May 2020

Dear Councillor,

I am writing to seek your support and assistance in ensuring that the nation faces as few obstacles as possible in the organisation and delivery of Remembrance parades and services.

As we prepare to mark the 75th anniversary of the end of the Second World War, alongside the 70th anniversary of the Korean War and the annual Armistice Day tradition, services of Remembrance continue to resonate with the nation, allowing local communities up and down the country the chance to reflect on the service and sacrifice of the many men and women from their own villages, towns and cities who have served in HM Armed Forces, or who have supported or lost someone who has.

Legion branches and volunteers are proud to play an active part in Remembrance services and parades every year, and are only too happy to support local authorities in their planning for such important community events. Whilst most local authorities show a great deal of support for Remembrance, every year a number of Legion branches report they are being asked to bear the costs of road closures and policing, having wrongly been assigned 'event organiser' status. This designation brings with it a range of responsibilities and insurance liabilities for which the Legion and its branches are simply not covered, and which could result in significant charitable funds being diverted away from our vital welfare work. As a result, whilst Legion branches can support councils in their planning of local Remembrance services and parade routes, they are unable to assume responsibility for the design or delivery of the latter, including the organisation of Temporary Traffic Management Orders (TTMOs), the contracting of traffic management services, or the provision of such services by volunteers.

The Legion is clear that while our branches are very willing to assist in the organisation of local Remembrance parades and services, for instance through the provision of Standard Bearers or the identification of local veterans, responsibility for both their funding and delivery rests with civic authorities. The ultimate demonstration of this model of delivery is, of course, the National Service of Remembrance on Whitehall, which is organised by Her Majesty's Government with the Legion acting in a support capacity as organiser of the veterans' parade. In short, Remembrance parades and services are important community events supported by the Legion, not Legion events supported by the community.

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Whilst I recognise that council budgets are facing pressures at the moment, these important civic occasions are a cost-effective way of bringing the whole community together in a collective moment of reflection, thanksgiving and togetherness, a view I have no doubt many of your local residents will share. I sincerely hope, therefore, that your council will continue to enable the local community to remember its fallen, without seeking to impose charges on The Royal British Legion, and I look forward to the continued observance of this time-honoured tradition.

Yours sincerely,

Charles Byrne

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Director General