Flag Raising Ceremony 20th June 2022 – Town Mayor's Speech

Good Morning,

We would like to welcome you all to the 2022 Flag Raising Ceremony as we celebrate Armed Forces week and thank you for taking the time to join us here today.

Firstly, I would like to pay tribute to the Corps of the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (REME) for the important role that they have played in our town for over a century. In 2015 they were awarded the "Freedom of the Town" at the Garrison Festival, and it is important that we still recognise this event as a part of this town's heritage.

It is only fitting that we should give recognition to the tremendous support, sacrifice and commitment carried out by our Armed Forces (Royal Navy, British Army and Royal Air Force), both veterans and present service men and women, as well as people serving from across the Commonwealth. Also to the amazing work carried out by the volunteers to the Armed Forces, such as the Royal British Legion and the Armed Forces Charity SSAFA in which they provide support to the forces and their families, some of which still live here in military housing and also recognition to these families, who while their loved ones are away support each other and carry on with their daily lives – sometimes for extended periods of time.

As a community, we are so fortunate to benefit from Whitehill and Bordon's military history, which spans over 100 years. Our history has grown up centred around the Bordon Garrison, with the first REME soldiers' arrivals in 1945 and creation of the School of Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (SEME) in 1961.

Troops first occupied the Bordon barracks in 1903, with the camp gradually building over time as the number of barracks was extended.

The town supported hundreds of troops throughout the 2 world wars and played a pivotal role in "Operation Overlord", also known as the D Day landings when over 156,000 joint American, British and Canadian forces landed on 5 beaches along a heavily fortified stretch of the Normandy coastline.

There are so many links between our town of Whitehill and Bordon and the wonderful Armed Forces and Reserves communities, housing the Army Fire Service and its horses and drivers since 1906, the Church of England Soldiers Institute in 1904, arrival of the Canadian Forestry Corps in 1918 and a rich history of providing military training and education that lives on amongst serving members of the Forces to this day. The Town's War Memorial – a Book of Remembrance is held in our local library to commemorate local people who fell in both world wars and subsequent conflict.

In spite of the relocation of the bulk of the towns' military to RAF Lyneham around 2015, which was celebrated by our town's farewell event on 27th June 2015, we still have some significant Army presence in our town, situated at the Longmoor Training Camp, the largest single firing range in the UK. Cadets from both the Army and Airforce. form part of a total of 130,000 young cadets across the country to date in 3000 different locations.

Armed Forces Day signifies the commencement of a week of celebration and remembrance. It is an opportunity to show support for the Armed Forces community and service families. In 2022, Armed Forces Day will take place on Saturday 25th June. Today's Flag Raising Event that we are gathered for is the start of those celebrations.

As we stand silently and still together, we offer a period of silent contemplation, prayer, reflection and thanks to remember those that have been injured or died and the debt that we owe them and their families as a community.

Please can I ask you to join me in a minutes' silence.

TIME 1 MINUTES' SILENCE

Cllr Leeroy Scott – Town Mayor