

- Present:** Councillor Calum Watt (*in the Chair*)
- Councillors:** Debbie Armiger, Chris Burke, Liz Bushell, Matthew Fido, Rachel Storer, Dylan Stothard, Aiden Wells, Joshua Wells and Emily Wood
- Also in Attendance:** Frank Barrett MBE (Royal Air Forces Association), Emily Holmes (Assistant Director of Strategic Development, City of Lincoln Council), Evelyn Moorland (Royal Air Forces Association) Ian O'Conner (Royal Naval Association & the Royal British Legion), Victoria Poulson (Democratic Services Officer, City of Lincoln Council) and Simon Walters (Strategic Director of Community and Environment, City of Lincoln Council)
- Apologies for Absence:** Councillor Hilton Spratt

**61. Welcome and Apologies**

Councillor Calum Watt, Chair of the Community Leadership Scrutiny Committee, opened the meeting with a brief round of introductions and offered a warm welcome to external guest speakers. Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Hilton Spratt.

**62. Confirmation of Minutes - 23 January 2024**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 23 January 2024 be confirmed and signed by the Chair as an accurate record.

**63. Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Chris Burke declared a non-pecuniary interest with regard to the agenda item entitled, 'Care of Veterans in Lincoln'.

Reason: He was Vice-Chair of Lincoln Royal Air Forces Association (RAFA)

**64. Care of Veterans in Lincoln**

Councillor Calum Watt, Chair of the Community Leadership Scrutiny Committee, introduced the topic of discussion which was the Care of Veterans in Lincoln.

The Committee received a collaborative presentation from guest speakers, Frank Barrett MBE, (Royal Air Forces Association), Evelyn Moorland, (Royal Air Forces Association) and Ian O'Conner (Royal Naval Association & Royal British Legion). During consideration of the presentation, the following points were noted:

**Frank Barrett MBE and Evelyn Moorland - Royal Air Forces Association (RAFA)**

Frank Barrett MBE commenced the presentation with confirmation that after 42 years, he had stood down as Chairman and Honorary Welfare Officer of the Lincoln RAFA branch on Monday 18 March 2024.

- RAFA was established in 1925 and had previously been named 'Comrades of the Royal Air Force'. During the war years, the Association name was changed to 'RAFA'. King Charles III had previously been a President of the Association and it was endorsed by the Duke of Edinburgh

*(Note: Councillor Matthew Fido joined proceedings at this stage)*

- During 2020, the Association quickly mobilised and launched the new Covid-19 emergency welfare services. This involved contacting 30,000 potentially vulnerable members of the RAF community to arrange telephone friendship calls, emergency bag drops, and broadcast an interactive entertainment and education service
- Further to the pandemic, it became increasingly apparent that the veteran community in particular, faced a significant new threat
- The rising cost-of-living caused significant demand and in the period January -September 2022, over 2,481 individuals contacted the Association in need of emergency financial support, home fuel grants, debt, bills and daily living costs
- For many years, mobility issues had remained the primary reason that individuals sought assistance from the Association. However, today, more individuals contacted the Association regarding home fuel grants
- The causes for the change in the type of help sought from the Association became clear; the UK State Pension increased by 3.1% per cent this year, yet inflation was likely to reach 10% and energy bills had increased by over 50%
- Age UK predicted that 2million older households would soon, not have sufficient income to cover their essential spending
- Colder temperatures in autumn and winter gave rise to increased fuel bills and in conjunction with inflation increases, the Association anticipated the need to mount a large-scale crisis response similar to the level required during the 2020 pandemic emergency
- In the absence of support offered from the Association, many RAF veterans and their loved ones would be faced with impossible choices to make ends meet which included staying at home alone to save money, going hungry or turning their heating off
- 36% of RAF veterans lived alone; higher than the national average of 21%
- Social isolation damaged both physical and mental health and could be more harmful to health than smoking 15 cigarettes per day. In addition, the risk of developing clinical dementia rose by 64%
- Eating inadequately lead to malnutrition which affected every system within the body. In addition, caused increased vulnerability to illness, increased complications and in very extreme cases, even death
- Public Health England (PHE) warned there was a damaging overlap between living in a cold home and poor health. This caused or worsened serious health conditions such as heart attacks, strokes, bronchitis, and asthma
- National Energy Action estimated that approximately 10,000 winter deaths occurred due to living in a cold home, prior to the impact of the current rising cost of heating
- To achieve a positive impact on beneficiaries, it was essential to understand the characteristics of the individuals that the Association served

- In 2018, a survey was undertaken to further understand the demographics of the Association's membership. It was hoped that the results would inform the development of evidence-based welfare services to offer information on financial assistance, war pensions, retirement and accommodation
- RAF KIDZ had been set up on certain stations and offered childcare while parents went to work
- An initiative called 'Staying in Touch' offered storybooks for children that provided a means of communication whilst their loved ones served abroad
- The Association continued to build on foundations with further research and insight into specific issues and the relationships between variables
- The Association published a quarterly bulletin called 'Airmail' which provided information on the activities of the Association
- Suggestions for future initiatives included the creation of a register or a trusted traders scheme for veterans and widows with no children, that offered practical assistance and support, such as help around the home.

