagement work, despite the large geographical area that he has to cover, and since December the Brigadier or his Deputy have attended two meetings with us plus given a presentation at the Conference, so early signs are indeed that the army is continuing to take its community engagement responsibilities very seriously.

3. Community Covenant Grant Scheme, and LIBOR funding

3.1 Since 2012/13, the Government has had a grant scheme whereby people could bid for funding for projects that promoted integration between the military and civilian communities. In addition, there was a separate one-off Armed Forces Libor Fund of £35m made up of fines levied on the City for manipulating LIBOR interest rates, which delivered financial support to projects supporting the military community. These funds are now closed, however the Government recently announced that they will continue to make £10m per annum available for a revised Covenant scheme, although they have suggested that a more centralised approach will be adopted from this year. Local authorities have expressed their reservations about making such a change and the Government has delayed releasing the final details of how the new arrangements will work. We would be concerned if there was to be less local input into decision-making, but whatever the final arrangements, we will continue to vigorously promote the opportunities the Community Covenant Grant scheme offers.

3.2 Between April 2012 and March 2014 95 applications for Community Covenant grants have been submitted from organisations in Kent. Of those 95, 65 have been funded in full or in part, and the total amount of Community Covenant grant that has come to Kent is £1.459m. A huge variety of projects have been funded, ranging from major capital works through to a few hundred pounds towards helping community groups with commemoration activities. Some examples of successful projects are given below:

- £92,000 was given to Futures for Heroes to develop a vehicle repair and recycling social enterprise that employed veterans to take old vehicles donated by local businesses and the community, to restore those that could be returned to working order and to dismantle others for recycling used parts.
- £262,000 went to the Folkestone Sports Centre to enhance access and include assisted changing rooms to enable disabled veterans to use the range of facilities.
- £7,274 provided new facilities (garden fence, outside play equipment, resources and storage) for Burgoyne Heights Pre-school, which is used by many service families.

- £10,000 is being used to create re-enactment trenches in Folkestone for the public to see first-hand what they were like.
- £69,950 is being used to develop the East Langdon Playing Field to provide a recreational area for the whole family which will be used by service families and civilian families alike.
- £69,000 is going towards a new, accessible building for Hever Castle's museum, with an adjacent education centre.
- £20,000 has been used to employ disabled and injured ex-service personnel in Tunbridge Wells to work with young people to achieve their Duke of Edinburgh bronze award and inspire, encourage and mentor other veterans.
- £45,000 has been given to the Engage Project in Maidstone to use veterans to lead positive community activities for young people.
- £1,858 went towards a new PA system for the Military Wives Choir in Shepway.
- £10,000 has been used to provide instruments and tuition for the Shepway Brass Academy and establish strong and ongoing links with the Band of the Brigade of Gurkhas.
- £8,554 restored a world war 2 trench in Dover that formed part of the defences against 'Operation Sea Lion' (Germany's plan to invade the UK), enabling it to be visited by the public and educational establishments.
- £41,000 went to Skill Horizons in Dover to help prepare veterans, service leavers and their dependents develop new skills for future employment.
- £60,592 has established Green Teams of unemployed people, run by ex-service personnel, to undertake community projects that enhance the local environment.
- In November 2015, 150 performers from Dover and East Kent will combine with performers from Dunkerque, Calais and Ypres to perform a specially commissioned Oratorio, "Dancing on Armistice Day"; with performances in Dover, Ashford, Dunkerque and Ypres. £20,500 has gone towards this.
- £37,307 is being spent to deliver Motivational Outreach to service and veterans communities in Dover to reduce the feeling of isolation and build on team work.
- In Shepway, £17,692 is being used to build relationships and record veterans' stories and create an Armed Forces Community Group. The stories will be shared with the community via a static display and a touring display to schools.

3.3 In addition, Kent has successfully bid for MoD LIBOR funding. The Royal British Legion Industries (RBLI) were awarded £250k from the LIBOR Fund to enable service personnel families to find and secure sustainable employment. The funding has been used to expand RBLI's successful piloting of 'LifeWorks' courses to spouses and partners of armed forces personnel to target 500 spouses in 2 years, trialling a mixture of methods to help them overcome the difficulties posed when their

partners are (often frequently and at short notice) redeployed or relocated. The MOD were so enthused about the bid that they encouraged RBLI to bid for further funding to cover childcare costs.

3.4 The Kent Sheds Programme, which was part-funded from the Libor Fund, goes from strength to strength. Members will recall that a Shed provides opportunities for men (and women if they want to) to participate in practical group activities such as engineering projects, woodworking or gardening. The idea is that they can share and learn new skills and support each other by working together 'shoulder to shoulder', thus improving their wellbeing. There are now 14 Sheds operating across the county including the Shepway Shed, based in Folkestone, which has a high proportion of veterans; the Dartford Shed, which is "virtual" and community-based – it gets involved in community projects such as gardening, improving public facilities, and helping those in need (eg they undertook a flat clearance for an elderly man to enable him to resume his life); Boat Buoys, which is based on a boat and promotes traditional boat repair skills, and the Mobile Shed that enables groups around the county to access its facilities. More information can be found at www.kentsheds.co.uk, and Kent Sheds is still inviting groups and organisations who would like to establish a 'Shed' to affiliate to the Kent Sheds programme, which can provide some support and networking, and a little financial assistance, to ensure new Sheds meet the ethos of the programme and provide a safe and welcoming facility for local men to meet and work. Members may also be interested to read the anonymised case studies at Annex 4 that show the impact on vulnerable veterans in participating in a Kent Shed.

