

Annual Council – 14 May 2025

Annual Report of the Member Champion for: Armed Forces Covenant

Councillor Vicky Johns

This report updates Council on the work of the Armed Forces Covenant Champion, Councillor Vicky Johns.

Work Achieved during 2024/2025

I was delighted to be nominated the Armed Forces Champion, a role that was established to implement initiatives to ensure serving and ex-military personnel are treated fairly by our organisation, that is EDDC.

East Devon is home to the Royal Marines Commando Training Centre in Lympstone. Our District has a large serving military presence, and many veterans living within our communities, but sadly their dedicated service is often overlooked.

EDDC had previously signed an Armed Forces Covenant, but our pledges required reviewing and updating, and so myself and council officer Jo Fellowes, (who has sadly since left EDDC), worked tirelessly to bring the Covenant up to date. It was a proud moment when we finally saw the Covenant signed, at the Council's 50-year anniversary at Blackdown House, on 10th September 2024.

The signing of the Armed Forces Covenant is a promise to ensure that those who served or have served in the Armed Forces, and their families are treated fairly by organisations - public, private or voluntary, any organisation is welcome to sign the Covenant.

An elected Councillor recently asked me about the EDDCC Remembrance Day protocol, and it appears we currently do not have one. This omission could lead to some towns and parishes having an influx of wreaths and others having none, it may also result in a lack of Councillor representation at Remembrance Day services. As EDDC has a strong military presence, I feel it is our duty to remember those who gave their service, and so a wreath laying protocol is currently in the process of being drafted and will be presented to full council. I hope that everyone will wholeheartedly support the protocol as the wreaths are not for celebrating war, as has been mentioned, but for remembering those who gave everything to ensure we have our freedom of choice.

As Armed forces champion, I have attended functions and talks at Bickton college, and various other Veterans events. On these occasions, it has been a pleasure to chat with veterans and serving personnel but also to get feedback on how EDDC can help them transition back to civilian life.

Priorities for the future

Looking ahead, I would like our Armed Forces Covenant to gain Silver level status, which would recognise EDDC as an employer who, through their recruitment and HR

policies and processes, proactively demonstrates that service personnel and the armed forces are not unfairly disadvantaged, they must also engage with the Cadet movement. I'm sure with the support of both Members and Officers that we can achieve this.

Lastly, I would like to thank the officers for their time and expertise in ensuring our military personnel, both veterans and those still serving, are supported by EDDC.