APPENDIX F

Full Council October 2026 – Armed Forces Champion

1 Introduction

As requested, work has been undertaken so that the Town Council can consider if it wishes to appoint an Armed Forces Champion.

In this report, you will find:

- A draft role description
- Some additional background information.

I am grateful to the resident who proposed this and Cllr Peters for their assistance in putting this information together.

2 Role Description - Armed Forces Champion at Bexhill-on-Sea Town Council.

Introduction

An **Armed Forces Champion** in a UK local council is a designated elected councillor who acts as an advocate and point of contact for the military community, including serving personnel (regular and reserve), veterans, families, and cadets.

The role is tied to the Armed Forces Covenant for communities and the statutory duties under the **Armed Forces Act 2021**, which requires public bodies to show "due regard" to the armed forces community.

Core Roles and Responsibilities

- **Advocacy and Raising Profile:**
    - Raise the profile of the armed forces community internally within the Council and across the wider community.
    - Ensure that the needs, views, and sacrifices of service personnel and veterans are considered in Council decisions.
- **Signposting and Problem-Solving:**
    - Act as a direct point of contact for current and former service personnel who need help navigating council or public services.

    - Work with others to unblock issues related to accessing housing, health, education, welfare, and employment support.
    - Work with the Community Hub to make sure information that veterans may need is available in the office.

- **Promote the Value of Local Veterans**
    - Encourage local businesses, organisations, and partner agencies to show their support for local veterans.
    - Help promote the work of the Service Champions - Armed Forces Network.
- **Work Closely with Local Veteran Organisations**
    - Work closely with Bexhill District Veterans Association, Royal British Legion and other groups working with or supporting veterans.
- **Ceremonial and Community Engagement:**
    - Liaise with the Mayor, Council Chair, and local military units (such as regional Army, Royal Navy, or RAF commands and the Reserve Forces and Cadets Association) on ceremonial duties.
    - Attend and support local military events, Armed Forces Day flag-raisings, Remembrance services, and Freedom marches.
    - Work with the East Sussex Civilian and Military Partnership Board.
- **Policy Review and Scrutiny:**
    - Contribute to reviewing and developing local authority policies to ensure service families and veterans are not disadvantaged.

Please note this role will be re-appointed by Bexhill Town Council at its Annual Meeting each year.

3 Background Information

According to the 2021 Census data from the Office for National Statistics (ONS), there were 4,226 veterans living in the Rother district, making up **5%** of the usual residents aged 16 and over.

Key Statistics for Rother Veterans

- **Total Count:** 4,226 individuals reported serving in the UK armed forces.
- **Type of Service:**

  - **3,257** served in the regular UK armed forces.
  - **767** served as reserves.
- **Age Profile (Older Population):**
  - **69%** of veterans in Rother were aged 65 or older (compared to 32% of the wider local population).
  - **2,060 (48.7%)** were aged 80 or older.
  - **465** were aged 90 or older.
  - Only **3%** were younger than 35.
  - This high average age is largely due to the legacy of UK War Service and National Service (conscription from 1939 to 1960).
- **Disability and Health:**
  - **1,428** veterans in Rother (about 35%) were classified as disabled under the Equality Act, meaning they had a physical or mental impairment affecting daily activities.
- **Housing Deprivation:**
  - **161** former military personnel in the area lived in housing classed as deprived (such as overcrowded households or homes lacking central heating).

4 Conclusion

I trust this provides the necessary information for Cllrs to:

- Consider having a Champion.
- Provide feedback for the Draft Role Description.
- If they resolve to have a Champion, make an appointment.