



Meeting Date: 26th April 2022

Public/Private*: Public

Title: **Communities, Health and Wellbeing Portfolio Holder's Report –
Councillor Elizabeth Mallinson**

DEFENCE EMPLOYER RECOGNITION SCHEME AND THE ARMED FORCES COVENANT

Carlisle City Council hosted an Armed Forces Covenant partnership event on 7th March 2022 to encourage local organisations to sign the Covenant. The Council signed the Cumbrian Armed Forces Covenant in 2013, and reconfirmed its support by re-signing the Covenant at this event.

Attendees included Armed Forces representatives Lieutenant Colonel NT Kennon, Commanding Officer 4th Bn The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment and Captain P Reynolds, 4th Bn The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment. Lucy Lamb from the Forces Link Project presented details of the work they undertake to help increase opportunity and support for the local ex-service community and their families. Council staff who have served in the Armed Forces or are reservists were also invited to attend the event to recognise their contribution and the Council's support for staff. 20 partner organisations attended the event and six signed the Covenant with us. This has increased the number of Covenant signees in the Carlisle area by approximately 60%.

Partner organisations and businesses from across Carlisle that signed the Covenant to demonstrate their support were:

- Story Contracting (Emma Porter, Managing Director)
- Forces Link (Lucy Lamb, Forces Link Project Officer)
- William Howard School (Lizzie McGaffin, Forces Liaison Officer)
- Carlisle College (Sarah McGrath, Principal)
- Cumbria CVS (Alison Phillips, Operations Manager)
- Clark Door Limited (Antonette Cullen, HR Manager)

This event formed part of the Council's advocacy work and action towards achieving the Gold Award of the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme. The scheme recognises employer organisations that pledge, demonstrate or advocate support to defence and the armed forces community, and align their values with the Armed Forces Covenant. The Gold Award application has been submitted, with feedback on the outcome expected later this Summer.

HOMELIFE

Applications for 2021/22 were completed at a value of £640,513. These Discretionary Housing Grants, permitted through the City Council's Housing Renewal Assistance Policy, include Safe & Warm, Hospital Discharge, Energy Efficiency and Dementia Friendly Grants. The grants assisted people to return to and live safely at home. The most common works completed included: 53 new central heating systems; 47 house clearances; 47 boiler and gas safety works, and 28 electrical safety works.

CUSTOMER SERVICES

Customer Services have been working from the Civic Centre since September 2021, operating normal opening times for the Contact Centre.

Whilst initially footfall was approximately 50% of pre-pandemic levels, from February we have seen a significant increase in Contact Centre footfall to roughly pre-pandemic levels. This is, in part, due to main billing of Council Tax. However, over 70% of that contact is for Council Tax and Benefits queries that are either complex or the customer has limited digital resource. This justifies our decision to have our face-to-face services available at the earliest opportunity, providing much needed support to our more vulnerable residents.

Customer Services are continuing to work closely with all Departments to provide advice on business grants payments and £150 Council Tax rebate.

ACTIVE SPACES

Public consultations to determine residents' preferred types of new play equipment at Briar Bank and Esk Road (Belah and Kingmoor) and Yewdale Park and Morton West (Sandsfield and Morton West) have been completed and this has informed the specifications for appropriate new equipment which are out for tender.

Work to improve the surface of the BMX track at Hammond's Pond (Currock and Upperby) was completed in April. The track, which was created with the help of residents more than 20 years ago, has been widened, levelled and resurfaced with asphalt at a cost of approximately £17,500.

HEALTH WALKS

The fortnightly Health Walks within Carlisle and District have continued and we have welcomed several new members recently to the walks. Planning of the new Spring/Summer programme of Health Walks is underway.

The Team have been working in partnership with Active Cumbria on the launch of the new Ramblers Wellbeing Walks within Carlisle.

FOOD CARLISLE

The partnership has been working alongside Harraby Community Centre to deliver a Veg Cities Project. This is now underway with both Team and financial support from the authority. A group of volunteers are leading on the community growing space side of this project.

Food Carlisle has also been involved with the evaluation of National Sustainable Food Places which has been undertaken by the University of West of England to determine the role of Food Partnerships in terms of food resilience.

COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP

A productive meeting of the North Cumbria Community Safety Partnership was held 31st March 2022. The agenda focused on the future of Community Safety Partnerships post Local Government Reorganisation in Cumbria, the development of a local authority led Local Focus Hub for Carlisle, work undertaken to reduce anti-social behaviour in Carlisle city centre, the launch of the Carlisle Safer Streets project and an update on current domestic homicide reviews in the county.

The meeting was also an opportunity to express our gratitude to Sergeant Chris Blain of Cumbria Police, who is about to retire. Chris has been at the heart of the Carlisle Local Focus Hub and led the development of this work in the city. The partners presented Chris with a small gift and wished him well in his retirement.