3.5 Although it came from a separate pot of money, it is also worth noting that Kent successfully secured £243,000 from the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) to support Gurkha resettlement, and Annex 5 provides more information about what has been done with this money, most of which has been spent in 2014-15.

4. The Second Annual Kent & Medway Conference

4.1 In January, the second annual conference was a great success, and over 100 people battled through the traffic problems caused by Operation Stack to get down to the Duke of York's Royal Military School in Dover. This year, in addition to having updates about the army changes, and examples of successful activity to promote integration, we had a particular focus on research. The Board, on the advice of its Integration Sub-Group, had decided that we needed to find out more about the needs of ex-service personnel and their families, and the extent to which they differ from other families. Our information about veterans is quite limited. For example, there is no way of counting how many veterans there are in Kent, although we can make educated guesses. Although we know how many children in Kent schools are

receiving the service children's pupil premium, we do not know how many Reservists children are in schools nor children of ex-service personnel as neither of these groups is eligible for the service children's pupil premium.

4.2 The Royal British Legion carried out a major national household survey in 2014 that has given us a lot of useful information, and a presentation on this was given to the conference. Key messages are set out below, and the full report can be found at www.britishlegion.org.uk/media/4093841/2014householdsurveyreport.pdf.

4.3 Nationally, the survey suggests that there are 2.83m veterans living in private households in the UK, 90% of whom are men. Half of these are ex-army, a quarter ex-RAF and the rest split evenly between Navy and Reserves. There are 2.09m dependent partners, almost all of whom are women, and 990,000 children under 18. In addition, they estimate that about 200,000 people are in communal dwellings, mostly care homes and sheltered housing but also hospital, prisons or temporary accommodation. This group was not included in the survey, but the estimates come from census data. This all gives a total community of 6.2m. If Kent and Medway had the same proportions as the national average, this would suggest around 176,000 veterans, dependents and children of which around 774,000 were ex-service personnel, but this does not reflect any regional variations, and we know that Kent is reported to be a popular destination for ex-service personnel to settle.

4.4 The research busts some common myths:

1. Veterans are NOT more likely to take their own lives: The oft-quoted statistic that more veterans of the Falklands subsequently committed suicide than died in the conflict is untrue (the respective numbers are 95 suicides and 237 who died in the conflict). Research by Manchester University found that suicide was less common amongst veterans than within the general population except for one group – young early service leavers.
2. Most service personnel DO NOT suffer from mental health problems: Rates of mental health problems amongst Service personnel and recent veterans appear to be broadly similar to the UK population as a whole, although depression is slightly higher amongst some age groups. Overall, rates of PTSD are around 4% although some groups are at a greater risk, including Reservists and combat troops. The only problem which appears significantly elevated amongst Service personnel and recent service leavers is heavy drinking.
3. Service Personnel are NOT more likely to end up in prison. Indeed, service personnel and veterans appear to be less likely than the general population to have a criminal conviction. Statistics on veterans in prison vary, but the most reliable ones have found that ex-service personnel make up between 3.5% and 7% of the prison population in England and Wales, which is broadly similar to the percentage of veterans in the UK population as a whole.

4. Rough sleepers are NOT likely to be veterans: Worrying statistics emerged in the 1990s indicating that around 20% of the London homeless population was ex-service. In contrast, a 2008 study estimated that the proportion of London's rough sleeping population who had served in the Armed Forces was 6%. A more recent estimate is that 127 individuals who slept rough in London at least once in 2013/14 had ever served in the UK military – 3% of the total. A 2007 National Audit Office survey of those undergoing the resettlement programme found that just less than 5% of respondents, mainly young and of junior rank, reported that they had been homeless at some point in the past two years (and this could include those staying with friends temporarily). For those who do fall through the cracks, homelessness is a serious problem of course, but the numbers in Kent are likely to be small.

4.5 The research also gives us some overall information about the veteran population, which is elderly and declining in size – almost half are over 75 (compared with 28% in 2005), and 64% are over 65, and the total numbers have reduced significantly since the RBL's last household survey. The needs of the older households are not, generally, very different from those of civilian older households. However, the research does throw up some interesting differences between the working age ex-Service community and the general population: they are more likely to:

- Be out of work
- Have unpaid caring responsibilities
- Report having health conditions that limit their daily activity (particularly hearing and musculoskeletal problems)
- Report being depressed.

4.6 Following the presentation about this research, the conference considered what it would be useful to further explore within Kent and Medway, and the following main themes emerged on the day:

1. What is the vulnerable ex-service population in Kent – unemployed, ill health, offenders – including spouses? How many are “falling through the net”? Where are they located? How can we access them and initiate support?
2. Needs of Reservists – how do they differ from the full timers? Are the needs of veteran Reservists different from veteran Regulars?
3. What specific needs and support requirements do the Ghurkhas (families of currently serving personnel; veterans) have? (eg transition issues and the health maintenance of cultural identity balanced with integration)
4. Are non-military partners and families particularly vulnerable following divorce or bereavement? What support needs do they have?

