

Reigate and Banstead Borough Council

Meeting of Council 29 July 2021

Public Questions

Number	Question by	To be answered by	Subject
1	Mr Mick Hay	Councillor Brunt, Leader of the Council	Support for Veterans

Council Meeting: 29 July 2021

Mr Mick Hay will ask the **Leader of the Council, Councillor Mark Brunt** the following question:

Question: Mental Health/Wellbeing Support for Military Veterans in Reigate and Banstead

Can I initially thank Madam Mayor and Council for their re-affirmation of the Armed Forces Covenant during Armed Forces Week at the end of Jun-21. I am 24670365 Sergeant M P Hay, served 22 years in Royal Corps of Signals 1984-2006, and I am grateful that Reigate and Banstead Council and indeed Surrey County Council recognise the Armed Forces Community in this way.

My question this evening is a request that Reigate and Banstead Council conduct a feasibility study that I feel would benefit the Wellbeing and Mental Health of Veterans such as myself, I am comfortable admitting I have suffered many mental health episodes since leaving the Army and am attracted to anything that supports and deals with mental health of Veterans in a positive way.

A fellow Veteran and a local Councillor in Gedling Borough Council (Nottingham) made me aware of a scheme where Military Veterans are given free access to Council-run Leisure Centres (of which there are three in his Borough). Of course, there are caveats in place, health and safety inductions etc but in essence, all Veterans in the Borough are allowed to use the leisure facilities free of charge upon production of certified documentation proving their Veteran status.

Whilst pragmatic and aware of the additional administration this brings to Reigate and Banstead Borough Council, to Donyngs in Redhill, to Tadworth Leisure and Community Centre and to Horley Leisure Centre, at this stage I simply ask for a feasibility study, a costing exercise, an understanding of the wellbeing benefits to the Veteran Community can commence. In the coming months, I intend to make my request County wide that would benefit c.42,000 Surrey based Veterans – I would be delighted if the journey began here in Reigate and Banstead where I live and you approve my request.

In summary, I would like to ask Council if they would be prepared to consider a scheme where all Military Veterans in the Borough be afforded free access to leisure facilities in the three leisure centres in the Borough.

Response:

Thank you Madam Mayor and I'd like to thank Mr Hay for both his question and for his service. Currently Members of the Armed Forces can already access reduced membership for our leisure centres across the borough. However, historically there has not been a specific allowance made for veterans.

I am pleased to advise the same discount will now be extended to all veterans across the borough through our leisure centre partners, which I hope will go some way initially to provide some reassurance and support to our veterans.

Mr Hay mentioned in particular the mental health benefits of leisure, and I am proud to say we work very closely with our public health networks locally on our community prescribing service, which enables people not only to be prescribed medication, but also to prescribe leisure services to enable them to support their mental wellbeing.

Turning now specifically to Mr Hay's request. Whilst I'm not in a position today to be able to offer the free access to our leisure facilities for veterans, and other priority groups, I will ensure that this is considered as part of the work underway at the moment for the future of our leisure services, which Councillor Sachdeva is in charge of across the borough.

I will also work with our Armed Forces champion, Councillor James Baker, to ensure that the voices of the armed forces and veterans are fully considered as we review the future of our leisure services across the borough. Thank you, Madam, Mayor, and thank you for your question Mr Hay.