

12.03.25

<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	<b>Portfolio:</b>
Cllr. Philip Hughes	Organisation and Workforce

## Progression of the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme (DERS)

### Purpose:

To further strengthen our ongoing commitment to the Armed Forces Community and uphold our pledges to the Armed Forces Covenant.

### Recommendations / key decisions required:

1. To agree '10 days additional paid leave' for HM Reserve Forces annual commitment as required for Gold Award Level. This is essential criteria.
2. To approve decision to apply for the (DERS) at Gold Award Level.
3. To agree '10 days additional paid leave' for Cadet Forces Adult Volunteers annual commitment. This is non-essential criteria.

### Reasons:

To support our current and future Armed Forces Community as employees of Carmarthenshire County Council.

<b>Directorate:</b> Chief Executive	<b>Designations:</b>	<b>E Mail Addresses:</b>
<b>Name of Head of Service:</b> Paul Thomas	Assistant Chief Executive (People, Digital & Policy)	<a href="mailto:PRThomas@carmarthenshire.gov.uk">PRThomas@carmarthenshire.gov.uk</a>
<b>Report Author:</b> Gwyneth Ayers & Robert Young	Policy, Performance and Partnership Manager	<a href="mailto:GAyers@Carmarthenshire.gov.uk">GAyers@Carmarthenshire.gov.uk</a>
	Lead HR Business Partner	<a href="mailto:RMYoung@carmarthenshire.gov.uk">RMYoung@carmarthenshire.gov.uk</a>

**Declaration of Personal Interest (if any):**

**None**

**Dispensation Granted to Make Decision (if any):**

**N/A**

**(If the answer is yes exact details are to be provided below:)**

**DECISION MADE:**

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

CABINET MEMBER

The following section will be completed by the Democratic Services Officer in attendance at the meeting

Recommendation of Officer adopted	YES / NO
Recommendation of the Officer was adopted <b>subject to the amendment(s) and reason(s) specified:</b>	
Reason(s) why the Officer's recommendation was <b>not adopted:</b>	

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Progression of the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme (DERS)

In October 2021 Carmarthenshire County Council (CCC) received Cabinet approval to re-sign the Armed Forces (AF) Covenant and pledge to commit to the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme (DERS). The DERS encourages employers to support serving personnel (reservists), armed forces veterans and their dependants. It aligns with the AF Covenant's pledge of respect and fairness for the AF community in the United Kingdom. CCC achieved Bronze status in February 2022 and re-affirmed its commitment to the AF community by re-signing the AF Covenant in July 2022.

In April 2023 the Cabinet approved the application for the DERS Silver Award and to work towards offering a Guaranteed Interview Scheme (GIS) for prospective employees who members of the AF community.

The Council was awarded the DERS Silver Award by the Ministry of Defence (MOD) in September 2023 and the GIS was offered in April 2024 to coincide with the rollout of the new corporate recruitment platform, which is now complete. The GIS enables us to identify, track and access this talent pool which provides a significant step towards becoming an employer of choice for the AF Community.

The DERS Gold Award is the highest recognition for employers who demonstrate outstanding support for the AF community. Securing the Gold Award would affirm CCC's commitment to supporting the AF community, enhance the Council's reputation as an inclusive and supportive employer, and broaden its access to the highly skilled AF talent pool.

To be eligible to apply for the GOLD Award CCC must meet essential criteria including providing 10 days fully paid leave for members of HM Reserve Forces to undertake their annual training commitments and duties. GOLD criteria also asks employers to consider provision of additional leave (paid) for Cadet Forces Adult Volunteers (CFAV) for them to complete their annual training commitments. The criteria in terms of CFAV is not essential for GOLD Award status.

Based on analysis undertaken of requests for unpaid leave over the last year, one employee has been identified as a reservist with no employees having been identified as serving as CFAV. On this basis it is thought that the cost of granting paid leave to both categories would be minimal.

