

Notice of Motion – Armed Forces Covenant and Military Compensation

Cabinet

19 September 2023

Armed Forces Covenant and Military Compensation

Torbay Council notes:

- More than 2.2 million national servicemen served the country between 1947-1963. This Council acknowledges that 395 national servicemen sadly lost their lives on active service.
- Earlier this year, Torbay reconfirmed its support to the Armed Forces on 22nd March 2023 with a ceremony held at the Commando Training Centre in Lymstone to signify our continued commitment of the Armed Forces Covenant.
- The obligations it owes to the Armed Forces community within Torbay as enshrined in the Armed Forces Covenant; that the Armed Forces community should not face disadvantage in the provision of services and that special consideration is appropriate in some cases, especially for those who have given the most.
- That in the course of their service in His Majesty's Armed Forces, some members of the Armed Forces Community, by virtue of the often dangerous and risky nature of their work, or environments in which they are required to operate, become wounded, injured or sick in such a way that affects their life in a permanent or significant way.
- That a number of military compensation schemes exist to recognise and compensate Service Personnel and sometimes their families, for the hardship, inconvenience or ongoing impact conditions such as PTSD, limb loss, hearing loss etc.
- Military compensation can be awarded through the War Pension Scheme (WPS), Armed Forces Compensation Scheme (AFCS) or through a veteran's occupational Armed Forces Pension Scheme (AFPS), known as Service Invaliding Pensions (SIPs) or Service Attributable Pensions (SAPs). Compensation awards under these schemes may also include supplementary payments. This compensation often interacts with benefits issued through Local Authorities and may impact a veteran's entitlement to such benefits.
- That whilst some benefits such as Universal Credit rightly disregard military compensation as income, others administered by or subject to the discretion of Local Authorities do not always do so, meaning that some veterans must give up their compensation in order to access essential financial support.
- A 2022 Freedom of Information request by the Royal British Legion showed that only one in five (19%) of Local Authorities in Great Britain rightly disregarded all military compensation when assessing local benefits claims for

Housing Benefit, Council Tax Support, Discretionary Housing Payments and Disabled Facilities Grants.

Torbay Council believes that no member of the Armed Forces Community should be forced to give up their military compensation to access the same welfare support as their civilian counterparts and supports the Royal British Legion's call for all forms of military compensation to be disregarded as income in the assessment and administration of locally administered benefits over which this council exercises discretion.

In light of the above, the Cabinet resolves:

1. That the Director of Pride in Place in consultation with the Armed Forces Member Champion identify an appropriate location and funding to facilitate a plaque to commemorate this public service that millions undertook.
2. That the Director of Finance reviews the Council Tax Support Scheme, Housing Benefit, Discretionary Housing Payments and Disabled Facilities Grants to understand whether compensation paid under any of the relevant military compensation schemes are treated as income on applications in order to allow Cabinet to make a decision on implementation of this as a part of the draft budget proposals for 2024/2025.
3. That Cabinet request the Overview and Scrutiny Board to monitor the progress of the review of (2) above.

Proposer Councillor Steve Darling
Secunder Councillor Harvey