

## **Wiltshire Council**

### **Cabinet**

**17 January 2017**

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**Subject: Army Basing LGA Peer Review**

**Cabinet Member: Cllr Baroness Scott of Bybrook, OBE  
Leader of the Council**

**Key Decision: N**

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#### **Executive Summary**

The LGA Peer Review of the Army Basing Programme was conducted in September 2016 at Wiltshire Council's suggestion. It recognised the strengths of the council's role in the Army Basing Programme, and confirmed the council's ability to take forward further phases. The review is recognised as best practice to be applied to other major programmes across the Defence estate.

#### **Proposal(s)**

1. To note the Peer Review of the council's role in the Army Basing Programme and its recommendations
2. To endorse that officers continue their work in supporting the Army Basing Programme, and that the Peer Review be publicised as an example of best practice nationally at an LGA seminar in May 2017

#### **Reason for Proposal(s)**

Supporting the Army Basing Plan is fundamental to key action 7 of the council's Business Plan. The council, MOD and Army have been working together to make sure that military growth is accommodated while continuing to maintain balanced communities with opportunities for veterans, military personnel, and their families, and the right services such as skills, education, and health. The LGA has recommended to the council that it publicise the findings of the review and use it as an exemplar programme which will help ensure that optimal solutions can be delivered across MOD sites both in Wiltshire and nationally.

**Dr Carlton Brand  
Corporate Director**

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### **Purpose of Report**

1. To provide members with a report on the LGA Peer Review of Army Basing and recommended way forward.

### **Relevance to the Council's Business Plan**

2. Key action 7 to build on the work of the Military Civilian Integration Partnership and maximise the benefits of the Army Basing Plan. The council, MOD and Army are working together to make sure areas with high levels of military growth continue to have balanced communities with opportunities for veterans, military personnel and their families. This includes the provision of the right services and infrastructure such as employment, skills, education, health and housing.

### **Background**

3. The Army Basing Programme (ABP) is owned by the Ministry of Defence. It followed a major review of the structure and optimum location of every unit. The Regular Army Basing Plan was announced on 5 March 2013 by the Defence Secretary.
4. It involves the relocation of units throughout the UK, completing with the final moves of units from Germany to Wiltshire (mainly to Larkhill, Bulford, Ludgershall and Tidworth). This accounts for approximately 4,000 service personnel and their families, a further 3,200 people.
5. Wiltshire Council led the steering group that oversaw the Army Basing Programme in Wiltshire. A master-planning approach in accordance with the Wiltshire Core Strategy was initiated. Through widespread public and statutory consultation, the Master Plan set out the whole extent of the MOD's development plans, which enabled the Strategic Planning Committee to initially support the Master Plan, and subsequently approve the individual applications for Service Family Accommodation. This was the first phase of the Wiltshire based Army Basing Plan. The second phase will involve monitoring the build programme, including providing an additional 1,175 school places, and preparing to welcome the units and their families to Wiltshire.

6. The end of phase 1 was achieved on 26 July 2016. It was therefore a timely point to review how Wiltshire Council had managed its commitments under this programme. Thus the LGA was requested to undertake a Peer Review of the Programme in advance of phase 1's completion, which it agreed to and conducted in late September 2016.
7. ToRs for the review (provided at **Appendix 1**) were drawn up and agreed. The LGA appointed four reviewers from various local authorities (officers and members) and an LGA chair. In brief, it looked at the following:
  - The council's response to MOD planning to ensure that not only the development would be sustainable, but helped to integrate the new soldiers and families relocating to Wiltshire into local communities and ensuring existing ones were not disadvantaged
  - Negotiation of the MOD (or other government departments') contributions towards new infrastructure etc. that the development would necessitate
  - Planning for new schools etc. for which the council will be responsible
  - Planning the delivery of additional services to an increased population
  - Engagement of the wider community in the programme. Wide-ranging stakeholders were consulted, including the MOD, (Army and the Defence Infrastructure Organisation), local councillors, schools, the council, the emergency services and the HCA.

### **Main Considerations for the Council**

8. The review was very positive. Its report was accepted with minor observations and its recommendations are being taken forward presently. The recommendations were:
9. In light of the importance of dedicated staff to coordinate the Army Basing Plan, to enter into discussions with the DIO on the future funding of these posts. DIO has recognised the value of these posts and a contribution towards costs would acknowledge their importance in delivering the Army Basing Plan.
10. To discuss with DIO alternative models for the development of service family accommodation and the advantages of such models. This could involve MoD transfer of land on a long lease to Registered Providers (RPs), with the latter procuring home construction and then holding responsibility for maintaining and managing the properties on behalf of and to a specification agreed with the DIO/MOD.
11. To review the relocation experience of 5 RIFLES to Bulford to ensure that any lessons – from partners and families affected – can be identified for the larger scale relocations planned for 2019.