In most cases CCC already satisfy the set criteria for GOLD (see table below) with most of the preparation work being the curating of the evidence and reviewing existing policies.

#### DERS ESSENTIAL GOLD CRITERIA

Gold Criteria	Council Status
Organisations <u>must</u> have signed the AFC	Complies
The employer <u>must</u> already be at Silver	Complies
The employer must have an existing relationship with RFCA Regional Employment Director	Complies
The employer must proactively demonstrate their Forces-friendly credentials as part of their	Complies

recruiting and selection processes. Where possible, they should be engaged with CTP in the recruitment of Service leavers.	Guaranteed Interview Scheme offered from April 24.
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. In the case where no HR policy exists this should be demonstrated by specific references in job descriptions or on the organisation's website	Complies. Positive people policies in place. Ongoing work to review.
The employer must be an exemplar within their market sector, advocating support to Defence People issues to partner organisations, suppliers and customers with tangible positive results. For example, demonstrate proactive steps/activity and clear success in encouraging partner organisations and their supply chain to sign the AFC	Complies
Within the context of Reserves the employer must have demonstrated support to mobilisations or have a framework in place.	Complies
The employer must demonstrate support to training by providing at least 10 days' additional paid leave for HM Reservists and CFAV.	Currently uncompliant.  The Council's Time Off Policy states " <i>Attendance for training in the non-regular armed forces should be taken out of annual leave, flexi-leave or an application should be made for unpaid leave. All leave requests will be considered subject to service requirements</i> ".
The employer must not have been the subject of any negative PR or media activity that could cause embarrassment to Defence.	Complies to date.
To be eligible to apply for GOLD status, CCC must approve the '10 days additional paid leave' for HM Reservists and additional leave for CFAV.	
<b>DETAILED REPORT ATTACHED?</b>	<b>NO</b>

## IMPLICATIONS

I confirm that other than those implications which have been agreed with the appropriate Directors / Heads of Service and are referred to in detail below, there are no other implications associated with this report:

Signed: Paul Thomas, Assistant Chief Executive (People, Digital & Policy)

Policy, Crime & Disorder and Equalities	Legal	Finance	ICT	Risk Management Issues	Staffing Implications	Physical Assets	Biodiversity
<b>NONE</b>	<b>NONE</b>	<b>NONE</b>	<b>NONE</b>	<b>NONE</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NONE</b>	<b>NONE</b>

### 7. Staffing Implications

It should be noted that paid leave for volunteering for Armed Forces reserve training is not currently Council policy.

If it is decided to allow 10 days paid leave to reservists for their annual training commitments, this will necessitate a change to the existing Time Off Policy which states: *“Attendance for training in the non-regular armed forces should be taken out of annual leave, flexi-leave or an application should be made for unpaid leave. All leave requests will be considered subject to service requirements”*

## CONSULTATIONS

I confirm that the appropriate consultations have taken in place and the outcomes are as detailed below

Signed: Paul Thomas, Assistant Chief Executive (People, Digital & Policy)

(Please specify the outcomes of consultations undertaken where they arise against the following headings)

**1. Scrutiny Committee**

N/A

**2. Local Member(s)**

Name(s) of local member(s) and individual comments to be included, if appropriate.

N/A

**3. Community / Town Council**

Name(s) of Town/Community Councils(s) and individual comments to be included, if appropriate

N/A

**4. Relevant Partners**

Name(s) and individual comments to be included, if appropriate

N/A

**5. Staff Side Representatives and other Organisations**

Name(s) and individual comments to be included, if appropriate

N/A

**CABINET MEMBER PORTFOLIO  
HOLDER(S) AWARE/CONSULTED**

YES

Cllr. Philip Hughes has been briefed on this proposal

**Section 100D Local Government Act, 1972 – Access to Information**

List of Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:

**THESE ARE DETAILED BELOW**

Title of Document	File Ref No.	Locations that the papers are available for public inspection
Defence Employer Recognition Scheme		<a href="http://www.gov.uk">Defence Employer Recognition Scheme - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)</a>