

Title of meeting: Employment Committee

Date of meeting: Tuesday 25th September 2018

Subject: Armed Forces Covenant: Defence Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS) Gold award sustainability plan

Report by: Caroline Hopper, Armed Forces Covenant Programme Manager

Wards affected: N/A

Key decision: No

Full Council decision: No

1. Purpose of report

The purpose of this report is to update Employment Committee about Portsmouth's recent Gold Award within the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS) and seek approval for the outlined sustainability plan.

2. Recommendations

Employment Committee is recommended to:

- a) note that Portsmouth City Council was awarded the prestigious Gold Award within the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme
- b) approve the outlined plan to ensure the sustainability of Portsmouth City Council's prestigious Gold Award within the ERS

3. Background

- 3.1 Portsmouth City Council (PCC) signed the Armed Forces Covenant in 2012. Although the Armed Forces Covenant was a wide commitment to support members of the Armed Forces community across a range of services, there was also a commitment to ensure that the Armed Forces community have better access to employment, opportunities, support and mentorship within the workplace.
- 3.2 In 2016 PCC became a part of the ERS. The ERS encourages employers to support the Armed Forces community and inspire others to do the same. Bronze, silver and gold are awarded to organisations that pledge, demonstrate or advocate support to the Ministry of Defence and the Armed Forces community, and align their values with the Armed Forces Covenant.
- 3.3 To obtain an ERS gold award the employer must be an exemplar within their market sector:

- Proactively seeking to employ members of the Armed Forces community;
- Demonstrating excellent support to employees who are members of the Armed Forces community;
- Evidencing exceptional advocacy for defence and the Armed Forces community.

3.4 In August 2018 PCC was successful in achieving a Gold Award.

3.5 On the 10th August 2018, 130 organisations nationally held a Gold Award and of these 21 were held by Councils, of which just 4 (Hampshire, Kent and Surrey county councils and Portsmouth City Council) are located in the South East of England.

4. Benefits of holding the Gold Award

4.1 The following are the main benefits of holding the Gold Award:

- a. Reputational: Achieving the Gold Award is an achievement and it enhances the reputation of the City Council and a number of potential benefits flow from this
- b. Access to talent: Gold organisations attract highly skilled service leavers, reservists and veterans into their workforce who are capable of filling cross-functional skills gaps. Moreover, research has identified that these people have lower rates of sickness than the wider workforce.
- c. Staff development: Gold organisations have the opportunity to put employees forward for development activities including the Sandhurst Leadership Challenge, Defence Academy skills under pressure course, RMAS Leadership Course, and professional placements.
- d. Opportunity to influence: Senior Executives within Gold organisations are invited to special influencer gatherings including leadership breakfasts, lunches and dinners with other gold award holders, senior members of MOD and cabinet ministers.

4.2 Renewal takes place every 5 years via a combination of assessment and quality inspection.

5. Headline sustainability plan (2019-2023):

5.1 To ensure that PCC continues to hold the Gold Award a high level sustainability plan has been developed. This plan identifies a number of key actions against a small number of key themes. These are summarised overleaf:

5.2 Being a proactive employer:

- Continued work with other organisations to advertise vacancies and create opportunities for veterans (Inc. specific groups such as early service leavers and injured wounded and sick), reservists, spouses and adult cadet volunteers to develop within the workplace;
- Continue to provide a specific work experience pathway for members of the Armed Forces community;
- Develop strategy for retention and increased numbers of reservists across the organisation.

5.3 Demonstrating support:

- Routine identification and targeted communication to Armed Forces staff;
- Ensure supportive policies (special leave, flexible working) are maintained and reviewed annually;
- Development of a staff network as a demonstration of recognition and appreciation of this group of employees;
- Proactive engagement in regional and national groups that support the development of best practice.

5.4 Evidencing exceptional advocacy:

- The Covenant is visible at every level of the organisation. The leader and Armed Forces Representative are supported to publically and consistently promote and inspire others to support Defence through a range of high profile activities;
- Ensure the Covenant communication plan includes regular focus on employment and advocacy;
- Continued work with commissioning managers and procurement to develop commitment within the supply chain.

6. **Reasons for recommendations**

PCC will need to renew its Gold award in March 2023. To do this PCC will need to demonstrate as an organisation that it has maintained and further developed its commitment in relation to advocacy of defence and employment of members of the Armed Forces community

7. **Equality impact assessment**

A preliminary Equality Impact Assessment has been completed.

8. **Legal implications**

There are no immediate legal implications arising from this report.

9. Director of Finance's comments

This sustainability plan will be managed within existing resources.

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Signed by:

Appendices:

Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972

The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

Title of document	Location

The recommendation(s) set out above were approved/ approved as amended/ deferred/ rejected by on

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Signed by: