



Title of Report:	Armed Forces Day 2026 Update
Committee Report Submitted To:	Commemoration & Celebration Sub Committee
Date of Meeting:	04 February, 2026
For Decision or For Information	For Information
To be discussed In Committee YES/NO	YES

Linkage to Council Strategy (2021-25)	
Strategic Theme	Cohesive Leadership
Outcome	Common Purpose and Culture
Lead Officer	Democratic and Central Services Manager

Estimated Timescale for Completion	
Date to be Completed	20 June 2026

Budgetary Considerations	
Cost of Proposal	TBC c. £110,000.00 (L&D, Dec. 2025)
Included in Current Year Estimates	Estimates 2026/27
Capital/Revenue	Revenue
Code	3106
Staffing Costs	

Legal Considerations	
Input of Legal Services Required	NO
Legal Opinion Obtained	NO

Screening Requirements	Required for new or revised Policies, Plans, Strategies or Service Delivery Proposals.		
Section 75 Screening	Screening Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
	EQIA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
	Screening Completed	Yes/No	Date:

Rural Needs Assessment (RNA)	RNA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA)	Screening Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
	DPIA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:

1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to give an update on Armed Forces Day 2026 which will take place in the Borough on 20th June, 2026.

2.0 Background

2.1 At the Council Meeting on 5th December 2023 Council resolved to agree the following Notice of Motion:

“I call upon this council to submit an application to host Armed Forces Day 2026. This significant event is a great opportunity to show our support and give thanks to our military personnel and families both past and present including our veterans and cadets.

This event will attract thousands of visitors to our Beautiful Borough, supporting our local traders and tourism providers.”

2.2 A report went to Leisure & Development Committee in September 2025. Councillor Huggins requested that a monthly progress report on Armed Forces Day is brought to the Leisure and Development Committee, beginning in October 2025.

2.3 A report was provided to the Leisure & Development Committee in October 2025 outlining ongoing planning for the 2026 Armed Forces Day.

2.4 A report was provided to the Leisure & Development Committee in December 2025 outlining ongoing planning for the 2026 Armed Forces Day.

3.0 Update on Planning and Draft Armed Forces Day Programme

Armed Forces Day (AFD) will take place on Saturday 20 June 2026 which is the week before the rest of the UK and officers are working towards the preparation of a programme of activity.

Council Officials from Democratic Services and the Tourism Events Team meet monthly with senior staff from the Ministry of Defence (MOD) representing the Army, Navy and RAF. As plans progress other multi agencies will join the planning process.

Planning update for the 2026 Armed Forces Day includes:

- The monthly meeting of the Armed Forces Day (AFD) Working Group took place at the beginning of December in Coleraine Town Centre. The session included a walkthrough of potential venues and nearby assets with MOD and multi-agency partners to assess footprint options and establish the scope required to host AFD successfully next June.
- The MOD lead for Northern Ireland advised that military colleagues have begun evaluating options surrounding Christie Park and believe the site will be unable to accommodate all assets intended for display. As a result, an additional location will be required to host the civic elements alongside the Military Village. Should the event feature visiting static aircraft or similar displays, a larger area of green space and hard standing will be necessary.
- Assessments of venue suitability and capability will now be undertaken. Council Officers, together with MOD and partner agencies, are exploring potential new event spaces, including the Market Yard adjacent to Coleraine Town Centre, playing fields at Coleraine Grammar School, and locations along the River Bann near the Waterside and Christie Park.
- Council's Estates Department has also been advised of essential NI Water drainage works scheduled in Christie Park from February to May 2026. An assessment of ground conditions will therefore need to be completed with contractors in the new year to determine whether the site will be suitable as a display area in mid-June.
- Council's Tourism Events team has had discussions with the RAF lead for Northern Ireland around potential flypasts. The application has been submitted as part of the event planning process. It is likely that confirmation of available assets will not be known until approximately March 2026. The RAF will also have aircraft displaying in Inverness on the same day, therefore requests for flypasts is promising.
- Officers have commenced reviewing the format of the activities and how they can be enhanced and improved based on learnings from previous events. Recent discussions with the MOD have indicated that the RAF is likely to have a greater presence within the Military exhibition zone, alongside other services. Ulster Aviation Society has also expressed an interest in attending and has retired assets that would support an RAF ground activation programme.
- The Navy also requires the local authority to make an application for Royal Navy Aviation attendance. Depending on operational requirements, various helicopters and vessels may be able to attend. The Senior Naval Officer for NI will lend his support to the Tourism Events team's application, seeking various assets.

- The Army have confirmed that the booking request has been received for the Band of the Royal Irish (bugles, pipes and drums). Additional bands will also be requested to attend. The Gun Salute is being explored, and enhancements have been sought and the format of the Drumhead service with various arena options being assessed as part of the event planning. Representation from all Military Units in NI has been requested.
- Council Officers are preparing to explore the idea of theming the event with the possibility to tie in with the US 250th Anniversary.
- Council's Corporate PR team will commence preparing for a soft launch of the event from mid-March.
- Regarding traffic and transport, park and ride plans will be explored at Rugby Avenue along with the possibility of using Ulster University. Visitors will also be encouraged to travel by rail and clear promotion will be prepared with Translink.
- In preparing a detailed event proposal, Council Officers continue to explore all anticipated costs and revenue streams. The recent conversation with senior MOD staff confirmed that there would be Northern Ireland regional monies available for this event. An application for up to £10,000 is available from the UK Armed Forces Fund for a NI event. Council Officers will prepare this application early next year.
- There were no further updates at the January meeting of the Leisure & Development Committee.
- There was a meeting of the AFD26 Working Group on 15th January , 2026. The following areas were discussed: Format, Programme, Parade, the site, the Military Village, Stalls, Parking, Access, Transport, Security and Communication, Launch, VIP list. The Minutes of this meeting are not yet available for Members.
- The next event preparation meeting for AFD26 is on Wednesday, 4th February, 2026.

4.0 Financial Implications

A budget of £40,000 has been allocated for 2025/26 to cover activities planned by the Commemoration and Celebration Sub-Committee. It is anticipated that the majority of the spend associated with Armed Forces Day 2026 will be incurred in the 2026/27 financial year and should be factored into the estimates for that year. Estimated budget at this stage is £100K - £110K.

The breakdown of the estimated expenditure is as follows overleaf:

Ground Budget: (Entertainment / Event Planning & Safety)	£24,000
Ground Infrastructure: (Marquees / Comms / Parade setup / Catering / H&S Costs / Estates Infrastructure Setup & Amenities)	£33,000
Marketing and Promotion Costs: (Event Comms, Website, Social and Digital, Programme, Themed Branding and Compere etc)	£10,000
Staffing Costs (Estates / Operations / Events Team / Marketing / PR / Prosperity & Place Dept / Media Consultancy)	£17,500
AFD Programme Features including the logistical operation and hosting of bespoke Bands and Assets	£25,500
TOTAL (estimated exp, subject to budget reprofiling)	£110,000

5.0 Equality Implications

The Armed Forces Day Programme will be screened in accordance with Council's Policies and Procedures.

6.0 Recommendation(s)

It is recommended that Sub-Committee notes the update, with further updates being provided through the Leisure & Development Committee on a monthly basis.