

<b>Title of Report:</b>	<b>Armed Forces Day 2026 – Update</b>
<b>Committee Report Submitted To:</b>	Leisure and Development Committee
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	17 February 2026
<b>For Decision or For Information</b>	For Information
<b>To be discussed In Committee</b>	<b>NO</b>

<b>Linkage to Council Strategy (2021-25)</b>	
Strategic Theme	Leader and Champion
Outcome	
Lead Officer	Director of Corporate Services

<b>Estimated Timescale for Completion</b>	
Date to be Completed	June 2026

<b>Budgetary Considerations</b>	
Cost of Proposal	TBC
Included in Current Year Estimates	<b>YES/NO Estimates 2026/27</b>
Capital/Revenue	Revenue
Code	3106
Staffing Costs	

<b>Legal Considerations</b>	
Input of Legal Services Required	<b>NO</b>
Legal Opinion Obtained	<b>NO</b>

<b>Screening Requirements</b>	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:
Rural Needs Assessment (RNA)	Screening Completed	Yes/No	Date:
	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**

**The purpose of this report is to provide Elected Members with an information update on the preparations for Armed Forces Day 2026.**

## **2.0 Background**

2.1 At the Council Meeting on 5 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".*

## **3.0 Update on Planning and Draft Armed Forces Day Programme**

3.1 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.

3.2 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.

3.3 Planning update for the 2026 Armed Forces Day includes:

- The monthly meeting of the Armed Forces Day (AFD) Working Group took place mid-January. The session included evaluating venue choice and nearby assets with MOD and multi-agency partners, as to the best footprint and benefits to Coleraine Town Centre in hosting AFD in June.
- Assessments of venue suitability and capability are being undertaken on a weekly basis. Council Officers, in collaboration with the MOD and partner agencies, are exploring a range of potential new event spaces, including the Market Yard adjacent to Coleraine Town Centre, Harbour Commissioners' assets along the River Bann near the Waterside, and Christie Park. Unfortunately, the option of utilising the playing fields at Coleraine Grammar School has proven less viable than initially anticipated. All partner agencies remain in agreement that the core focus of the event should be retained within the town centre. As a result, all available hard-standing and green spaces adjacent to the town centre are being scoped to accommodate military assets, ensuring activities remain close to the parade route and maximise economic benefit for the town centre.
- Council's Estates Department has received an update from NI Water that the essential drainage works scheduled in Christie Park are now postponed to 2027 due to budget constraints, therefore the park land will be unaffected for now.
- Council's Tourism Events team has submitted RAF applications for flypasts. Confirmation of available assets will not be known until approximately mid-March 2026. The RAF will also have aircraft displaying in Inverness on the same day, therefore requests for flypasts remains promising.
- The Army are exploring options surrounding the old bridge for a Gun Salute and have also expressed an interest in the Army's rowing team taking on the local club in a race along the iconic River Bann.
- 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. Meeting with UAS to take place next month.

- The Navy has assisted the local authority in making 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 is also scoping the potential attendance of the RN abseil team.
- 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. Cadet numbers are now confirmed.
- Council Officers will soon outline plans for 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. The website has been updated to list the event for 2026.
- Regarding traffic and transport, park and ride plans will be explored at Rugby Avenue along with the possibility of using a partial section of Ulster University. Alternative options are being explored near Coleraine Showgrounds and the surrounds. Visitors will also be encouraged to travel by rail and clear promotion will be prepared with Translink.
- Discussion required with the Veterans Champion regarding clergy input on the day. To be facilitated by Corporate Services.
- 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. Council's Tourism Events Team along with the Funding Unit will prepare an application for up to £10,000 which is available from the UK Armed Forces Fund for a NI event. Council Officers to prepare this application within the next month.

#### **4.0 Financial Implications**

4.1 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.

The breakdown of the estimated expenditure is as follows:

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
<b>TOTAL (estimated exp, subject to budget reprofiling)</b>	<b>£110,000</b>

**5.0 Equality Implications**

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

Elected Members are asked to note the contents of this monthly report for information.