

# HUMAN RESOURCES AND COUNCIL TAX COMMITTEE

11 OCTOBER 2022

## REPORT OF ASSISTANT DIRECTOR (PARTNERSHIPS)

### A.1 DEFENCE EMPLOYER RECOGNITION SCHEME UPDATE REPORT

#### PART 1 – KEY INFORMATION

##### **PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

To update the Human Resources and Council Tax Committee on the work that has been undertaken to date, and activities planned, to support the armed forces/veteran community; including Tendring District Council's (TDC) participation in the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS).

##### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The ERS encourages employers to support defence and inspire others to do the same. The scheme encompasses bronze, silver and gold awards for 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 Armed Forces Covenant is a promise by the nation ensuring that those who serve or who have served in the armed forces, and their families, are treated with fairness and respect in the communities, economy and society they serve with their lives*).

TDC renewed its commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant in February of this year, in a decision made by the Leader of the Council; which recognised the value serving personnel, reservists, veterans (*including our Chief Executive*) and military families bring to our organisation and community. The covenant focusses on helping members of the armed forces community have the same access to government and commercial services and products as any other citizen. This support is provided in a number of areas including:

- Education and family well-being;
- Having a home;
- Starting a new career;
- Access to healthcare;
- Financial assistance;
- Discounted services.

At the last update provided to this committee in February 2019 the Council held ERS Bronze award status, and was working with the Armed Forces Development Officer at Colchester Borough Council (CBC) to attain Silver status; which this authority was successful in achieving that Summer.

Since then the Council has continued to demonstrate its commitment in this regard, and in July of this year received Gold status in the ERS scheme. Gold criteria are more stringent than for Silver, including promoting the scheme to other employers (see 'Background' section below).

Employers can self-nominate for the ERS. Once the nomination has been validated it is considered by a selection board at national level for Gold awards (and at a regional level for Silver awards). The board is chaired by a senior military officer, and considers each nomination

against the award criteria. Organisations selected for Gold and Silver awards will be formally notified in writing and invited to the relevant award event, with TDC invited to the Gold award event on 29 September.

Cllr Chris Amos was appointed as Armed Forces Member Champion in 2017 and he attends the Civil Military Partnership Board (Essex).

Tendring is one of just 38 local government organisations to hold Gold status, and one of 48 organisations altogether in the East Anglia region.

Officers are keen to continue this work, not only to support the priorities outlined in the Armed Forces Covenant; but also the Council's recruitment priorities. Colchester Barracks discharges around 400 highly trained and skilled military personnel each year, a number of whom remain in the local area; and the Council is keen to tap into this talent pipeline. Being an ERS Gold Award holder adds to the organisation's employer brand, and the opportunity to be seen as an employer of choice by potential applicant's, particularly from this cohort.

To support our application for ERS Gold status, a staff survey was carried out to establish current Armed Forces personnel levels within the Council; this saw six people self-identify as veterans, with a further three staff who are partners of those in (*currently or previously*) the Armed Forces.

In addition some very positive comments were made by those staff. A TDC employed veteran reported high levels of professional and personal support for them and their family, citing they "*would thoroughly recommend TDC as an employer of ex-members of the Armed Forces*".

Finally, the authority is able to utilise its military partnerships to promote the employment opportunities available across the organisation amongst this network, thus giving us an opportunity to reach a recruitment market not open to many other employers.

## **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

**It is recommended:-**

**That the contents of this report be NOTED.**

## **PART 2 – IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION**

### **DELIVERING PRIORITIES**

This work programme demonstrates our intention to '*recognise the diversity and equality of individuals*' and '*work collaboratively*' as detailed in '*Our Values*' within the Corporate Plan. It also contributes to '*Support existing businesses*' under '*A Growing and Inclusive Economy*'.

### **FINANCE AND OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

There is no direct cost to the Council in self-nominating for Gold ERS status. A small sum (~£300) has been allocated from existing budgets to support a Tendring4Growth Business Fortnight event to promote the ERS scheme to other employers locally, supporting our advocacy requirements.

### **MILESTONES AND DELIVERY**

Employers are expected to actively reflect their Gold status for three years, and then look to renew this status.

#### **ASSOCIATED RISKS AND MITIGATION**

Additional leave requirements which could potentially impact upon service capacity are fully mitigated by effective planning by line managers, and are outweighed by the benefits gained from employing those who qualify for it.

#### **EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS**

In addition to its general duties under the Equalities Act 2010, the Armed Forces Covenant commits the Council to treating those who serve or who have served in the armed forces, and their families, with fairness.

Having due regard to the protected characteristics listed by the relevant legislation, our Armed Forces commitments will not adversely impact any group; and may positively impact those with disabilities when considering veterans who may have been injured in the line of duty.

