

Requisitioned Items

Cabinet Member: All

Division and Local Member: All

Lead Officer: Scott Wooldridge – Monitoring Officer

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1. 100 years of women County Councillors

- 1.1 The following requisitioned item will be proposed by Cllr Bill Revans and seconded by Cllr Christine Lawrence:

That Somerset County Council remembers that the first woman Somerset County Councillor Miss Norah Fry (later Mrs Norah Cooke Hurle MA LLD) was elected to the council in 1918. She was also elected as the first woman Alderman in 1938 and was one of the first women JPs in the country.

Norah Fry was an advocate for better services for people with learning disabilities. She was a campaigner for appropriate education for children with disabilities and on the shortage of housing for people with learning disabilities.

Council recognises the huge contribution made by Councillor Fry to the county, especially her contributions to the health and education of the county through Norah Fry Hospital and Sandhill House Hospital.

It is recommended that the Council resolves to recognise the contribution of Councillor Fry, and commemorate the contribution of women to the council over the last 100 years, by asking the Chief Executive to work with the Chair of the Council to identify and name a prominent meeting room after her.

2. Opposing the closure of Norton Manor Camp and relocation of 40 Commando out of Taunton Deane

- 2.1 The following requisitioned item will be proposed by Cllr Simon Coles and seconded by Cllr Alan Wedderkopp:

Somerset County Council notes that:

- closure of Norton Manor Camp, with expected disposal in 2028, was announced by the Secretary of State for Defence in November 2016 in 'A Better Defence Estate', with a key objective to raise £1Billion from land sales, including the statement "opportunities to release value from surplus land and property must be maximised";

- the County Gazette reported “False Hope” ^{[1][1]} after the Defence Secretary said in Parliament on 22/10/18 that 40Commando would remain in Taunton “for a long time into the future” but his Ministry of Defence(MOD) spokesperson then described these words as “vague” confirming the Camp remained scheduled for closure;
- the National Audit Office (NAO) has said implementing the plan will be “extremely challenging” and there is a “significant risk” to defence capability;
- no operational military reasons or objectives have been given by the MOD for the closure, and the Government’s National Security Capability Review begun in summer 2017 has led to proposals to cut up to 2,000 Royal Marines over the next decade ^{[2][2]} cuts which the Defence Select Committee of the House of Commons described as “militarily illiterate” ^{[3][3]} , and that
- at a time of significant reductions in footfall in Taunton town centre the value of 700-800 personnel at the Camp to the local economy has been estimated at £10-14Million per annum (on the basis of the proportion of the proportion of locally spent average family incomes).

Somerset County Council therefore resolves that:

- 1) it opposes the decision of the Government to close Norton Manor Camp and relocate the Royal Marines out of Taunton Deane, will support the retention of 40 Commando Unit and stands behind the local 40 Commando community of serving and veteran Royal Marines who want the Camp to remain in Taunton Deane;
- 2) the Leader of the Council write to the Secretary of State for Defence strongly opposing the closure of the Camp, urging him to remove Norton Manor Camp from the list of sites to be disposed of on the MOD website, and
- 3) the Leader of the Council write to all of Somerset’s Members of Parliament pointing out that the County is in danger of losing 40 Commando Royal Marines and urging them to urgently take up the importance of Norton Manor Camp to the County of Somerset and to Taunton Deane in particular in Parliament and oppose its closure and the relocation of 40 Commando to another area, and that the Chief Executive should report back to the whole Council placing copies of any replies received on the public record.

Footnotes

[1][1] <https://www.somersetcountygazette.co.uk/news/17004687.norton-manor-marine-camp-taunton-still-set-to-close/?ref=mac>

[2][2] <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2018/02/04/royal-marines-cuts-militarily-illiterate-say-mps/> and <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2018/feb/04/royal-marines-cuts-undermine-security-mps-defence-committee>

[3][3] *Ibid.*