THE ARMED FORCES
COVENANT FUND TRUST

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES
12 December 2025

Minutes of the Trustee meeting held 09.30am on 12 December 2025 online via Teams and in person at the Victory Services Club, London

Name	Initials	Category of Trustee/Staff/Observer	Attendance
Trustees			
Hans Pung (Chair)	HP	Independent Trustee	In person
Wendy Cartwright	WC	Independent Trustee	In person
Victoria Wilson (Deputy Chair)	VW	Independent Trustee	In person
Frances Nash	FN	Independent Trustee	In person
Jonathan Bell	JB	Independent Trustee	Apologies
Lieutenant General Sir Nick Pope	NPo	Cobseo Trustee	Virtual
Major General James Senior	JS	MoD Trustee	Apologies
Zoe Bishop	ZB	MoD Trustee	Virtual
James Parker	JP	HMT Trustee	Virtual
Peter Kellam	PK	DA Trustee (Wales)	Virtual
Nick Parton	NPa	DA Trustee (Scotland)	Virtual
Lesley O'Rourke	LOR	DA Trustee (Northern Ireland)	Apologies
Sarah Clewes	CM	Family Federation Trustee	Virtual
Anisha Worbs	AWo	OVA Trustee	Virtual from item 2
Others			
Hayley Marsden	HM	Partner, Wrigleys Solicitor	Virtual for item 2
James Greenrod	JG	Observer	Apologies
Maj. Mike Keighley	MK	Observer	Virtual
Gary Lashko	GL	Observer – future Independent Trustee	In person
Richard Harries	RH	Observer – future Independent Trustee	In person
Amanda Struby	ASTr	Observer – sponsor department	Virtual
Anna Wright	AWr	Staff - CEO	In person
Carol Stone	CS	Staff – Director of Grants	In person
Matthew Hall	MH	Observer – future Director of Finance & Operations	In person
Claire Rick	CR	Staff - Director of Strategy	In person
Martin Dyson	MD	Staff - Head of Risk and Compliance	Virtual
Steven Inman	SI	Staff – Head of Strategic Grants and Relationships	In person
Carol Hartley	CH	Staff – Grants Manager	Virtual
Emma Pagan-Skelley	EPS	Staff – Grants Officer	Virtual
Alex Stainer	AS	Staff – Corporate Governance Manager and Minute taker	In person

Item No.	Item	Action
1 1.1	**Meeting Opening** **Welcome and Introductions** Chair opened the meeting and welcomed Gary Lashko and Richard Harries as observers and future independent trustees. It was noted that it was WC's last meeting. Apologies were received and accepted from JS, JB and LOR. The meeting was quorate in line with the Articles of Association.	

1.2	**Declarations of Interest** It was confirmed that all declaration of interest forms had been received for those attending the meeting. The following conflicts were declared: CH declared an interest in item 5.1 Family Focus due to a relative being CEO of one of the applying organisations (9051). CH had removed herself from the moderation stage and had no decision-making role at the meeting. No mitigation was required during the meeting. AWo declared an interest in item 5.6 Op Fortitude due to being the Director of the OVA. The applications had been through the independent assessment and internal moderation process, and it was not a solicited bid, so no mitigation was required during the meeting. HP declared an interest in item 6.4 Chairs Action due to being the Chair. HP would not take part in the vote for this item. VW declared an interest in item 6.5 Appointment of Deputy Chair due to being the nominated candidate for the role. VW would not take part in the vote for this item.	
1.3	**Approve minutes of the last Board meeting held on 24 October 2025** (Annex 1) **The Board approved** the minutes as a true and accurate record of the meeting.	
1.4	**Review and receive update on actions arising** (Annex 2) The Board reviewed the current outstanding actions and updated actions log.	
2 2.1	**Legal Update by Wrigleys Solicitors**, delivered by Hayley Marsden, Partner. HM updated the board on the changes over the last year and upcoming changes to be aware of. [AWo joined the meeting]	
2.2	The Board discussed: • Investigating links between the Civil Society Covenant and Armed Forces Covenant. • Challenges from charities/bodies that don't have the time or resources to be involved in governance and how to support them.	
2.3	HM was thanked and left the meeting.	
3 3.1	**Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust** **CEOs Report for noting** (Annex 3) AWr ran through the report and highlighted the information in the enclosures.	
3.2	**Feedback from Team Day** (November 2025) FN fed back from her attendance at the Team Day in Manchester in November. FN praised the mix of social and working aspects of the gathering and noted how dispersed the team was across the country. The day had included a preview of the Trust's 10th anniversary film, a practical AI session, presentations from grant holders in the Northwest, and a staff reflection session following on from the work on communication styles at the last team day. It was suggested that Trustees invited to future Team days were asked to deliver a session.	
4 4.1	**OVA Briefing on Veterans Strategy and Valour** AWo briefed the Board on the recent Veterans Strategy and Valour programme. The Trust would be part of the delivery partners forum for the Veterans Strategy.	
4.2	Valour The Board discussed: • The challenge of the size of the geographic area and the spread of funding. • Understanding the Trust's role in the process and the management fee being received. • The Trust would facilitate the usual application and assessment process with the fundable options presented to the panel and then the Minister to choose from. • Concerns that this was a different way of working and more detailed discussion would take place at the next Audit and Risk Committee meeting, to feed into the next Board meeting and the review built into the MoU.	Agenda

