

Council Report for Armed Forces Covenant Meeting September 2022

Appendix B

'What Chorley Council Has Achieved In Support of The Armed Forces Community and Future Aims & Objectives

1. **Chorley Council currently holds the Bronze and Silver Awards in The Defence Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS)**, which encourages employers to support defence and inspire others to do the same. This prestigious scheme is in place to officially recognise organisations that pledge, demonstrate or advocate support to defence and the armed forces community; and align their values with the Armed Forces Covenant.
2. **Chorley Council aims to make an application for the ERS Gold Award in 2023. More information can be found about the ERS Awards here:**
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/defence-employer-recognition-scheme/defence-employer-recognition-scheme>
3. **The council achieved the ERS Bronze and Silver awards as a result of the following:**
 - By signing up to both the Armed Forces Community Covenant and the Armed Forces Covenant
 - By being part of the Lancashire Armed Forces Covenant Hub / Forum
 - Frontline Customer Services Staff attended UCLAN online Armed Forces Covenant Training sessions a couple of years ago - **John Hill is currently working to make this mandatory training for staff as part of our e learning hub**
 - Offering support for military personnel and their spouses / partners, by signing up to the Career Transition Partnership (CTP) and Forces Families Jobs (FFJ). This raises awareness in the Armed Forces Community, about job opportunities at Chorley Council. Ex military personnel are guaranteed an interview for a job at Chorley Council, if they meet the criteria
 - Providing appropriate housing support for the Armed Forces Community, for example priority on Select Move for Social housing will be given if the applicant is serving in or has formerly served in the UK regular forces within the last 5 years. This will also override the usual local connection criteria. Their application will be placed in Band A-C as determined by the assessing Housing officer and assessed case by case and the banding assessment date will be backdated to equal their total period of service in the UK armed forces (or the service of spouse or civil partner).
 - Any Reservist and Cadet Force Adult Volunteers, employed by Chorley Council, will be granted up to an additional two weeks per year (**a maximum of 10 days pro rata**) leave with pay to attend training sessions *over an* annual two week summer camp.
 - Through our Armed Forces Champion, we enjoy good links with C (64) Medical Squadron at the reservist centre in Chorley along with 3 Medical Regiment in Fulwood, who has Freedom of The Borough Status in Chorley. They both attend community

events throughout the year, such as Armed Forces Day and the Freedom Parade in June and VE and VJ and Remembrance Days respectively

- We support the Royal British Legion (RBL) and our HIA team have worked collaboratively with them for several years, principally on Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) cases. This included joint home visits to disabled ex-servicemen living in Chorley who required adaptations at their homes. As a result, the council were successful in receiving the RBL's 'Support to The Armed Forces Community Award 2019
- By providing Health and Wellbeing support to veterans through via the Social Prescribing Service
- Due to Democratic Services arranging the annual Armed Forces Remembrance and other annual commemoration events in Chorley
- The following information covers Council Tax support for the Armed Forces Community

Armed Forces Council Tax exemption

- Living accommodation for UK armed forces which is owned by the Secretary of State for Defence is exempt whether occupied or not
- This includes barracks and other accommodation on military bases, together with married quarters and any other property, wherever located, provided the accommodation is held for the purposes of forces accommodation. Contributions in lieu of Council Tax are payable to local councils on such properties

Ministry of Defence Council Tax relief

- Armed forces personnel deployed on operations overseas, who normally pay Council Tax, can claim a tax-free payment on the cost of their Council Tax, which is paid directly by the Ministry of Defence.
- The relief scheme is funded and administered by the Ministry of Defence (MOD), not Chorley Council
- To claim the relief, military personnel need to contact your their department and will need to provide a copy of their Council Tax bill. The MOD will then calculate payment daily, and it will be paid as a lump sum in the persons salary at the end of their operational tour

- 4. Chorley Council are currently working towards the ERS Gold Award** which includes much of the above Silver Award Criteria, along with advocacy criteria, sharing information with partner agencies about the Armed Forces Covenant and encouraging them to sign up to it. To help us achieve this we are:

- Currently in the process of developing an Armed Forces Covenant webpage on Chorley Council website
- We have liaised with the Procurement Team who have included information about the Covenant in their social values toolkit – In which it highlights information about the covenant and informs services tendering for contracts, how they can advertise

employment opportunities to the Armed Forces Community via the Career Transition Partnership (CTP) and Forces Family Jobs (FFJ)

- Likewise, we hope to do the same with the Economic Development Team with a view to create a recognition award at the annual Economic Awards, for companies that have signed up the Armed Forces Covenant and or advertise jobs through the above mechanisms
- We have also contributed to the Lancashire Armed Forces Covenant Guide, which promotes Chorley as a great place to live, work, shop / visit and spend leisure time in as well as our affiliation with the Armed Forces Community
- Currently working to create an Armed Forces Covenant Awareness e learning training package on the Councils e learning hub for front line staff
- We also plan to develop a local Armed Forces Covenant Hub in partnership with South Ribble Council, with a similar remit to the Lancashire Hub. Once established, this new local hub, will replace old 'Civil and Military Partnership' which last convened in 2017 and was chaired by Sir Lindsay Hoyle