5. How can the army's welfare pathway be improved to tighten up the transition process?

4.7 The Integration Sub-Group is developing some further research specifically in Kent and Medway, building on what is already known from other sources, which will help shape the Board's future activity.

5. Children and Young People

5.1 Supporting Service Children, along with the planned research outlined above, has been the main focus of the Integration Sub-Group, and was a key theme at the conference. A 5 minute video of service children talking about the issues they faced was prepared for the conference, and will be shown to the Committee. A speaker from the MoD's Children's Education and Advisory Service gave a presentation along with Angela Maxted, Head Teacher of Cheriton Primary School which has a large number of service children. An afternoon seminar discussed how best to share good practice, and in particular how to support service children in schools that only had small numbers of service children (about 100 schools in Kent have between 1 and 5 service children).

5.2 Since the conference, further meetings have been held between Angela Maxted and the Armed Forces Network about how to raise awareness of the issues for school staff, including 'real' training that is less formal and truly reflects the needs, vulnerabilities and demands on school staff. A one day conference is being planned for head teachers and relevant staff.

5.3 The armed forces can provide wonderful role models for children and young people. We are fortunate indeed in Kent in having the Challenger Troop, which has engaged over 9,000 young people since it was founded in 2007, many of whom are not otherwise involved in activities such as Scouts, or Cadets. Challenger Troop positively reaches out to the most disadvantaged and disengaged youngsters, engaging them in challenging team activities to develop their personal skills and leadership and raise their aspirations, and has also been involved in supporting the Troubled Families programme. Another inter-schools Challenger Day is being planned for later this year.

5.4 For the army, a big concern is ensuring that when soldiers are posted to Kent, their children get places in local schools, and our officers work closely with schools to ensure that this happens in individual cases. Kent has been praised by the MoD for the way in which it has managed to accommodate service children at short notice.

6. Health and Wellbeing

6.1 The Board has a virtual network of health and related professionals that focusses on the health and wellbeing of veterans and their families. We know that:

- Training and preparation for combat impacts (positively) on the prevalence of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (military mind set)
- Health impacts of military service are related to the characteristics of people going in to the military services (e.g demographic and personal)
- Reserves are particularly vulnerable, and more likely to suffer PTSD
- Alcohol and depression are the biggest health issues facing veterans (borne out by the RBL research referred to above).
- Those exposed to combat are more likely to suffer alcohol misuse (drink more heavily)

6.2 We don't know:

- Exact numbers of the ex-military population in Kent; in prisons; or registered with GPs (the research we are about to do will improve estimates, but we will still not have precise figures)
- Exact nature of impact on mental health of ex-military (i.e. can take long time to manifest symptoms and social stigma).
- Impact of mental health on veterans' families

6.3 Under the Armed Forces Covenant, priority treatment is given for conditions related to an individual's service, and for their first assessment. People who need prosthesis will be able to access treatment through the NHS to military standard quality. Those few ex-service personnel who do get PTSD (directly related to their combat) get specialist and fast track treatment. With any other mental health condition, if military service is an exacerbating factor then they are entitled to specialist help.

6.4 So in Kent, we now have the Armed Forces Network (AFN) (see the website at <http://armedforcesnetwork.co.uk>) which provides information about free mental health services for ex-military personnel across Kent and Medway. The network brings together volunteers and professions to ensure ex-military personnel who are suffering from anxiety and depression and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder can access and receive appropriate help. In 2014 the AFN has delivered Military

Mindset Training across all the public sector organisations in Kent to raise awareness amongst staff dealing with the public of the issues faced by ex-service personnel.

6.5 The Kent Sheds Programme referred to above was set up in direct response to the mental health needs of veterans. In addition in Kent there is physiotherapy for veterans provided by the Kent Community Health Trust; IAPT (Improving Access to Psychological Therapies) specialist support in Shepway; the Military Psychiatry Service in Woolwich, and various voluntary sector services such as the Blackthorn Trust.

6.6 Specifically on alcohol misuse, the new alcohol pathway is being developed in Kent, with the emphasis on having multiple routes of entry into support, starting with GPs and pharmacists. Local alcohol strategy groups have been asked to prioritise veterans as a key vulnerable group. With drug misuse, although in general veterans are less likely to use illegal substances than the general population, our substance misuse providers are working closely with veteran mental health networks, and have also done some specific outreach work with the Nepalese community in Shepway.

6.7 Over the next year the key priorities for this sub-group are:

- Improving identification of ex-service personnel within the health services
- Ensuring there is a clear pathway for veterans to receive health support
- Improving family support
- Using serving personnel and veterans as role models and champions of promoting higher activity levels within local communities.

7. Employment, Economy and Skills Sub-Group

7.1 The main priority for this sub-group has been to ensure that service personnel who have been made redundant in Kent have been supported to transition to civilian life. The Sub-group has organised many transition events and engagement groups as well as working with local businesses. Several Community Covenant grants have related to improving skills of veterans and their partners to enable them to find new employment. The final tranche of Kent army redundancies takes place in June 2015.

7.2 In moving forward, the focus of this Sub-Group will be on promoting and supporting the expansion of Reservists amongst businesses, and seeking to improve the interface between military and civilian qualifications and skills (including helping ex-service personnel to identify the skills and qualifications they have that can be applied to other jobs in civilian life).

