

CABINET

COUNCILLOR SOPHIE PORTER  
DEPUTY LEADER AND HEALTHY  
COMMUNITIES AND ACTIVE LIVES PORTFOLIO  
HOLDER  
REPORT NO. ED2608

2 JUNE 2025

KEY DECISION: YES

### ARMED FORCES DAY NATIONAL EVENT 2026 - UPDATE

#### SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

This report updates Cabinet on progress with planning for the Armed Forces Day National Event 2026 and sets out a revised budget position required to ensure the event is delivered safely and successfully.

Rushmoor Borough Council, working in partnership with the Ministry of Defence (MOD) and local stakeholders, has secured the opportunity to host this prestigious national occasion, bringing significant economic, social and community benefits to the borough.

Cabinet considered a report (No. PG2541: *Proposal to Accept a Government Grant*) in November 2025 and accepted the opportunity to host the event. It agreed to underwrite the cost and approved proposals for seeking sponsorship to cover the costs of running the event.

Cabinet received a further report (No. ED260: *Armed Forces Day National Event 2026 - Update*) in April 2026 which set out revised cost projections and agreed to underwrite an anticipated budget gap.

As planning has progressed further and police and forces leads have become more involved, a more thorough understanding has been reached on the safety, security and specialist infrastructure required to deliver an event of national significance. This has resulted in an updated forecast budget that more accurately reflects the safety and logistical demands involved.

Considerable commercial sponsorship and in-kind support have already been secured, with further opportunities still being actively pursued. However, at the time of writing, there is a funding gap between current income and expenditure of circa £431,736 which the Council will need to underwrite if the event is to be delivered.

#### **Cabinet is recommended to:**

- Note the current financial position and agree to underwrite the current forecast budget gap of £431,736 to be funded from any forecast underspend in the events budget, broader service budget savings, the community recovery fund and as a last resort the stability and resilience reserve.
- Agrees that a contingency of 10% be added to the forecast event budget

- Notes the proposals for seeking additional income to cover the remaining costs and close the budget gap.
- Request Officer to identify options to achieve the required level of savings following the budget outturn, MTFS review and final event account.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1. Following a successful bid, Rushmoor Borough Council was selected to host the Armed Forces Day National Event, working in close partnership with the MOD, Army Headquarters South East, Aldershot Garrison as well as public-sector and community stakeholders.
- 1.2. Delivering the event is a significant undertaking. It is larger and more complex than any event previously organised by the Council. It requires additional resources, specialist expertise, and strong collaboration with local, regional and national agencies and partners to ensure a safe and successful event.
- 1.3. As preparations have progressed, a clearer and more detailed understanding has been reached of the requirements necessary to deliver a safe, well-managed and high-quality national event. This has been shaped by the appointed Event Director with the support of events management specialists and input from the military and other public sector partners including the Police.
- 1.4. The report sets out the requirements and the associated financial implications and seeks Cabinet's approval of the financial approach and next steps to enable continued planning and safe delivery of the event.

## **2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1. The offer to host the Armed Forces Day National Event in June 2026 was set out in Cabinet Report No. PG2541 *Proposal to Accept a Government Grant* in November 2025. Cabinet accepted the opportunity to host the event, agreed to underwrite the cost and approved proposals for seeking sponsorship to recover the costs of running the event.
- 2.2. Cabinet received a further report (No. ED260: Armed Forces Day National Event 2026 - Update.) in April 2026 which set out revised cost projections at that time and agreed to underwrite the revised anticipated budget gap.

## **3. DETAILS OF THE PROPOSAL**

### **General**

- 3.1. The event programme includes a weekend of activity as well as events and activities leading up to the event. The main events will be hosted on Queens Parade and along Queens Avenue in Aldershot.

- 3.2. The opportunity to host the 2026 event represents a unique and high-profile opportunity for Rushmoor. It is likely to attract tens of thousands of visitors across the weekend and attract considerable media coverage raising the profile of the borough.
- 3.3. The programme is intended to deliver on the submitted proposal as agreed by the MOD. This includes a high-quality, inclusive programme of activity that celebrates the Armed Forces community, supports national and local partners, and meets the expectations of a nationally designated Armed Forces Day event, while also reflecting Rushmoor's unique military heritage and community links.
- 3.4. As well as supporting key council priorities, the event is likely to generate economic benefits from the visitors attracted to the borough and boost the local economy both in the short term (during the event) but also in the medium to long term for visitors encouraged to visit the borough by increasing its profile.

### **Resource and expertise**

- 3.5. Given the scale, profile and multi-faceted nature of the event, external project management and support has been secured. This includes an Event Director, with experience in running previous Armed Forces Day events. Support has also been secured from an event management company – Richmond Event Management Ltd – with considerable experience of delivering events at scale, again including previous Armed Forces Day events.
- 3.6. The event requires a wide range of partner expertise, particularly the military and also the Police and other agencies. This is provided through a range of forums and working groups including the Safety Advisory Group. In particular, input from the Army and the Police is informing the security response for the event.

### **Budget forecasts**

- 3.7. The aim for the Council in hosting the event was for it to be delivered on a cost neutral basis, with the budget needed to run the event secured from grants and commercial sponsorship. To guide the process, a package of sponsorship opportunities has been developed. This sets out a range of opportunities for businesses to support the event ranging from 'Platinum' (£100,000) to 'Bronze' (£20,000). Smaller, more bespoke packages have also been developed to help secure income.
- 3.8. Using this framework, considerable commercial sponsorship has been secured to date with Platinum support from Farnborough-based QinetiQ and local business BAE as well as significant contributions from other local businesses including smaller contributions from SMEs. Current income is set out in Annex 1.

