

Title of Report:	Armed Forces Day 2026 – Update
Committee Report Submitted To:	Leisure and Development Committee
Date of Meeting:	18 November 2025
For Decision or For Information	For Information
To be discussed In Committee	NO

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

Estimated Timescale for Completion	
Date to be Completed	June 2026

Budgetary Considerations	
Cost of Proposal	TBC
Included in Current Year Estimates	YES/NO 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:
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 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 met at the start of November with senior staff from the Ministry of Defence (MOD) representing the Army, Navy and RAF.
- 3.3 Ongoing planning for the 2026 Armed Forces Day includes:
- Assessments of locations and venues based on the 2018 AFD which was held in Coleraine. MOD services are willing to explore options for potential new event spaces including the Market Yard adjacent to Coleraine Town Centre, whilst also maintaining a focus along the River Bann at Christie Park.
 - Council's Tourism Events team has had discussions with the RAF lead for Northern Ireland around potential flypasts. The application is being prepared as part of the event planning process and will be submitted by the end of November. It is likely that confirmation of available assets will not be known until approximately March 2026.
 - 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 the attendance of the Royal Marines band.
 - The Army personnel in attendance at the recent planning confirmed that at this stage the booking request has been made for the Band of the Royal Irish (bugles, pipes and drums). Additional bands will also be requested to attend. The Gun Salute will be explored, and enhancements have been sought and the format of the Drumhead service will be agreed as planning progresses.

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.

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
TOTAL (estimated exp, subject to budget reprofiling)	£110,000

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 report for Information.