

ANNUAL STATEMENT OF THE ARMED FORCES COUNCILLOR CHAMPION
2025/2026

Councillor Graham Jones MBE

Armed Forces Councillor Champion

The Role:

Underlying all actions is the objective to raise the profile and needs of the Armed Forces community (serving personnel, both regular and reserve, their families, veterans and Cadets), within the Council and the Borough. It will be essential that the Champion is kept informed of all relevant developments through the Surrey Leaders' representatives on the Surrey Civilian Military Partnership Board and its associated Task Groups, and through the SCC Community Partnerships Team. Close liaison with the Armed Forces Covenant Officer, with particular reference to the Council's actions undertaken through the Armed Forces Covenant and the Community Covenant. Close liaison with the Executive Office on all ceremonial Armed Forces matters in which the Mayor should be involved. (e.g., ranging from Armed Forces Day flag raising, attendance at local Armed Forces events, to Freedom Marches). The Champion is encouraged to keep the local Member/s of Parliament apprised of the activity within the Borough in relation to the Armed Forces community. To liaise as appropriate with local members of the Armed Forces, in particular the appropriate Task Force Commander (appointed by 11 Infantry Brigade) to assist in understanding where help may be most needed and to enable in return a better understanding within the Armed Forces of the limitations and different responsibilities of Local Government and its decision-making processes. To be the primary focal point for liaison with businesses/local organisations within the Borough to promote the Armed Forces Corporate Covenant and encourage engagement with the Armed Forces, in particular Reservists and Cadets. To support local Cadet units by acting as the key link with the local authority, and to look to provide local ceremonial, remembrance and volunteering opportunities. To sponsor an Annual statement to the Community & Wellbeing Committee detailing the Champion's actions over the past year in respect of the Covenants.

Remembrance Day:

Mission:

To continue to support the Royal British Legion (RBL) in the planning and preparation of Epsom and Ewell Borough Council's Remembrance Parade and act as Parade Marshall.

Outcome:

The Parade is now well established and runs very efficiently. The parade continues to grow in terms of community organisations taking part and the crowds attending to watch the parade has grown significantly. The 2025 Parade saw the largest residents attendance since the parade was reformatted three years ago.

Veterans Hub

Mission:

To continue to support both Rotary and RBL in the running of the Hub.

Outcome:

To support RBL in the running of the hub. During the past year there has been a change in that Rotary have now stepped back from the running of the hub.

Outcome:

Epsom and Ewell Veterans Hub continues to be the most successful hub Surrey. While the membership is still high sadly a few Veterans have passed away and recruiting continues to be an issue. A number of organisations visit the hub, recently Surrey Police gave a most informative presentation on Fraud and Scams. During the past 12 months away visits have been organised to the Poppy Factory in Richmond and the Aviation Museum in Gatwick. Once again the ever popular Christmas Lunch was a great success.

Military Band Concert

Mission:

Produce an annual Military Band Concert at Epsom Playhouse to create awareness of our armed forces and raise funds to support RBL in Epsom and Ewell and local Charities.

Outcome

Because of the success of the first Gala concert was such a success I organised two concerts in 2025. The first, in in January performed by the Scots Guards and the second in June performed by the Band of His Majesty's Royal Marines, Collingwood. For 2026 we have two mor concerts. In February the Band of the Irish Guards and in June the Band of His Majesty's Royal Marines Portsmouth.

Armed Forces Covenant Award Scheme

Mission:

To work towards moving up from the existing Bronze award held by EEBC to the Silver Award.

Outcome:

Due to the formation of the new Unitary Councils and the incredible workload of officers within EEBC it has been decided to put this work on hold. I do continue to attend the Surrey conferences on regarding the development of the Armed Forces Scheme.

Form an Armed Forces Advisory Group

Mission:

To set up an advisory group consisting of Veterans charitable support groups from around the Borough.

Outcome:

Meetings are now taking place quarterly within EEBC. We are making slow progress with creating a complete Borough wide diary, this is because there are so many charities to work with, however it is still part of the mission.

2026 Objectives

To continue to support the Armed Forces and Veterans community in Epsom and Ewell by supporting:

Remembrance Day

Veterans Hub

Armed Forces Advisory Group

The Military Band Concert series