7.3 The Sub-Group will also encourage local authorities in Kent to support initiatives which create employment opportunities for ex-service personnel who choose to settle here. One example of this is Royal British Legion Industries (RBLI) who provide employment opportunities for ex-service personnel, particularly those who have incurred a life changing injury which impacts on their employment options. Encouraging the purchase of goods and services from their Social Enterprise, in accordance with Social Value Act 2012, helps to ensure the sustainability of RBLI and the wider work it does in supporting ex-service personnel in Kent, from providing healthcare and housing to equipping individuals with the understanding and skills they need to find work, through its LifeWorks programme. Supporting practical initiatives such as this further evidences how KCC intends to meet its commitment to the principles of the Armed Forces Covenant.

8. Housing Sub-Group

8.1 The Joint Policy & Planning Board for Housing has established a Service Personnel Housing Sub-Group, to lead on implementing the priorities relating to serving and ex-serving military personnel identified for response in the Kent & Medway Housing Strategy. The Sub-Group has representatives from a wide range of organisations including public, private and third sector that support the ambition to level the playing field on housing issues for serving and ex-serving military personnel. The group has worked with RBL and RBLI on understanding and catering for the housing needs of ex-service personnel and their families including:

- Holding housing events countywide to help service leavers understand their housing options
- Similarly working with barracks in advance of leavers' transition
- Moat Housing Association working with MoD to raise awareness of the affordable housing available
- Working to establish transitional housing provision for leavers to prevent homelessness
- Multi-agency transition fairs held, offering help for redundancies from the armed forces and serving officers
- The Sub-Group working hard with Public Health on service personnel housing and health issues
- Serving or veteran armed forces personnel are now eligible to access social housing

8.2 Kent HomeChoice has promoted armed forces' issues through the website, including videos connected to YouTube, news articles and leaflets. There is also a section in the housing options pages dedicated to armed forces, containing relevant signposting links.

8.3 The MOD sit alongside social tenants as the Highest Priority for the Low Cost Home Ownership Options within Help to Buy, which is another option shown on Homechoice (see www.helptobuyese.org.uk).

8.4 Housing application forms across all of 13 Kent & Medway district councils now ask whether the applicant is or has been a serving member of the armed forces in order that statistics are collected to ascertain the level of housing need in this client group.

8.5 The Sub-Group has worked together to develop projects for submission to the LIBOR Veterans' Accommodation Fund, identifying and addressing need and developing a pathway which provided appropriate accommodation solutions for veterans at whatever point they are in their journey. A number of project submissions made by members of the group were successful and once completed will provide a range of accommodation solutions from single person to family units, supported housing, transitional and move on accommodation. This has enabled the group to achieve one of the key objectives for which it came together, ie to provide an effective housing network for veterans, especially those who are vulnerable and at risk of experiencing periods of homelessness.

8.6 Now that we have been successful in levelling the playing field for personnel through allocations and Kent HomeChoice, the group still has work to do, specifically projects to assist transition from military to civilian life. One of the aspirations of the group has always been to create a block of self-contained flats that can be used to support ex-service personnel to transition and resettle. A challenging aspiration but this is now becoming a reality for the near future, made possible by the true partnership working and enthusiasm of the group members and the support of the Kent & Medway Civilian Military Partnership Board. Other key priorities are:

- Levelling the playing field for housing options – improving the experience, signposting, continuing the links with Kent Homechoice
- Training awareness for the housing sector, eg. military mindset
- Identifying recommendations for inclusion in the refresh of the Housing Strategy

9. Recognise & Remember Sub-Group

9.1 The purpose of this Sub-Group, which is chaired by Leyland Ridings, is to have an overview of the many ways in which people in Kent recognise the work of the armed forces and commemorate significant events, and to drive and co-ordinate activity. In 2014 the main focus was the anniversary of the start of World War 1, and Members will be very aware of the Step Short Arch, the march that took place, and

the wealth of activity around that. If Members have not yet looked at the wonderful World War 1 timeline at www.kent.gov.uk/ww1 then this is well worth a browse.

9.2 The priorities for the coming year mostly relate to World War 2, starting with the 70th anniversary of VE day on 8th May, followed by the 75th anniversary of the commencement of the Battle of Britain in July. The group will also be focussed on the 800th anniversary of the Magna Carta in June, with Kent Libraries, Registration & Archives taking a lead, as well as 200 years since the Battle of Waterloo, also in June, and 100 years since Edith Cavell was executed by firing squad in Belgium in October; particularly relevant to Kent, as having arrived back in Dover, her remains stayed overnight in the parish church before being conveyed through Kent on the way to a state funeral at Westminster Abbey.

9.3 The Sub-Group will continue to liaise with the Armed Forces, Councils, Libraries, Archives, and Galleries, University of Kent and educational institutions, schools, the Lord Lieutenant's office and support organisations to make the links necessary to reap the maximum reward from the many co-ordinated efforts across the county.

10. Conclusions and Recommendations

10.1 This report has provided an overview of how the Kent & Medway Civilian Military Partnership Board is implementing the Community Covenant, putting this into the context of the significant changes taking place in how the armed forces will operate in Kent and nationally. It has set out for Members the direction of travel and the key areas of priority for future action, starting by undertaking some further research to help target future activity.