### Ian O'Conner - Royal Naval Association & Royal British Legion

Ian O'Conner commenced his presentation with confirmation that he supported both the Royal Naval Association and the Royal British Legion. In addition, he had been actively involved in the Poppy Appeal for twenty-three years.

- Collaborative working was necessary to ensure that charities worked more effectively together to spread information and signpost the support and assistance that was available to veterans
- Consideration could be given to the inclusion of support information within a 'Hub' service and the printing and publication of brochures
- Younger veterans and their life postservice needed to be considered with care
- The issue of a housing shortage was understood however if correctly signposted, homelessness of younger veterans could be avoided
- 4% of the prison population in England and Wales were veterans. Support was offered via 'Care After Combat' – a UK based charity of trusted mentors that provided support within the justice system for the well-being of former British Armed Forces personnel and their families.

The Chair offered thanks for the presentations from all guest speakers and welcomed comments and questions from Members of the Committee. As a result of discussions between Members and speakers, the following points were made: -

**Comment:** There had previously been a system for minor repair works however, the service had been stopped.

**Response:** Possible liability issues could arise in certain circumstances such as changing a lightbulb

**Comment:** Charities had recently worked more collaboratively across Lincolnshire. This included representation from the voluntary sector, public authorities and the military sector. There was a wide range of representation from all parts of the military, veterans advisory and pensions Committee. Consideration had been given to work streams and how partnerships assisted veterans.

**Comment:** It was disappointing that young married couples with children experienced a reliance on social security payments.

**Comment:** Lincoln RAFA branch had a total of approximately 900 members however it was only possible to engage digitally with 350 of the total members. It was important to reduce the reliance on digital information sharing.

**Response:** Data protection considerations were essential as permission was required to contact individuals.

**Question:** Referred to the creation of a register or a trusted trader's scheme. Was it possible to utilise existing staff within the City of Lincoln Council's repairs teams?

**Response:** Current work force demand and recruitment was problematic. It was possible to consider the suggestion under the Social Responsibility Charter.

**Comment:** It was difficult to keep abreast of changes within the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). The Lincoln RAFA branch had three welfare officers who gained national accreditation once courses had been completed.

**Comment:** Exploration of the Veterans Charter in collaboration with officers offered consideration of how it could be developed further.

**Response:** It was an exciting time in Lincolnshire. Further to the consideration of the new statutory duty under the Charter, the fantastic work that had already happened within the County had been explored further and included the sharing of best practice. Jacqui Bunce, Programme Director of Strategic Estates, NHS had brought together information on access to health provision. We were committed as districts to implement support via the introduction of a dedicated officer. Work would continue to increase over the coming months; the focus of such remained the views of the residents. Gave thanks for the comments in respect of digital inclusion.

**Question:** How did the Armed Forces Covenant relate to the ex-service community?

**Response:** It was important that no individual experienced a barrier or disadvantage for serving in the Armed Forces. Consideration of effective and appropriate levels of support available for residents remained the focus. Communities benefitted from the sharing of best practice from other regions.

**Question:** Had officers experienced difficulties in the achievement of effective communication with veteran communities? There was a high number of individuals in desperate need.

**Response:** Effective communication remained a focus topic. The Lincolnshire Military, Veteran & Families Wellbeing Network was set up in May 2017. There were over 65 members that represented a wide range of groups, organisations and services across Lincolnshire. The network was facilitated and supported by 'Every-One'. Officers remained happy to pass on details of relevant Associations.

**Question:** Did the Council work to a budget?

**Response:** There was a budget set aside however the implementation of the external role could assist access to external funding. Bids for funding would be submitted.

**Comment:** Applications to claim war pension was processed through a new system which was accessed from within the service. RAFA worked closely with the RAF Benevolent Fund.

**Response:** Disabled Facilities Grants fell under the Directorate of Communities and Environment and enabled home adaptations to assist individuals to stay in their own

homes. Officers confirmed that the details of the relevant team would be passed on to Associations.

**Comment:** It would be valuable for the City of Lincoln Council (CoLC) to inform RAFA Head Quarters (HQ) of the support available and the work carried out on behalf of the ex-service community.

