

DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

CABINET

28 February 2019

**Report of the Strategic Director Commissioning,
Communities and Policy**

**DERBYSHIRE ARMED FORCES COMMUNITY COVENANT
(Health and Communities)**

1. Purpose of the Report

To seek approval for the official re-signing of the Derbyshire Armed Forces at a hosting ceremony on 7 March 2019.

2. Information and Analysis

The Government published the Armed Forces Covenant in May 2011, setting out the relationship between the nation, the state and the Armed Forces. Two key principles underpin the Covenant, namely that:

- The Armed Forces community should not face disadvantage compared to other citizens in the provision of public and commercial services
- Special consideration is appropriate in some cases, especially for those who have given most such as the injured and the bereaved.

In September 2011, Cabinet agreed to adopt the Armed Forces Community Covenant to formalise and enhance the links between the Council and the Armed Forces. In November 2012, the Council, together with all Derbyshire District and Borough Councils, Derby City Council, Armed Forces and the Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire Chamber of Commerce signed a joint Community Covenant.

The formal joint signing of the Community Covenant for Derbyshire demonstrates a commitment to the Armed Forces community and provides a basis for a strong co-ordinated approach allowing wider strategic links to be made with the voluntary sector, business and private individuals. The new administration appointed Cllr Neil Atkin as its Armed Forces Champion in 2017.

Derbyshire Community Covenant Partnership

The Armed Forces Covenant recommends that where areas have signed a Community Covenant, Civilian Military Partnerships are established to oversee the Covenant. Civil/Military partnerships are seen as an excellent low-cost way to demonstrate support for the Armed Forces community and to help build an understanding of the needs of the Armed Forces. The Derbyshire Armed Forces

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Community Covenant Partnership (DAFCCP) acts as a forum for bringing together the relevant partners and as a mechanism for collaboration and information sharing between organisations.

Since the original signing, officers from all Derbyshire local authorities have met regularly as the DAFCCP to share best practice and consider opportunities to access funding. The DAFCCP continues to meet twice a year with meetings convened and facilitated by the Council and representatives of the Ministry of Defence. The Group is chaired by Dianne Jeffrey CBE on behalf of the Derbyshire Lieutenancy.

The Council has been instrumental in setting up and supporting the Derbyshire Armed Forces Community Covenant Partnership (DAFCCP) with representatives from all the signatories of the joint Community Covenant. During this time, the Partnership has worked with partners to secure over £133,000 of funding to encourage local communities to support the armed forces community in their area and to promote understanding and awareness of issues affecting the community amongst residents.

In addition to being a key partner in the work carried out by DAFCCP, Derbyshire County Council has also supported the needs of service and ex-service personnel in a variety of ways including:

- Offering specific advice to ex-service personnel through the Council's website on a range of issues such as: health and wellbeing, money matters, housing advice, disability and mental health support
- Providing information about organisations that help ex-service personnel such as SSAFA Forces Help and Royal British Legion in the Council's Derbyshire Directory
- Ensuring Call Derbyshire (the Council's Call Centre) staff, are trained to ask callers if they are ex service personnel, and if so, signpost them to organisations that provide targeted services
- Ensuring problems facing ex-service personnel such as alcohol and substance misuse and mental health issues are incorporated in the Health and Wellbeing Strategy which prioritises those suffering from health inequalities
- Supporting Reservists through up to two weeks paid time off to attend summer camps

Joint re-signing of the Covenant

Following discussions at meetings held in 2018, partners concluded that it would be appropriate for the Partnership to reaffirm their commitment to the Armed Forces Community. It was agreed that the revised draft Covenant should reflect the changes in the current landscape and be updated to ensure it was fit for purpose. It was also agreed that an official re-signing take place at a formal event on 7 March 2019. The event also provides the opportunity to share information about the development and delivery of a countywide Armed Forces Covenant Strategy and Action Plan currently in development.

The revised Covenant, attached as Appendix A, provides greater clarity and focus on shared aspirations and principles to the armed forces community as

well as an outline of best practice. The revised Covenant commits the Council to the same levels of activity as the original Covenant.

The revised Covenant is structured as follows:

- **Section 1: Participants**
Provides details of all councils signing up, and responsible for, the delivery of the Covenant
- **Section 2: Principles of the Armed Forces Covenant**
Sets out key principles about the armed forces community and the Covenant to guide the work of all signatories
- **Section 3: Objectives and General Intentions**
Outlines the objectives of the Covenant and obligations between the different stakeholders (armed forces, public sector and community) to ensure that it is adhered to
- **Section 4: Core Infrastructure for Covenant Delivery (new)**
Describes key elements of the approach, which includes Armed Forces Champions, Actions Plans and Partnerships Boards to ensure successful delivery of the Covenant. As set out in '*Armed Forces Covenant: A guide for local Authorities*' the DAFCCP has all of this infrastructure currently in place with the exception of an action plan, which is currently being developed alongside a new strategy
- **Section 5: Actions and Outcomes (new)**
This section identifies a number of key areas (healthcare, education, deployment, housing etc) where participating signatories could look to bolster the experiences of armed forces community in Derbyshire when accessing goods and services provided by partners. These actions and outcomes are understood as best practice and have been appropriately generalised to accommodate the needs of all signatories.

