

Wiltshire Council

Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

4 June 2019

Task Group Update:

Military and Civilian Integration Programme (MCIP) Task Group

Membership

Cllr Richard Britton (Chairman)
Cllr Gordon King
Cllr Mollie Groom
Cllr Alan Hill
Cllr Tony Jackson
Cllr John Smale
Cllr Graham Wright

Terms of Reference

1. To identify any risks and opportunities presented by the MCIP that are relevant to Wiltshire Council services and priorities, focusing on the following themes:
 - Housing
 - Health
 - Infrastructure
 - Budget
 - Schools
 - Employment (leavers and dependents)
2. To make workable recommendations on how any identified risks could be mitigated and opportunities exploited to support delivery of the MCIP and of relevant priorities within the Council's Business Plan.

Background

The task group has been in operation since 2016. In its first two years the task group focused on the impact of the Army Basing in Wiltshire and the work of the council to prepare for the arrival of more military personnel. In January 2018 the task group refocused its attention on the work done to encourage military and civilian integration. Later in the year the group chose to look more closely at integration, and the work towards integration, at a community level.

The group believes it has taken this work as far as it can under its current remit, given that there now needs to be activity promoting integration rather than a review of that activity. The task group is seeking a decision on next steps from the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee.

Recent activity

The group developed a definition of successful Military/Civilian integration.

We think that successful military/civilian integration should involve:

Shared provision of community, leisure, cultural and sporting facilities

Equal access to and participation in national, local and community services and facilities

Joint contribution to all aspects of community and family life and development

This definition was then used as the basis for a questionnaire for affected town and parish councils and area boards. The questionnaire was delivered with the support of the Community Engagement Managers. The summary of the results is provided as Appendix 1 to this report.

Having reviewed the results of the questionnaire and interviewed Wiltshire Council's new MCI Programme Manager the group have summarised their conclusions and are seeking a decision from Management Committee on whether there is still a role for the task group.

Army Basing Findings

- There are no discernible direct benefits to communities of the section 106 investments made as part of the development that came about in response to Army Basing. There have been infrastructure enhancements, but these aren't always viewed as positive by communities.
- There are a number of section 106 investments resulting from developments relating to army rebasing that are not yet complete. Members for the relevant divisions should follow these up through the relevant area boards.
- The task group was disappointed that it had been unable to confirm that Army Basing will be at least cost neutral to Wiltshire Council. The group received a general assurance that Wiltshire is a net beneficiary of Army Basing. However, quantitative evidence demonstrating this has not been provided.

The group are aware that police resources are to be reorganised and increased in response to Army Basing, but not what the final details are.

Community Level Integration Findings

- There is evidence of excellent military and civilian integration at the strategic level. Relationships between military commanders and the leadership of Wiltshire Council appear strong and positive.
- The responses to the task group's questionnaire suggest that there is much more to be done to achieve military and civilian integration (as defined by the task group) at a community level. Experience of integration varies significantly

between areas; some successful and some not. Wiltshire Council could and should play a leading role in enabling successful military and civilian integration, in line with its Business Plan objective to build stronger and more resilient communities.

- It is essential that the military and the council share an understanding of, and a commitment to, community level integration.
- The task group considers a conference to bring together services and communities, to identify successful integration and develop that practice across all affected areas would be a useful addition to the MCI programme.

Next Steps

- The task group believe there is no advantage in putting any further resource into scrutinising Army Basing and Wiltshire Council's part in it. It is recognised that Army Basing was not a Wiltshire Council project and that the council's planning activity is now complete.
- There may, however, be future scrutiny work in reviewing how successful the council's efforts in improving military and civilian integration have been.

Recommendations

1. That the OSMC decide whether a) there is any further role for the Task Group at this stage of army basing; and/or b) whether at a later date scrutiny should review how successful the council's efforts to improve military and civilian integration have been.
2. That relevant division members are encouraged by the MCI Programme to follow up outstanding local section 106 investments through the relevant area boards.
3. That the Military Civilian Integration Programme hold a conference on community integration; agreeing a shared vision of successful integrated communities between the military, Wiltshire Council and affected communities.

APPENDIX 1 MILITARY CIVILIAN INTEGRATION TASK GROUP

Comment on the analysis of ten survey responses

The task group has tried to use the survey responses as evidence towards measuring outcomes against its criteria for what successful military/civilian integration looks like at community level.

First criterion: Shared provision of community, leisure, cultural and sporting facilities

The responses clearly indicate a wide-range of experience with regard to the joint use of community facilities and amenities but generally the matter of access to military facilities tend to get negative comments:

- Limited
- By invitation only
- Access to facilities until ten years ago
- Not at all (from three respondents)
- Clubs and societies not open to public (although a "yes, available" from one respondent)

There are aspirations:

- Hope to get more access as a result of army basing

And a need for improved communication:

- Access available but public largely unaware
- Need for better advertising of opportunities (two mentions)

Second criterion: Equal access to and participation in national, local and community services and facilities

There were indications of some success in this respect:

- Serving and retired military personnel play full and active role
- Representative on Parish Council
- Military Liaison Officer attends PC meetings when possible
- Attendance at specific events (e.g. Bonfire Night, Remembrance Sunday)
- Good relationship between Town Council and Deputy Garrison Commander
- Good links with Larkhill Community Partnership

But this positive experience is clearly not universal:

- More support for and involvement in local events would be welcome
- The military need to engage and show some effort to involve themselves in local community issues
- Parish Council has a liaison role but not very effective
- Pewsey Community Area Partnership recently tried to obtain military support and received no response
- Community need encouragement to accept military role in the community
- Very few invitations for village people to attend garrison events

- Closure of local facilities will limit integration opportunities

Third criterion: Joint contribution to all aspects of community and family life and development

A tendency towards negative comments in this respect:

- Investment in rebasing and perceived prioritisation of army over community needs creates or adds to a perception of an “us and them” culture
- Military preference appears to be for isolation and not integration
- Civilians respect the military's right to carry on their exercises or whatever and the military in turn do not disturb the civilian village life
- Any integration would be an improvement
- Community need encouragement to accept military role in the community
- There does not appear to be a general, systemic approach to encourage and work towards fully integrated communities

Some more positive comments were:

- Combined activities - litter picking, speed watch
- Support in times of need - e.g. adverse weather

Looking ahead

- National Armed Forces Day should create opportunities for improved longer-term relationships (three references)

SUMMARY

1. There is a wide range of experience across the different locations and it may not be wise to seek general conclusions. Different locations show different degrees of integration, acceptance and mutual respect.
2. Communications may be the exception to 1 above. Lack of communication does not further the cause of integration, risks creating suspicion and resentment on the civilian side, and misses or undermines opportunities to build relationships and successful integration.
3. Although there are indications of locations where there seems to be meaningful contact between the military and town and parish councils this is not the universal experience and there is clearly a widespread need for greater military involvement in local affairs.

Cllr Richard Britton, Chairman of MCIP Task Group
04/02/2019