10.2 One of the challenges of this area of work is that it is so broad, linking in with such a wide variety of different services and activities. We are making full use of technology – using websites to make connections for individuals and service users, and now we are also liaising with colleagues in Hampshire and Surrey to share experiences and good practice. The bottom line, though, is that by having a Civilian Military Partnership Board, we have a first point of contact for the military or veterans who are not sure where to go for help, support or advice.

10.2 The Committee is asked to NOTE the range of activity underway, and to COMMENT on the priorities for the future.

Background Papers: None

Report Authors:

Debra Exall
Policy & Strategic Relationships Adviser
03000 **416074**
Debra.Exall@kent.gov.uk

Tim Woolmer
Policy Officer
03000 **416858**
Tim.Woolmer@kent.gov.uk

Annexes:

1. Membership of the Civilian Military Partnership Board
2. 11 Brigade area, and Commanding Officers responsible for community engagement
3. Army Footprint in Kent and Medway
4. Case studies from Kent Sheds
5. How the Gurkha Resettlement Fund is being used in Kent

Kent & Medway Civilian Military Partnership Board

The overall purpose of the Board is to implement the Kent & Medway Community Covenant. It will do this through overseeing the work of five sub-groups which each focus on particular themes within the Covenant. The Board will meet bi-annually to receive reports and progress updates from each of the sub-groups, thus having a strategic overview of all activity and the ability to steer the implementation of sub-group work.

The terms of reference are as follows:

- *To address countywide issues relating to the Kent Community Covenant.*
- *To review the Kent Community Covenant annually and propose amendments where necessary.*
- *To filter and endorse applications of strategic significance for the Ministry of Defence Community Covenant Grant Scheme.*
- *To oversee, and take responsibility for, administering such Community Covenant Grant Scheme grants.*
- *To ensure that evidence is collected for audit purposes.*
- *To provide a forum for the exchange of information between the civilian and military authorities*
- *To widen understanding of military and veteran issues, including those relating to families of current or ex-service men and women.*

The members of the Kent & Medway Civilian Military Partnership Board are:

Leyland Ridings *CHAIR (Armed Forces Champion for KCC)*

Brigadier Andrew Hughes *(Commander of 11 Brigade)*

Mike O'Brien *(Armed Forces Champion for Medway)*

David Bowen *(SSO 1 REME Regiment)*

Patrick Crowley *(South East Reserve Forces' and Cadets' Association)*

Sandra Fruish *(Royal British Legion)*

Steve Sherry *(Royal British Legion Industries)*

Jo Gunnell *(Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen & Families Association)*

Alison Broom *(Invicta Chamber of Commerce / Maidstone Borough Council)*

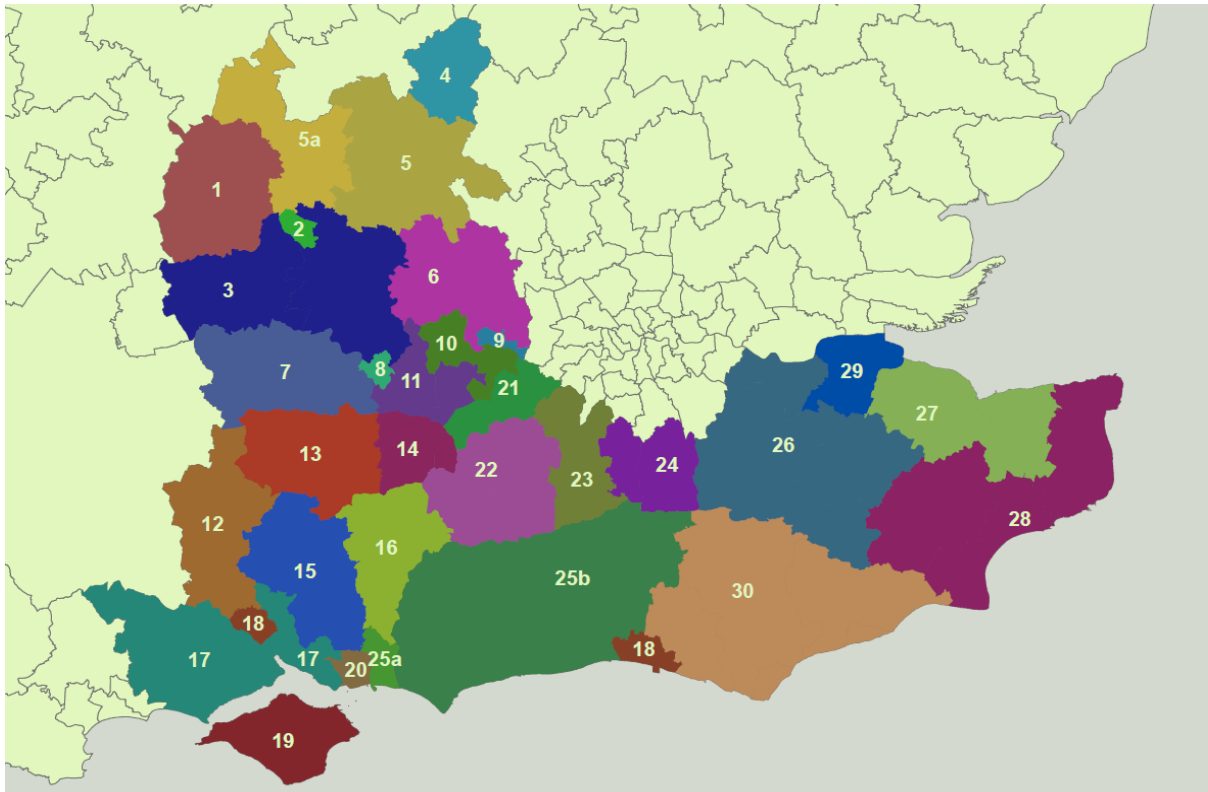
Victoria Paterson/Jodie Kennedy-Smith/Tracy Evans *(11 Brigade)*

