

BLYTH TOWN COUNCIL

Special Full Council

Thursday 24 April 2025

Decision Report

Armed Forces Covenant

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Council RESOLVES to make a formal pledge to the Armed Forces Covenant and pursue the Bronze Award under the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS).

Ward

Not Ward Specific

Risk Management

There are no direct financial implications associated with signing the Armed Forces Covenant or the ERS Bronze Award.

However, should the Council decide to appoint a Mayoral Cadet, associated costs would include:

- An official cloth brassard with an embroidered badge
- A pin badge (year stamped)
- A DBS check for the Mayor and/or Deputy Mayor

Estimated total cost: under £300.

Crime Prevention

This proposal supports community cohesion and engagement, contributing to wider crime prevention objectives.

Objective

To promote strong governance and enhance democratic engagement at all levels, particularly through the Council's commitment to recognising and supporting the Armed Forces community.

Background and Context

According to the 2021 Census, 4,696 residents in the Blyth and Ashington constituency identified as having previously served in the UK Armed Forces — representing **5.6%** of the population aged 16 and over. This compares to:

- 5.0% in the Northeast region
- 3.8% across Great Britain

At a more local level, the proportion of veterans is reported as:

- Isabella – 6.2%
- South Blyth – 5.8%
- Croft & Wensleydale – 5.5%
- Cowpen & Kitty Brewster – 5.4%
- Newsham – 5.3%

The Armed Forces Covenant

The Armed Forces Covenant is a national commitment to ensure that members of the Armed Forces community are treated fairly and with respect in the communities, economy, and society they serve with their lives.

While there is no statutory requirement for Town and Parish Councils to sign the Covenant, doing so demonstrates leadership and solidarity with local veterans, service personnel, and their families.

To sign the Covenant, the Council must demonstrate commitment to two key principles:

1. No disadvantage for Armed Forces members in accessing public and commercial services.
2. Special consideration, where appropriate, particularly for those injured or bereaved.

Demonstrating Our Commitment

Blyth Town Council is already active in areas aligned with the Covenant's values. A summary of current and proposed initiatives is attached as Appendix 1.

Of note is the proposal to collaborate with local cadet groups to appoint a Mayoral Cadet each municipal year—strengthening civic links and supporting youth in uniformed services.

The role of the Mayoral Cadet

The role of the Mayoral Cadet role is to accompany the Mayor of Blyth to a number of appropriate public Civic Events during the Mayoral year, this would include Armistice Day, Remembrance Sunday, Town Carnival, and any other significant dates that are considered on a year basis i.e. historic military anniversaries, royal events etc.

At these events the Mayoral Cadet will assist the Mayor to welcome dignitaries may perform such duties as conducting a reading at an event or carrying a wreath for the Mayor on Remembrance Sunday.

The Mayoral Cadet also brings a visible association with the local uniformed organisations within the town, and a role that is considered to be a honour and reward for the applicant selected.

Defence Employer Recognition Scheme – Bronze Award

By aligning council values with the Armed Forces Covenant, the Council is also eligible to receive the Bronze Award of the Defence Employer Recognition scheme.

By pledging support through the Covenant, the Council becomes eligible for the Bronze Award in the Defence ERS.

Bronze Award Criteria:

- Self-nominated by organisations who pledge support for the Armed Forces community.
- Signed the Armed Forces Covenant
- Demonstrates forces-friendly practices, including:
 - Recruiting reservists and veterans
 - Supporting military spouses, partners, and cadet instructors

Award holders receive:

- A digital certificate
- Official logos for use on websites, stationery, and publications

Elaine Brown
Deputy Town Clerk
15 April 2025

Appendix 1: Blyth Town Council Commitments to the Armed Forces Community

1. Promotion and Awareness

- Publicising the Covenant through the Council website, social media, and newsletters
- Collaborating with local press on Armed Forces-related initiatives

2. Employment Support

- Welcoming applications from members of the Armed Forces community
- Recognising military skills and qualifications in recruitment and selection

3. Staff Engagement

- Supporting employees who volunteer with cadet forces or other service-related organisations.

4. Youth Engagement

- Partnering with local cadet groups
- Offering the opportunity to nominate a **Mayoral Cadet** annually

5. Civic Support for National Events

- Active participation in:
 - Remembrance Sunday
 - Armistice Day
 - Armed Forces Day
 - Historic military anniversaries (e.g. D Day VE Day)

6. Collaboration with Local Veteran Networks

- Working with local veterans' groups to promote relevant community projects and events

Please note initiatives already supported though BTC are in red type above.