- 3.9. The council is very grateful to all those businesses that have so far agreed to support the event. Sponsorship currently totals £380,000.
- 3.10. As planning has progressed key personnel from the Armed Forces and the Police have joined the planning team. Their input into security requirements, and logistical needs of the Armed Forces Day National Event has ensured become clearer, the projected budget has been revised to reflect what is required for an event of this scale and nature given the national security rating. See exempt appendix 1 for the detail of the budget.
- 3.11. The updated event budget estimate of £943,436 reflects the infrastructure and safety measures required to deliver an event of this national significance to the expected standard.
- 3.12. The revised budget includes assumptions on the following:
- Event management: the external expertise needed to run an event of this scale and significance
  - Infrastructure: fencing, barriers, utilities, toilets, fuel, water and other costs
  - Policing – anticipated external policing cost
  - Military assets – a proportion of Garrison troop welfare costs
  - Security: staff and CCTV
  - Traffic: traffic management, signage, parking and public transport options
  - Comms and PR: including the event programme
  - Stage and AV: includes lighting and site PA system
  - Ticketing: includes staff at key entrances
  - Volunteer programme
  - Entertainment, programming and activities: includes community and cultural zone activities and performances supported by Arts Council England grants.
- 3.13. A significant proportion of these costs relate to the considerable security and logistical costs associated with running a national event. These include costs related to infrastructure, policing, security and ticketing.
- 3.14. Some items could still change in response to event safety requirements. This includes the costs of Policing and other agencies representation at the event. This will be confirmed in liaison with the Police and other agencies.
- 3.15. There could be further support in kind which still might reduce some of the event costs. There is considerable support in kind being provided by Army Headquarters South East and Aldershot Garrison.
- 3.16. There also remain opportunities to secure further income to reduce the residual funding gap:
- 3.16.1. Engaging with the MOD to secure further support for mitigating the security and logistical costs of running the event.

- 3.16.2. Ongoing targeted approaches for commercial income to businesses and other partners, building on existing Council, partner and stakeholder relationships.
- 3.17. Income is being secured by charging traders at the event, including charities, catering and attraction providers, and charging visitors for priority parking. The current forecast income from the event is £40,000.
- 3.18. When grants have been taken into account the unfunded budget required is currently circa £423,900.
- 3.19. The project team will continue to apply strong financial controls, use competitive procurement where appropriate, and regularly monitor spend against budget. Costs will be challenged to ensure they are necessary, proportionate and represent best value, with opportunities for in-kind support and shared resources actively pursued.
- 3.20. The National Armed Forces Day Member Working Group is meeting monthly and will monitor the budget and budget variances.
- 3.21. Cabinet are therefore requested to agree the underwriting of the budget gap of circa £423,400.
- 3.22. Given the limited number of weeks to the event and the need to focus on that it is also proposed to put in place a contingency of 10% to avoid the need to bring a further report to Cabinet.

### **Alternative options**

- 3.23. **Withdrawing from holding the event:** This option was discussed and discounted by the National Armed Forces Day Member Working Group, which noted the considerable reputational risk associated with withdrawal, given that Cabinet has already accepted the opportunity to host the event.
- 3.24. **Scale back the event:** The programme and scale of the event only include activities identified in the approved bid. Some elements of the programme including the stage and performances are being actively managed to reduce costs.

### **Consultation**

- 3.25. The budget has been developed in consultation with external support from event management specialists.

## **4. IMPLICATIONS (of proposed course of action)**

### **Risks**

- 4.1. Delivering a national-scale event presents a number of risks, primarily associated with security, finance, operational delivery and reputation. These

risks increase in complexity due to the size of the event, expected visitor numbers and the involvement of national partners, including the MOD.

- 4.2. A recent increase in the terrorism threat level has highlighted the security and safety elements of the event that need to be appropriately resourced.
- 4.3. There is a financial risk that costs may increase further or that anticipated commercial sponsorship and income levels are not fully realised. This risk is being mitigated by financial controls, active sponsorship engagement, and regular budget monitoring through the project governance structure.
- 4.4. The National Armed Forces Day Member Working Group will monitor the project risk register including financial risks.

### **Legal Implications**

- 4.5. There are no specific legal implications arising from the content of this report.

### **Financial and Resource Implications:**

- 4.6. The current Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) approved by Council on 26 February 2026 did not include any provision for the costs of the Armed Forces Day event beyond the underwrite of the original £100k. The current MTFS projections are that there are insufficient funds to support the Council over the coming four-year period. Therefore, if additional funds from the Council are required to support this event, the Council will be worsening the overall financial projections.
- 4.7. Subject the 2025/26 Outturn and MTFS Review additional savings will need to be sought to mitigate the impact of the Council financially supporting this event.

### **Equalities Impact Implications**

- 4.8. An Equalities Impact Assessment screener completed for Report No. PG2541 found mostly positive impacts, with any negative impacts to be mitigated by designing the event to be inclusive and accessible for all, engaging all sections of the community and celebrating the diversity of Rushmoor's communities.

## **5. CONCLUSIONS**

- 5.1. Hosting the Armed Forces Day National Event 2026 presents a significant opportunity for Rushmoor to celebrate its proud military history, showcase its communities, and attract national attention. It is also a significant undertaking for a small borough and needs to be resourced appropriately.
- 5.2. External expertise has determined the resources needed to deliver a safe and successful event. Whilst considerable external funding has been received, there is currently a significant gap between the income and

expenditure and if the event is to proceed the Council will need to underwrite the gap.

**LIST OF APPENDICES/ANNEXES:**

Exempt Annex 1: Budget summary income and expenditure

**BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:**

None

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