**Response:** Contact information for RAFA HQ, based in Leicester, would be circulated further to the meeting.

**Comment:** The CoLC had a Councillor that acted as a champion for veterans. When a replacement for the role was considered, it would be useful to raise the profile of the position.

The Chair offered his thanks to guest speakers and officers for all the information provided to Committee and for the remarkable work carried out.

RESOLVED that:

1. Details of veterans Associations be shared with Council officers and details of the support available and the work carried out on behalf of the ex-service community be shared with RAFA HQ.
2. Consultation work be advertised appropriately.
3. The content of all presentations be noted with thanks.

## **65. Youth Engagement Update**

Simon Walters, Strategic Director of Community and Environment, presented a briefing note received from Toby Ealden, Zest Theatre, ahead of the meeting. During the presentation, the following points main points were noted:

- The briefing note was intended to update the Committee on the development of Zest Theatre's work across Lincoln to gather young people's voices and the delivery of a new youth space for 11-18 year-olds across the city
- Zest Theatre was an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation and Associate Artists at Lincoln Arts Centre. Based in Lincoln, Zest Theatre worked closely with local partners to support the development of Lincolnshire's Arts and Culture sector
- In 2022, Zest facilitated an ambitious new research project with approximately 1,500 young people across Lincoln; nearly 10% of the city's age 10-19 population
- In every setting, space was made for young people to share their vision for Lincoln's future and the process concluded in the creation of six maxims that summed up young people's needs, ideas, and requests
- With a rise in anti-social behaviour and a growing need to tackle the mental health outcomes for young people, there was a clear need for the nation to invest in new youth spaces:
  - 750 youth centres had closed nationwide and 4,500 youth workers had been cut since 2011
  - Currently, 1 in 6 young people struggled with a mental health disorder

- In Lincoln, only 8% of young people felt they were thriving and 72% felt there weren't enough spaces for young people
- Meanwhile, there had been a rise in anti-social behaviour across the city
- Zest successfully secured £93K funding from The National Lottery Community Fund / DCMS' Million Hours Fund and another £8K from Lincolnshire Co-Op to enable the development of 'The Common Room'
- The Common Room would be set up in public spaces such as town squares, playing fields, and community centres and provided a stunning and purpose-built space for young people that was fully staffed and programmed by the Zest Theatre and local artists
- Zest supported a co-design process with young people across the city and built upon previous research in the design of the brand-new facility. Designs would be completed by the end of March
- Aspirations were for The Common Room to be opened for two weeks in the city centre at the start of the summer holidays in 2024 before touring communities across the city for the remainder of the summer and the October half term of 2024
- There would be 8 weeks of delivery in 2024/25 and 10 weeks in 2025/26 – all focussed on 'fair weather' school holidays. Aspirations were for The Common Room to tour across all wards over the 2 years of funding
- The exploration of funding had resulted in Zest Theatre becoming a national portfolio organisation with three years of core funding.

The Chair offered thanks to Simon Walters and welcomed comments and questions from Members of the Committee. As a result of discussions between Members, the following points were made: -

**Question:** Was The Common Room design a tent or marquee?

**Response:** The Common Room would be designed in collaboration with Nick Crosbie - Product Designer and Architect of the incredible temporary structures called AirClad. Young people would work with Nick Crosbie to design The Common Room.

RESOLVED that the update be noted with thanks.

## 66. Work Programme 2024

Consideration was given to the Committee's Work Programme. Further to scoping discussions, the Democratic Services Officer confirmed that the focus of the Committee's upcoming work would include further attendance in relation to Sheltering Our Citizens and further attendance in relation to Youth Engagement.

It was agreed that further to the update provided on Youth Engagement received during tonight's meeting, deliberation and discussion would be facilitated by the Committee in June 2024. The Democratic Services Officer advised that confirmation of attendance had been requested from Toby Ealden, Artistic Director & CEO - Zest Theatre.

It was agreed that Development Plus and a representative from Lincolnshire County Council be invited to attend Committee in relation to Sheltering Our Citizens. The Democratic Services Officer confirmed that the item would be brought before the Committee in June 2024.

The Chair sought the views of Members with regard to future topics of scrutiny. Members suggested a scrutiny review on the Council's engagement with schools in the City in regard to the cost-of-living, pupil premium and the signposting of access such as housing. It was suggested that contributors include Lincoln College and the University of Lincoln. The Democratic Services Officer confirmed that scoping discussions would take place further to the meeting and the item would be brought before the Committee in July 2024.

The Democratic Services Officer confirmed that the Committee's Work Programme would be amended to reflect the municipal year. The change would take effect after the Elections in May 2024.

**Date of Next Meeting:** Tuesday 18 June 2024.