FUTURE ARRANGEMENTS FOR ARMED FORCES DAY IN WALES

Purpose

1. This report sets out two options proposed for the future arrangements for the Armed Forces Day held in Wales and invites members to consider and share their views on a preferred option, as requested by the Deputy Minister for Housing and Local Government.

Background

2. A UK Armed Forces day is celebrated annually in June and provides an opportunity for the nation to show its support for the men and women who make up the Armed Forces community. This includes serving troops, service families, veterans and cadets. Armed Forces day celebrations give communities an opportunity to show their appreciation, gratitude and pride of all serving personnel and veterans. The first ‘Veterans Day’ was held in 2006 and has developed into an annual UK-wide event taking place on a designated Saturday in June, with supporting events often taking place during the preceding week in communities across the country. In 2010 the UK national Armed Forces Day was held in Cardiff and more recently in 2018 it was held in Llandudno.

Armed Forces Day in Wales

3. In 2011 the Welsh Government formalised the arrangements for funding an Armed Forces Day in Wales by agreeing to provide support from 2012 onwards towards flagship events with one being held in both North and South Wales. It was agreed that the maximum support package provided would be £20,000 split evenly between the two events.

4. In recent years, the North and South Wales events have been held in Conwy, Flintshire, Cardiff and Caerphilly respectively.

5. Since the signing of the Armed Forces Covenant at a local level by local authorities and partners, Armed Forces day events have increasingly seen partnership working between groups of partners, with some events not solely serving the host area but neighbouring authorities also, providing a ‘regional focus’ for Armed Forces day. In addition to the two flagship North and South Wales events however, individual local authorities and communities have also staged Armed Forces day celebrations of various sizes, marking the day in their own unique way and supported by local funding.
Armed Forces Day 2018

6 The hosting of the UK Armed Forces day in Llandudno led to a change of approach in Wales for 2018, with the overwhelming focus of Welsh Government, the military and national partners being on ensuring the success of the UK national event. As a result, Welsh Government provided funding in 2018 solely to support the UK Armed Forces day in Llandudno. There was overwhelmingly positive feedback received by national and local partners regarding the success of the event where over 100,000 people are estimated to have attended.

Future Arrangements

7 Following discussions at Welsh Government's Expert Group on the Armed Forces, in November 2018 Welsh Government officials presented a discussion paper to members of the WLGA Armed Forces Champions Network, exploring options for how Armed Forces Day in Wales could be organised in the future to seek their initial views.

8 It was reported that Armed Forces day events required a major logistical and resource support from a number of stakeholders and it was vital that planning began at an early stage for future events. Senior figures in 160 (Wales) Brigade had also called for discussions regarding the future delivery of Armed Forces day and associated events across Wales, given the significant resourcing pressures two national events placed on the armed forces, for example, the Brigade which remained highly active with Welsh Regiments on operations across the world.

Options for Consideration

9 Two options were presented to the Network for the future delivery of Armed Forces Day in Wales. These were:

- **Option 1: One Armed Forces Day event**
  One flagship event supported by £20,000 of Welsh Government Funding. The event would alternate between local authorities.

- **Option 2: Two Armed Forces Day events**
  Two flagship events as per the pre-2018 model with each event supported by £10,000 of Welsh Government funding. Events would alternate between local authorities in North Wales and South Wales (including mid and west Wales).

10 At the meeting, following discussion members offered general support for option 1. It was argued, however, that any changes to arrangements should not begin until 2020, as preparations for a North Wales Armed Forces Day in 2019 were already underway. It was also noted that arrangements would need to be put into place to decide on the location of a single event.

11 The views from the Armed Forces Champions Network were fed back to the Welsh Government’s Armed Forces Expert Group at its meeting in March 2019,
where further discussions were held. Following this, the Chair of the Expert Group, the Deputy Minister for Housing and Local Government, Hannah Blythyn, wrote to Cllr Rob Jones, WLGA Spokesperson for Community Safety and asked Cllr Jones to liaise with local authorities to determine their preferred option and way forward.

12 As such, a further report on the options for the future arrangements of Armed Forces Day in Wales was presented to and discussed at the Armed Forces Champions Network on 14 May, with a view to making a recommendation to the Executive Board to enable Cllr Jones to respond to the Deputy Minister. Members confirmed they were in general agreement of option 1, with one Wales flagship event. Members did wish, however, to note the following:

- A single event would need to be peripatetic and move across all parts of Wales and all authorities should have an opportunity to host the Armed Forces day should they wish to do so;
- An agreed method of deciding on and rotating the location of the event would need to be established and agreed (the National Eisteddfod model was suggested as an option);
- The hosting of a national flagship event should not detract or negatively impact on plans and activities authorities have been planning and hosting at the local level for a number of years to mark Armed Forces day;
- It should be noted that while a single authority could act as the lead host authority, neighbouring authorities could also offer their support; and
- There was concern that £20,000 was unlikely to be sufficient resource to host a single national event in Wales.

Recommendations

13 Members are invited to:

13.1 Consider and discuss the options presented in the report on the future arrangements for Armed Forces Day in Wales

13.2 Agree a preferred option in order to inform Welsh Government.

Author: Rachel Morgan
Community Safety Policy Officer
Tel: 02920 468651
E-mail: Rachel.morgan@wlga.gov.uk