	• Differing needs between veterans and their families to serving personnel and their families, and not assuming what will work for one will work for the other.	
5	**Grant Decisions**	
	Covenant Fund - Supporting those in need of special consideration	
5.1	**Family Focus** (Annex 4)	
5.1.1	CH presented the paper and the recommendations for the programme and highlighted the 3 highest scoring applications in Wales and the suggested additional conditions due to geographic spread. CH clarified that the programme was looking for applications from organisations who were dealing with issues close to service and gave the flexibility for the organisations to define this.	
5.1.2	**The Board approved** the recommended seventeen applications at the full requested amount for an overall total of £1,534,329 **The Board approved** two enhanced funding applications. The Board deferred application 9094 for £100,000 for revisions to be made. **The Board delegated** the decision to award £100,000 to application 9094 to the Executive, subject to revisions being made to the application and if the score remained at 8 or increased.	
5.2	**Covenant Fund - Understanding complex problems and identifying solutions** **NOVA NI** (Annex 5)	
5.2.1	MD presented the paper and recommendation of a revised score of 8 for the application.	
5.2.2	**The Board approved** the solicited grant to application 9144 for the NOVA Northern Ireland project, at a reduced sum of £420k, taking account of the interim grant of £30k awarded at the previous meeting.	
5.3	**Covenant Fund - Research on the impacts of service life on children** (Northumbria University) (Annex 6)	
5.3.1	MD presented the paper and recommendation, explaining the time extension of a year was to build on research that had already taken place and to make up for time lost due to waiting for Ministry of Defence Research Ethics Committee (MODREC) approval. It was noted that MODREC delays would be built into future projects.	
5.3.2	The Board discussed: • Concerns about the value from the initial spend, input vs output. • The social determinants on children were not being researched by other organisations.	
5.3.3	**The Board approved** an award of £30k to the Research on the Impacts of Service Life on Children project at Northumbria University, to enable it to continue for another year.	
5.4	**Covenant Fund - Enriching support for those living with acquired brain injury** (approval of a programme on a page/invitation to solicit an application) (Annex 7)	
5.4.1	MD presented the paper and recommendation explaining that the support would be complementary to medical intervention.	
5.4.2	The Board discussed: • Lack of reference in the paper to the 2022 NICE guidance on brain injury, and whether there was a requirement when delivering medical intervention and not medical treatment. • Size of the award to a small team and capacity of the charity. • The gap that was being addressed with no other organisations working in the space with such broad knowledge, which supported the decision for a solicited bid.	
5.4.3	**The Board approved** the recommendation to invite […………….]to apply for a solicited grant of up to £250k. [Information has been withheld here in line with the requirements of section 43(2) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 – prejudice to commercial interests. A public authority is entitled to withhold information under this provision where disclosure of that information would be likely to prejudice the commercial interests of any persons or organisations, including the AFCFT itself.]	
5.4.4	The application would be brought to the March Board meeting for consideration.	

5.5 5.5.1	**Enhancing sector resilience pilot programme** – approval of a programme on a page (Annex 8) MD presented the paper and recommendation for a pilot of a small, focussed, grant programme to support organisations working within the Armed Forces sector to become more resilient.	
5.5.2	The Board discussed: • The need for this support within the sector. • CICs were excluded from the pilot to manage application numbers but would expect them to be eligible if the programme was taken forward. • How the impact and return on investment would be measured and how to know if the investment would give longevity and value for money, which may require a longer study than the Trust had done previously. • Concerns about how the programme would weigh against the normal grant making activity. • The reputational risk of giving money to some organisations but not others.	
5.5.3	**The Board approved** the pilot.	
5.6 5.6.1	**OVA - Op FORTITUDE Top Up funding** (Annex 9) SI presented the paper and recommendation.	
5.6.2	**The Board approved** distribution of £35,187 to Op FORTITUDE to support an expected surge in referrals over the winter period.	
6 6.1 6.1.1	**Governance and Finance** **Briefing on Charities SORP changes** (Annex 10) MH presented the paper for information. The Board noted the paper.	
6.2 6.2.1	**Committee updates**: • **People** 12/11 minutes (Annex 11) The minutes of the meeting had been circulated with the papers. The Chair of the Committee, WC, had nothing additional to report.	
6.2.2	• **Grants** 27/11 minutes (Annex 12) The minutes of the meeting had been circulated with the papers. The Chair of the Committee, HP highlighted the awards that had been made and thanked the grant committee members for their input.	
6.3 6.3.1	**Policy Review and approvals**: • **Social Media policy** – recommended by People Committee (Annex 15) CR presented the revised policy for approval. The Board suggested minor amendments and highlighted a relevant case from item 2 for consideration.	
6.3.2	**The Board approved** the policy subject to the above comments.	
6.4 6.4.1	**Standing Order for Chair's Action** (Annex 16) HP abstained from voting. People Committee recommended the revised resolution for Board approval	
6.4.2	**The Board approved** the resolution for Chair's Action.	
6.5 6.5.1	**Review and appointment of Deputy Chair** (Annex 17) People Committee recommended the revised role profile for Deputy Chair for Board approval. **The Board approved** the role profile.	
6.5.2	The People Committee, following nomination by the Chair, recommended the term of the current post holder, Victoria Wilson, be extended by 1-year, to reflect the change to a 2-year term.	