Debra Exall/Tim Woolmer *(Kent County Council)*

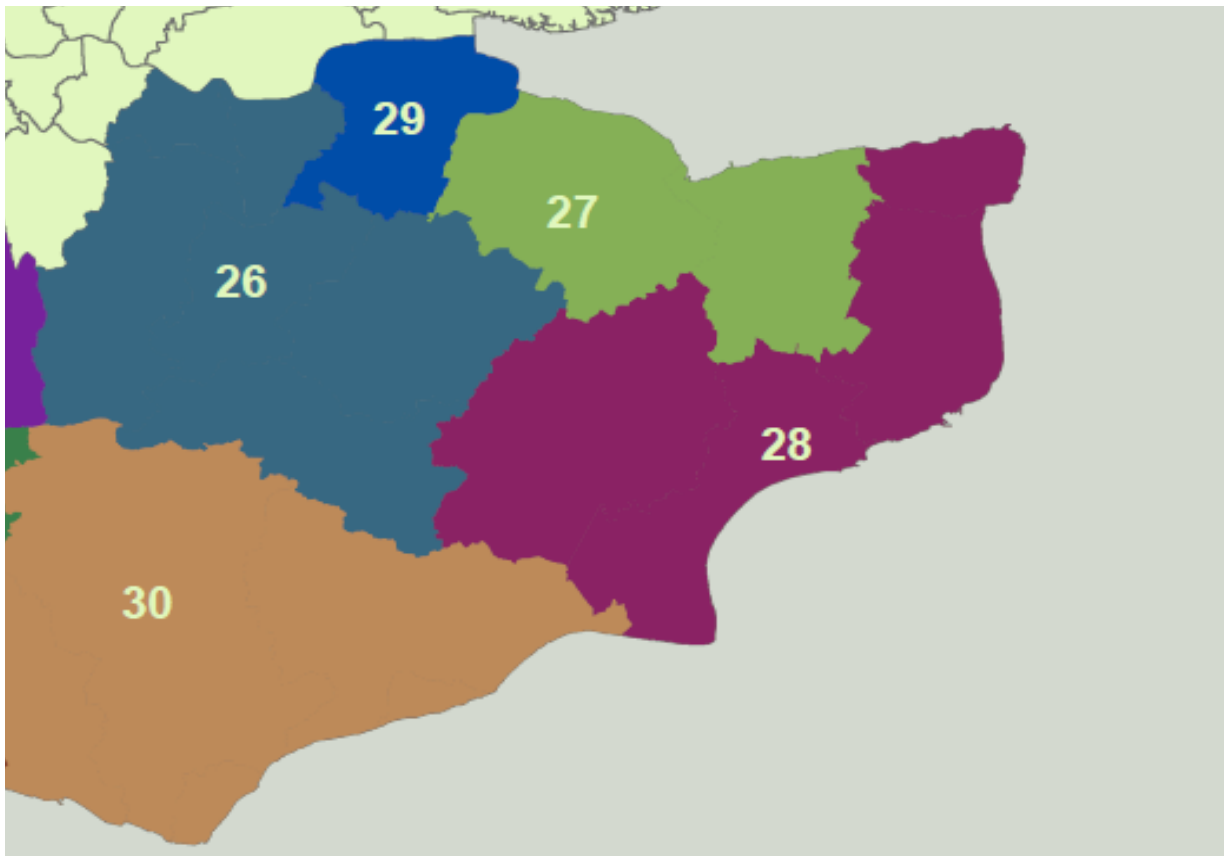
The five Sub-Groups are:

- Recognise and Remember Sub-Group
- Integration Sub-Group
(covering children and young people, and stronger, safer communities)
- Joint Policy & Planning Board for Housing Service Personnel Sub-Group
- Health and Wellbeing Sub-Group
- Employment, Economy and Skills Sub-Group