#### **SOCIAL VALUE CONSIDERATIONS**

The Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 requires all public sector organisations (and their suppliers) to look beyond the financial cost of a contract and consider how the services they commission and procure might improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of an area.

Our Armed Forces commitments:

- Promote Skills and Employment: By promoting development opportunities for the Armed Forces community and ensuring they have access to opportunities to develop new skills and gain meaningful employment.
- Supports the Growth of Responsible Local Businesses: By promoting the benefits of employing Armed Forces personnel to local businesses, it helps give them the skills to compete.

#### **IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S AIM TO BE NET ZERO BY 2030**

None

#### **OTHER RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS OR IMPLICATIONS**

**Consideration has been given to the implications of the proposed decision in respect of the following and any significant issues are set out below.**

<b>Crime and Disorder</b>	<b>None</b>
<b>Health Inequalities</b>	<b>None</b>
<b>Area or Ward affected</b>	<b>All</b>

### **PART 3 – SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

#### **BACKGROUND**

Considerable work has been undertaken to date to '*demonstrate or advocate*' support to defence and the armed forces community, and the Council had already achieved Defence ERS Silver award status. The criteria for achieving Gold status, awarded to the Council in

July, is as follows:

- must have signed the [Armed Forces Covenant](#);
- the employer must have already stated their intent to be supportive by using the ERS website to register at the Bronze level;
- the employer must proactively demonstrate that service personnel/armed forces community are not unfairly disadvantaged as part of their recruitment and selection processes;
- the employer must actively ensure that their workforce is aware of their positive policies towards defence people issues. For example, an employer nominated for support to the Reserves must have an internally publicised and positive HR policy on Reserves;
- within the context of Reserves the employer must have demonstrated support to mobilisations or have a framework in place. They must demonstrate support to training by providing at least five days' additional unpaid/paid leave (*wherever possible not to Reservist employees' financial disadvantage*);
- the employer must not have been the subject of any negative PR or media activity.

To achieve Gold award status, awarded to the Council in July, the authority had to demonstrate:

- it had signed the [Armed Forces Covenant](#);
- an existing relationship with their National Account Manager/REED/appropriate defence representative;
- it was already demonstrating support by holding a valid ERS Silver Award;
- it could proactively demonstrate their forces-friendly credentials as part of their recruitment and selection processes. Where possible, it should be engaged with [Career Transition Partnership](#) (CTP) in the recruitment of service leavers and have registered for the [Forces Families Jobs](#) (FFJ) portal;
- it actively ensures the workforce is aware of their positive policies towards defence people issues. For example, an employer nominated for support to the Reserves must have an internally publicised and positive HR policy on Reserves;
- it must be an exemplar within their market sector, advocating support to defence people issues to partner organisations, suppliers and customers with tangible positive results;
- within the context of Reserves it must have demonstrated support to mobilisations or have a framework in place. They must provide at least ten days' additional leave for training, fully paid, to the Reservist employee;
- it must not have been the subject of any negative public relations or media activity.

To achieve this a revised Reserve Forces Training Mobilisation Policy was adopted in April 2022 to grant Reservists ten days' additional paid leave for training, up from five offered previously.

Other activity taken to support the Council's objectives and the ERS Gold status, since the last update to this committee, include:

- Regular annual civic events including services for Remembrance Sunday, Armed Forces Day, the Veterans' Tea Dance and other services or flag raisings (*all in conjunction with the Clacton Royal British Legion*);
- In addition the Council supported the Chairman in staging a Veterans' Day event in

early August;

- Attendance by the Armed Forces at the Tendring Jobs and Skills Fair (2019), and the Tendring Skills Fair held last week;
- Continued links to the Career Transition Partnership;
- Continued priority given to ex-forces personnel within their housing band for those on the social housing register;
- Ran an event in week one of the Tendring4Growth Business Fortnight to promote the Armed Forces Covenant, ERS, and general benefits of employing Armed Forces personnel, to local employers – this built upon a similar event held in March 2019;
- An Armed Forces discount is available on leisure services;
- Workshops held for staff to raise awareness of our signing of the Armed Forces Covenant and possible benefits;
- TDC has signed up to the Essex Family Friendly Employer scheme – this supports in particular those who have partners in the military;
- Established a buddy scheme where existing TDC staff who are from an Armed Forces background can support any new starters from the same background to help with their transition.

#### **PREVIOUS RELEVANT DECISIONS**

15 February 2022 – Decision by the Leader of the Council, to commit to honour the Armed Forces Covenant and support the Armed Forces Community.

17 April 2022 – Decision by the Chief Executive, to update the Reserve Forces Training Mobilisation policy in line with the requirements of the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme (*Gold standard*).

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