6.5.3	VW abstained from voting. **The Board approved** Victoria Wilson as Deputy Chair for 1 year.	
6.6 6.6.1	**Vote of thanks for outgoing Independent Trustee Wendy Cartwright** HP, on behalf of the Board and Trust, extended a vote of thanks to Wendy Cartwright whose term of office ended at the close of the meeting. HP ran through highlights of her tenure and presented her with a token of appreciation. WC gave a short speech and thanked all.	
6.7 6.7.1	**Appointment of Independent Trustees** HP gave an overview of the process undertaken and a brief portrait of the nominated trustees.	
6.7.2	**The Board appointed** Gary Lashko as an Independent trustee, for an initial period of 2 years, subject to checks. **The Board appointed** GL as Chair of People Committee.	
6.7.3	**The Board appointed** Richard Harries as independent trustee, for an initial period of 2 years, subject to checks. **The Board appointed** RH as Chair of Grants Committee.	
6.7.4	The date of their official appointments and start of their terms of office would be confirmed once checks were finalised.	AS
6	**Dates of the next Board meetings**: 13 February 2026 – Annual Trustees' Meeting 20 March 2026 12 June 2026 11 September 2026 23 October 2026 11 December 2026 5 February 2027 – Annual Trustees' meeting 19 March 2027 There being no further business the Chair closed the meeting at 12.40	
	There had been no written resolutions made since the last meeting.	

Grants Awarded

Family Focus

Request ID	Name	Project Title	Project Location	Awarded
9064	Brooke House Health and Wellbeing Centre	The Circle of Resilience	Northern Ireland	£ 149,505
9126	SSAFA, the Armed Forces charity	RESOLVE: Building Resilience and Empowerment	Scotland	£ 69,100
9118	Bulldogs Boxing & Community Activities	Resilient Families, Brighter Futures	Wales	£ 99,624
9111	Cardiff City FC Community Foundation	Families Rising Strong Together	Wales	£ 75,000
9104	Cardiff Council Advice Services	Advice for Armed Forces Families	Wales	£ 55,121
9085	Community Drug and Alcohol Recovery Services	The Stronger Together 360 project	England	£ 63,641
9108	Suffolk Family Carers	Wounded, injured, sick- family support	England	£ 93,250
9095	Veterans Outreach Support	Resilient Together: Holistic Support	England	£ 94,491
9107	Alliance for Better Care	Stronger Families, Clearer Pathways	England	£ 99,937
9102	Carers Plus Yorkshire Ltd	With Honour We Care	England	£ 72,637

9133	Citizens Advice Hull and East Riding	Forces Families Money Advice Project	England	£ 100,000
9093	Citizens Advice Telford and The Wrekin	Citizens Advice Forces Family Support	England	£ 91,102
9122	Cumbria, Northumberland, Tyne & Wear (CNTW) NHS Foundation Trust	Family Financial Support Pathway	England	£ 99,994
9101	Defence Medical Welfare Service (DMWS)	Armed Forces Family Support	England	£ 93,589
9123	RAF Association	Forces Families' Resilience Programme	England	£ 100,000
9117	Hull KR Foundation	Stronger, Together	England	£ 85,565
9094 *	Armed Forces Community HQ CIC	The Invisible Ranks Project.	UK-wide	£ 100,000
9116	Combat Stress	Stronger Together.	UK-wide	£ 91,773
			Total awarded	**£ 1,634,329**

* The application from AFCHQ CIC (9094) will be accounted for as a commitment of up to £100K, subject to conditions as documented in the paper, rather than deferred

NOVA NI

Request ID	Name	Project Title	Project Location	Awarded
9144	Forces Employment Charity	NOVA NI	NI	£ 420,000
			Total awarded	**£ 420,000**

Research on the impacts of service life on children

Request ID	Name	Project Title	Project Location	Awarded
TBC	Northumbria University	Military Children' Promote, Protect, Prevent - extension	UK Wide	£ 30,000
			Total awarded	**£ 30,000**

OVA - Op FORTITUDE Top Up funding

Request ID	Name	Project Title	Project Location	Awarded
TBC	Riverside Housing	OP FORTITUDE	UK-wide	£ 35,187
			Total awarded	**£ 35,187**