

Defence Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS)

Summary:

North Norfolk District Council (NNDC) signed the Norfolk Armed Forces Covenant at an official ceremony on 7 March 2012.

To further demonstrate the Council's commitment to the Armed Forces, NNDC published its own Armed Forces Covenant Pledge in February 2022. The pledge included a commitment to achieve the Bronze, Silver and Gold Defence Employer Recognition Scheme (DERS) awards.

The Defence Employer Recognition Scheme (DERS) encourages employers to support defence and the Armed Forces Community and inspire others to do the same. The scheme encompasses bronze, silver and gold awards for employer organisations that pledge, demonstrate or advocate support to defence and the armed forces community, and align their values with the Armed Forces Covenant.

NNDC successfully achieved the DERS Bronze Award in 2022.

Registration for Expressions of Interest in respect of the DERS Silver Award opened on 10th January 2023. The closing date for completed applications is 19th April 2023.

To achieve the DERS Silver Award, eight essential criteria must be met.

The achievement of at least one of the essential criteria will require a change in policy as it requires a commitment to provide at least five days additional leave for Reservist training. This can be paid or unpaid.

Options considered:

The North Norfolk District Council Armed Forces Covenant Pledge included a commitment to obtain the DERS Bronze, Silver and Gold Awards.

Conclusions:

Therefore no other options have been considered.

The achievement of the DERS Silver Award will further demonstrate NNDC's gratitude, support for and commitment to defence and to the residents of the Armed Forces Community that live in or visit North Norfolk.

Recommendations: To give authority to the Lead Officer and the Armed Forces member Champion to liaise with HR and other relevant internal services to identify and implement any relevant changes to policy and process to ensure the achievement of at least the eight essential criteria.

To agree to the submission of the DERS Silver Award application by the application closing date of 19th April 2023.

Reasons for Recommendations: To enable NNDC to successfully obtain the DERS Silver Award.

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS AS REQUIRED BY LAW

(Papers relied on to write the report, which do not contain exempt information and which are not published elsewhere)

North Norfolk Armed Forces Covenant Pledge
DERS Silver Award – essential and desirable criteria.

Cabinet Member(s) Cllr. John Toye	Ward(s) affected All wards in North Norfolk
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1. **Defence Employer Recognition Scheme**
 - 1.1 The Defence Employer Recognition Scheme (DERS) encourages employers to support defence and inspire others to do the same. The scheme encompasses bronze, silver and gold awards for employer organisations that pledge, demonstrate or advocate support to defence and the armed forces community, and align their values with the Armed Forces Covenant.
 - 1.2 Following the formal adoption of North Norfolk Armed Forces Pledge at a meeting of Full Council in February 2022, NNDC successfully obtained the Bronze Award in May 2022.
 - 1.3 The eight essential criteria which must be achieved in order to obtain the DERS Silver Award are:
 - 1.31 Organisations must have signed the Armed Forces Covenant
 - 1.32 The employer must already hold a valid DERS Award at Bronze Level
 - 1.33 The employer must proactively demonstrate that Defence People are not unfairly disadvantaged as part of their recruitment and selection process.
 - 1.34 The employer must actively ensure that their workforce is aware of their positive policies towards Defence People issues and have an internally publicised and positive Human Resources (HR) policy for Reserve Forces.

- 1.35 Employers should employ at least one individual from the Armed Forces Covenant category; Veteran /Service Leaver, Reserve Forces, Spouses/ Partners or Cadet Force Adult Volunteer.
- 1.36 Within the context of Reserves the employer must have demonstrated support to mobilisations or have a framework in place.
- 1.37 The employer must provide at least 5 days additional leave for Reserve training. This can be paid or unpaid.
- 1.38 The employer must not have been the subject of any negative PR or media activity that could cause embarrassment to Defence.

- 1.4 Examples of the types of activity and evidence required to demonstrate achievement of the essential criteria have been received. It is considered that to achieve the DERS Silver Award a change in HR policy and recruitment process may be required in respect of 1.33, 1.34, 1.36 and 1.37.

- 1.5 Initial discussions have already been held with officers in HR and Communications. Following Cabinet approval there is sufficient time, to identify and implement the required actions to meet the essential criteria for the submission of the DERS Silver Award application by the deadline of 19th April 2023.

- 1.6 NNDC will receive support and guidance throughout the process from a dedicated officer from the DERS.

- 1.7 Once the DERS Silver Award application has been submitted it will be considered by a selection board at national level for gold awards and regional level for silver awards. The selection boards will be a panel chaired by a senior military officer and they will consider each nomination against the award criteria. Organisations selected for gold and silver awards will be formally notified in writing and invited to the relevant award event.

2. Conclusion

- The achievement of the DERS Silver Award will further demonstrate NNDCs gratitude, support and commitment as an employer to Defence and to residents of the Armed Forces Community that live in or visit North Norfolk.
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3. Implications and Risks

- 3.1 Reputational risk, it is understood that North Norfolk District Council is the only Council in Norfolk that has not achieved the Silver DERS Award.

4. Financial Implications and Risks

- 4.1 A small number of activities that would be implemented to meet the essential criteria may have a financial implication such the promotion of job vacancies on the Armed Careers Transition Partnership and Forces Families for Jobs websites. Any actions with a potential financial implication, will be identified, discussed and the budget agreed prior to being submitted as evidence in the DERS Silver Award application.

5. Sustainability

5.1 Once the DERS Silver Award is achieved compliance will be monitored. It is envisaged that an application will be made for the DERS Gold Award in 2024.

6. Equality and Diversity

6.1 The achievement of the DERS Silver Award will support the Councils commitment to Equality and Diversity

7. Section 17 Crime and Disorder considerations

7.1 There are no crime and disorder considerations