12. To conduct further analysis of the economic impact of the Army Basing Plan to quantify the overall benefits to the economy and the implications for the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)
13. To ensure that the MOD surplus land review links to wider Council aims of land use, for example economic development, community use, employment sites and housing
14. To communicate with parents the rationale for the schools expansion programme that required the Council to make decisions on where new build occurs and those other schools which have undergone substantial investment.
15. That the Council should continue in its efforts to obtain Government support, in current and future school funding rounds, to address any shortfall in educational provision as a result of the Army Basing Plan
16. That the next phase of the Army Basing Plan will require the Council and the DIO/Army to manage the expectations of families arriving from Germany.
17. That the Army Basing Plan presents a potential opportunity to test new service delivery models for the communities of the Salisbury Plain Training Area.
18. To continue to monitor the MOD development of the New Employment Model for armed forces that may offer more flexible employment arrangements.
19. That it would be useful to assess and record the community benefits that have arisen from the Army Basing Plan.
20. To develop with the DIO/MoD a joint Community and Engagement Strategy for phase 2 of the ABP.
21. In feeding back to Wiltshire Council, the Review Team was very complimentary on Wiltshire Council's management in areas such as supporting the DIO through the Masterplanning process, extensively engaging stakeholders, initiating the Steering Group which was regarded as a source of continuity and good information sharing, the level of resourcing the council had allocated to the programme, the leadership skills of the council's leadership and senior management, and the innovation shown in the housing proposals.
22. It recommended that the council maintain its commitment and governance arrangements to take forward later phases of the programme.
23. In addition to implementing the recommendations set out above, the LGA suggested that Wiltshire Council publicise the findings of the review and use it as an exemplar programme in a national seminar that the LGA hosts. Wiltshire Council is currently liaising with the LGA to set up this seminar in

spring 2017 and to highlight how a masterplanning approach can deliver complex programmes to the satisfaction of the MOD, the council and local communities. This is particularly relevant now that the MOD has announced its Better Defence Estate Strategy (on 7 Nov 2016). This suggests a number of major sites which will require planning for both disposal and development to increase the operational activities in some sites across the UK. It is about to embark upon the subsequent Defence Estate Optimisation Programme, and the findings of the LGA Peer Review may be followed to help bring about comprehensive development proposals at each site, possibly with funding through the Government One Public Estate Programme, which will deliver optimal solutions in terms of meeting the MOD's operational needs, boosting economic growth, gaining support from communities and value for public investment.

### **Overview and Scrutiny Engagement**

- 24 The Military-Civilian Integration Task Group of Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee reported to the Committee on 1 November 2016 the independent peer review of the Army Basing programme and Wiltshire Council's involvement. It noted that the review included an interview with the chairman of the task group and Head of Scrutiny to understand its origins and the role scrutiny has played in Army Basing. The task group plans to meet again to review the findings of the Peer Review.

### **Safeguarding Implications**

- 25 The Peer Review report recognises the role of the Multi Area Service Hub (MASH) involving the Council's senior social care officers working with the Police, health services, mental health and so on, in promoting partnership working on safeguarding issues.

### **Public Health Implications**

- 26 Activity in the first phase of the Army Basing Plan involved: making provision for additional health and other facilities and services as required.
- 27 Wiltshire is the second most popular location for soldiers leaving the service. This could present a number of issues in the future when responding to the needs of veterans who may be suffering ill health, trauma, or mental health issues. The Council recognises many of these issues as part of its responsibility and its partners.

### **Procurement Implications**

- 28 There are no procurement implications relating to this report.

### **Equalities Impact of the Proposal**

29. An equalities impact analysis has not been specifically undertaken for the peer review as the risk score was assessed as low. Where appropriate in

Army Basing Programme activities, equalities impacts are assessed in line with equalities policy.

### **Environmental and Climate Change Considerations**

- 29 The Peer Review report recognises that environmental and climate change considerations were taken into account through the masterplanning process.

### **Risks that may arise if the proposed decision and related work is not taken**

- 30 The Peer Review report makes a number of recommendations for taking forward the ongoing Army Basing Programme as well as recommending that the council publicise its findings and use it as an exemplar programme at an LGA national seminar. If this work is not undertaken, the Army Basing Programme may not proceed as beneficially as it might, and the commitment and success of the council in its role in the programme may not be as well recognised as it merits, and may not inform the delivery of other parts of the MOD estate thereby failing to deliver optimal solutions.

### **Risks that may arise if the proposed decision is taken and actions that will be taken to manage these risks**

31. This paper does not seek an executive decision from cabinet but does seek cabinet's endorsement of continual improvement of the council's role, and management of its role, in the Army Basing Programme by implementing LGA's recommendations, and publicising the findings of the peer review nationally as an exemplar of good practice. No new significant risks have been identified as it is not anticipated that the council will need to increase its current resource commitment to the programme to achieve these things, and the findings of the Peer Review were very positive overall.

### **Financial Implications**

32. As indicated in paragraph 9, should the DIO agree to contribute to dedicated officers for the Basing Plan's coordination, this may help to offset the council's resource commitment.
33. As indicated in paragraph 12, further analysis of the implications for the council's MTFs may be undertaken to understand the potential impacts of both new income generated and any additional costs in terms of service provision. As indicated in paragraph 17, by using technology and managing service demand new models of service delivery could help manage costs.

### **Legal Implications**

34. There are no legal implications relating to this report.

### **Options Considered**

35. Not applicable to this report.

## **Conclusions**

36. THE LGA Peer Review was conducted in September 2016 at Wiltshire Council's suggestion. It was a thorough Peer Review which recognised the strengths of the council's role in the Army Basing Programme, and confirmed the council's ability to take forward further phases. The review is recognised as best practice to be applied to other major programmes across the Defence estate.

### **Alistair Cunningham (Associate Director, Economy and Planning)**

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21 December 2016

## **Appendices**

**Appendix 1 – LGA Peer Review Term of Reference**

### **Background Papers**

None