Area covered by the new 11 Brigade

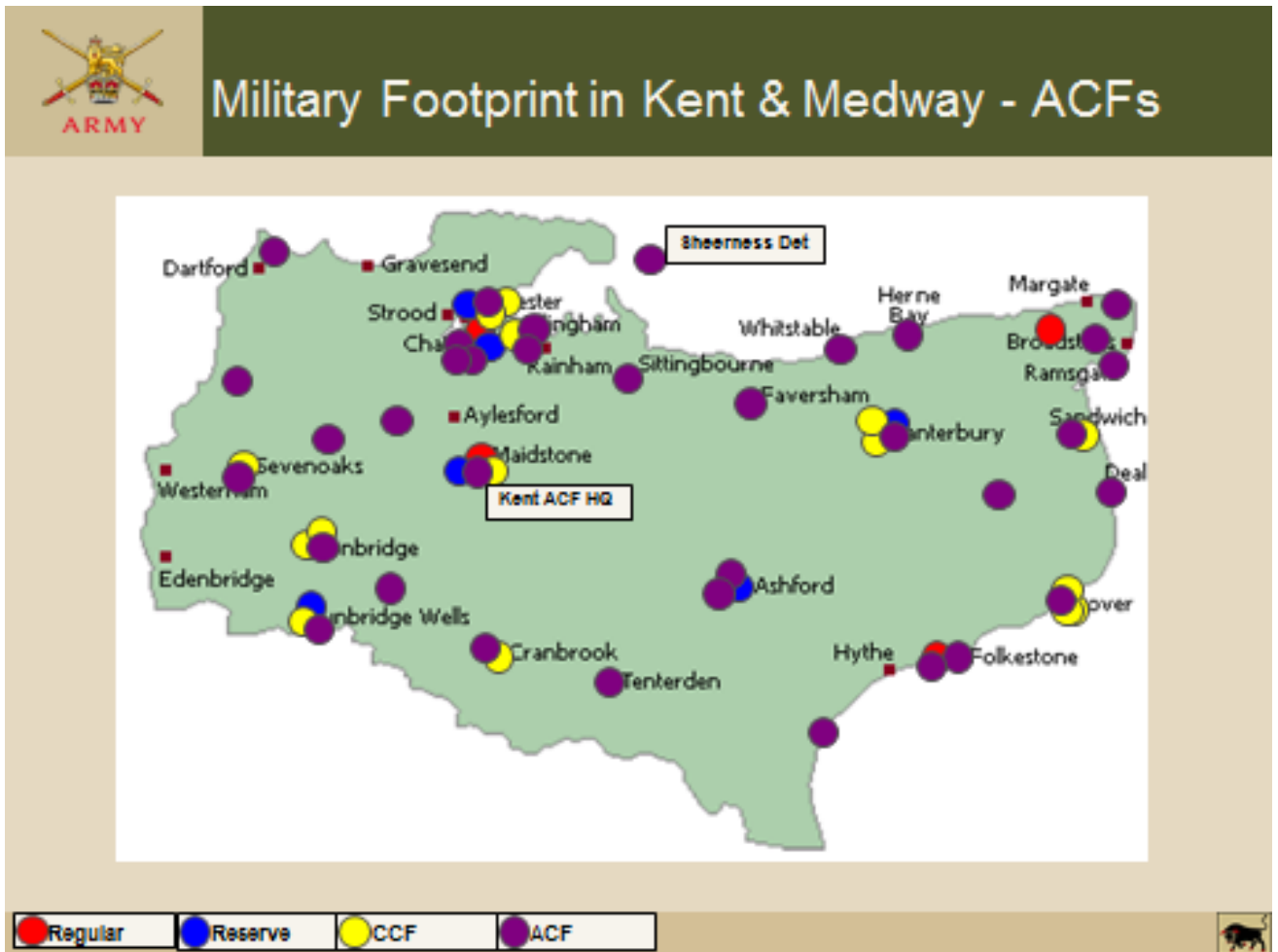


KENT AND MEDWAY COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TASK FORCE
COMMANDERS



(Numbers below refer to numbered areas on map)

- 26. Commanding Officer of 36 Engineers Regiment (Tunbridge Wells, Tonbridge & Malling, Maidstone, Sevenoaks, Gravesham, Dartford)
- 27. Commanding Officer of 3 Princess of Wales Royal Regiment Reserves (Canterbury & Swale)
- 28. Commanding Officer of 2 Royal Gurkha Rifles (Ashford, Shepway, Dover, Thanet)
- 29. Commanding Officer of 1 Royal School of Military Engineering Regiment (Medway Towns)



CCF = Combined Cadet Force

ACF = Army Cadet Force

Case Studies from Kent Sheds

“John” (ex-Royal Artillery)

John came to us via SSAFA Canterbury. He had been sleeping in his car in the local Sainsbury car park, and had reached an absolute low point in his life when he turned to SSAFA for help. He impressed us immediately with his desire to help others despite his own challenging circumstances, and within a week of working with us he took on the role of Team Leader, acting as the first point of contact for new volunteer and disadvantaged veterans. He now has accommodation in Canterbury and use of a vehicle to help him bring volunteers to our base. He has become a SSAFA caseworker since joining us and wants dedicate his time improving the lives of veteran colleagues who are struggling.

“When I met the people from the Shed that was the day my life changed. It was like first contact – awesome - just saved my life. Having chatted for well over eight hours on my first day, I realised that this is what I want to do for the rest of my life. I want to help ex service personnel who need the same support as I was given. I now have the nickname “goose” because now whenever I talk about it, or see the difference it makes to the people we help I get goose bumps!”

“Matt” (ex-Light Infantry)

Matt’s background has been a difficult one - as well as serving in the Army he has had a lot of personal issues that he feels is mainly down to PTSD. Fifteen months ago he undertook a course run by Royal British Legion Industries called Lifeworks. The course made him recognise that there were issues that he needed to address and gave him support to do so. In December 2013, he heard about the Kent Sheds programme and worked with Activmobs (commissioned by KCC) who helped him develop the concept and he then worked with Julie (the Kent Sheds Project Officer) to establish and build up one of our sheds.

Being involved with the shed has helped him find his confidence once again. He is very supportive to other members and says the camaraderie between “shedders” is brilliant. Most of the members have or have had mental health issues and find that being with like minded people, standing shoulder to shoulder is improving their wellbeing.

