

Annual Council – 13 May 2026

Annual Report of the Councillor Champion for: Armed Forces Covenant

Councillor Vicky Johns

Work achieved during 2025/2026

I was delighted to be nominated the Armed Forces Champion for another year, a role that was established to implement initiatives to ensure serving and ex-military personnel are treated fairly by our organisation, East Devon District Council. As a child of Veterans and a mother of a Veteran I find this role something I am particularly proud to hold and hope to be able to continue it in the upcoming year.

East Devon is home to the Royal Marines Commando Training Centre in Lypstone. Our district has a large serving military presence and many veterans living within our communities. In 2024 EDDC reviewed and updated the Armed Forces Covenant bringing it up to date on 10th September 2024.

Last year we discussed looking forward and EDDC gaining 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. With LGR and all of the work that has entailed this has not currently happened, but I am proud of the work EDDC has been doing to ensure fairness with our veterans in all avenues within EDDC.

I have also been communicating with Veterans with Dogs (VWD) they are the first UK registered charity to directly address the needs of mental health difficulties for former service personnel of the Armed Forces. At VWD they use 'bond-based option training' which means simply that the dog chooses to participate in training sessions. This forms a bond of trust from the very beginning.

Trained dogs remind their veterans to take medication, they can turn on lights, provide comfort during flashbacks, and wake their veteran from nightmares. They can recognise the signs of panic attacked before they happen. A dog is matched to a client based on the person's lifestyle, temperament, and characteristics. VWD brings the veteran and dog together in a residential environment which allows the Veteran to train with the trainers and learn how to work and train with their dog.

Volunteers are a crucial part of ensuring that VWD can continue to train and provide assistance dogs to Veterans with mental health conditions. There are various ways to become involved with this great charity, so please do look them up

I am also pleased to see so many groups open within East Devon for veterans including a wonderful Art group located within Lypstone run by a veteran where all veterans are welcome. Plus various other groups including Veterans breakfast etc.

Priorities for the future:

It would be wonderful to gain Silver status for EDDC but with LGR looming in front of us and with such a heavy workload already on officers we would need to weigh up whether even something as important as Silver status would be worth officer time when I don't believe it would carry over to a new unitary authority.

If I am lucky enough to be made the Member Champion for the Armed Forces for another year, I hope to be able to continue working with veterans' groups across EDDC and assist where I can, after all they have done so much for us it is the least I can do.