He is now in a much better place mentally and is one of our most active Shed Champions. He promotes the ‘six ways to wellbeing’ amongst shedders and has gained a lot of knowledge of where to seek help if needed with outside agencies.

“I am now more confident, have discovered new talents, made new friends and above all have made an impact in people’s lives, this for me is better than what any wage packet can offer because it’s natural and I thank all involved for the chance to

help in the support of other shedders. I am for the first time in many years happy and content”

“Dave” (Ex-Royal Engineers)

When Dave first came to the shed he was having difficulty dealing with everyday issues and was easily misled by others on issues that he knew little of. By attending the shed and having the support of other ex-service men has helped him immensely. With the help and guidance of others and knowing where to signpost him, he has now started to tackle some of his everyday problems by himself. The shed has given him the confidence to move on and look forward to the future for the first time in years. He has even set up a window cleaning business on his own and is enjoying having a purpose.

“The shed gives me so much. I have made friends and feel welcome.”

“Paul” (Ex-Royal Navy)

Paul’s self esteem and confidence were extremely low when he first got involved in the shed. By going along and spending time with the others in the shed, he feels his confidence has grown. He now manages to speak up in the group and has become more outspoken outside of this environment. He likes to get involved in the projects that the shed do within the local community. He is actively seeking to change his job and feels that he has a support network amongst the shed members.

“ I am finding myself again”

How the Gurkha Resettlement Fund is being used

In 2012 the Department for Communities and Local Government allocated funding to Kent for the provision of new services to aid settlement in the areas of Ashford, Maidstone and Shepway. This funding was allocated to providing improved access to community information and services for Gurkha veterans and their families, whilst also improving community cohesion.

Extensive research was undertaken with the Gurkha communities, local authorities from across the UK and local voluntary organisations who have expertise in community integration.

In April 2014 four new services were launched, designed to empower the Nepalese community, to help improve access to public and voluntary organisations' services, social integration and to increase cultural awareness across Kent.

Under the Gurkha Settlement Fund project, the charity Migrant Help employed a new Community Development Worker to work on improving integration and developing cohesive communities, in addition to mapping out assets available in each area.

Migrant Help also offered an innovative volunteer-led support programme for accessing information, advice and guidance in a range of face-to-face locations, as well as a new telephone support line. This project is helping ex-Gurkhas and their families to become independent, responsible and self-reliant within the community.

The Health Trainer Service at Kent Community NHS Health Trust has appointed a co-ordinator to recruit and train volunteers from Gurkha communities. They will be trained to support their communities in accessing local health services, signpost to appropriate services and also offer advice and support with healthy behaviour changes.

A fundamental principle to aiding integration is the ability to communicate with those who live around you. Working with Community Learning and Skills, Skills Plus we designed a bespoke package of training to support the transition into civilian life. These range from the day-to-day language skills required to better understand and communicate in matters such as job search, house hunting, medical and community facilities, to the higher level skills required to prepare for and pass the B1 language test as a route to citizenship.

For the elders and families we are teaching the language skills to enable them to function and integrate on a day-to-day basis. The Skills Plus response team continues to support the families to build confidence, motivation, knowledge and skills.

But to deliver these four key projects just wasn't enough. Working with the voluntary community we were able to offer community grants which will enhance the work of the core projects.

Research has demonstrated that singing improves the health and well-being of older people. Sing For Your Life, a charity which supports older people by providing participatory singing sessions, is developing a programme of Nepalese folk songs. Diwas Rai, the Community Development Officer at Sing For Your Life, has formed a folk group which will record the programme to enable older Gurkhas and their families to enjoy traditional music sessions.

On a very sunny day in Ashford, the Gurkha Peace Foundation held a BBQ and party for around 500 people from the local community. The 'Settlement Fund' enabled this event to take place and it lasted for eight hours, bringing together Gurkha families from Ashford, Folkestone and Maidstone to mix and socialise with others who live within the local housing estates.

A BBQ at lunch time and a curry in the evening were enjoyed by all as they watched Nepalese cultural dancing and participated in a bingo session.

The Gurkha Peace Foundation is also running weekly day centres in Ashford and Folkestone providing a translation service for hospital visits with transport, legal and financial advice.

Kent Community Organisation is a long established third sector organisation with expertise in community integration, having worked with a range of nationalities from across Europe. The All Together project has been born from the need to ensure a basic level of understanding about what it actually takes to achieve integration. They believe that for a community to thrive, it must be representative of all who choose to live there, and for that community to have a strong cultural awareness and acceptance of others.

VOICE (Shepway Volunteer Centre) held two Community Links events in September in Ashford and Folkestone targeting the Gurkha community, with the two-fold aim of providing information about the services available from the voluntary and community sector and the benefits to be gained from volunteering. Voluntary and community organisations had stalls and there were presentations, speakers and entertainment, as well as a buffet lunch. This was an exciting way of promoting the voluntary and community sector and the support available.

The funding provided by DCLG has been used to full effect with a range of innovative projects which have delivered better community integration, increased cultural awareness and enhanced access to public, voluntary and community services. Although this was one-off funding, an element of sustainability was built into the four key projects to ensure some of the good work would continue.

Emma Pike, Emma.Pike@kent.gov.uk, Direct dial - 03000 417153