Moving forward

Work is taking place on the development of a Partnership strategy and action plan to take shared priorities forward. It is recommended that further reports on progress be brought to future meetings of Cabinet in due course.

3. Considerations

In preparing this report the relevance of the following factors has been considered: financial, legal, prevention of crime and disorder, equality and diversity, human resources, environmental, health, property and transport considerations.

4. Key Decision - No

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5. Call-in

Is it required that call-in be waived in respect of the decisions proposed in the report? No

6. Officer's Recommendations

It is recommended that Cabinet:

1. Note progress on the adoption of the Armed Forces Community Covenant in Derbyshire.
2. Note the changes to the new Armed Forces Covenant.
3. Approve the joint re-signing of the Armed Forces Covenant at an event to be hosted by the Council on 7 March 2019.

Emma Alexander
Strategic Director Commissioning, Communities and Policy

Draft 5 – 24 Jan 19

Appendix A



An Armed Forces Covenant

Between

Local Authorities in Derbyshire

and

The Armed Forces Community

(Serving personnel, both regular and reservist, veterans and military families)

**We, the undersigned, agree to work and act together to honour the
Armed Forces Covenant.**

7 March 2019

The Armed Forces Covenant

An Enduring Covenant Between

The People of the United Kingdom

Her Majesty's Government

– and –

All those who serve or have served in the Armed Forces of the Crown and their
Families

The first duty of Government is the defence of the realm. Our Armed Forces fulfil that responsibility on behalf of the Government, sacrificing some civilian freedoms, facing danger and, sometimes, suffering serious injury or death as a result of their duty. Families also play a vital role in supporting the operational effectiveness of our Armed Forces.

In return, the whole nation has a moral obligation to the members of the Royal Naval Service, the Army and the Royal Air Force, together with their families. They deserve our respect and support, and fair treatment.

Those who serve in the Armed Forces, whether regular or Reserve, those who have served in the past, and their families, should face no disadvantage compared to other citizens in the provision of public and commercial services. Special consideration is appropriate in some cases, especially for those who have given most, such as the injured and the bereaved.

This obligation involves the whole of society: it includes voluntary and charitable bodies, private organisations, and the actions of individuals in supporting the Armed Forces. Recognising those who have performed military duty unites the country and demonstrates the value of their contribution. This has no greater expression than in upholding this Covenant.

SECTION 1: PARTICIPANTS

1.1 This Armed Forces Covenant commitment for Derbyshire is made between:

Derbyshire County Council; Amber Valley Borough Council; Bolsover District Council; Chesterfield Borough Council; Derby City Council; Derbyshire Dales District Council; Erewash Borough Council; High Peak Borough Council; North East Derbyshire District Council; Peak District National Park Authority; South Derbyshire District Council;

and

The Armed Forces Community in Derbyshire (Serving personnel, regulars & reserves, veterans and their families and members of the military sponsored cadet organisations).

SECTION 2: PRINCIPLES OF THE ARMED FORCES COVENANT

2.1 Life in the Armed Forces is different from the rest of society; Armed Forces personnel make sacrifices on behalf of the nation. They go where they are sent, when they are sent. So families will have to move, sometimes with little notice, to unfamiliar areas; or they may have to live apart for extended periods of time and they will face the stresses and challenges that arise when a loved one is deployed on operational duties.

2.2 This means that they can find themselves at a disadvantage in comparison with their civilian neighbours in accessing the goods and services that as citizens we should all expect. The Armed Forces Covenant aims to ensure that those who serve or have served, and their families are treated fairly and are not disadvantaged because of their Service.

2.3 The Armed Forces Covenant is based upon two key principles:

- no member of the Armed Forces community should face disadvantage in the provision of public and commercial services compared to any other citizen;
- in some circumstances, special treatment may be appropriate for the injured or bereaved.

2.4 These principles should be taken into account when writing and implementing policies that impact upon the local populations and should be integrated into all the services, support, engagement and work within the Local Authorities of Derbyshire.

2.5 For the purposes of this Covenant, the Armed Forces community includes Armed Forces personnel and members of the military sponsored cadet organisations. Armed Forces personnel include serving personnel (regulars and reserves), veterans and their families. Children of Armed Forces personnel, no matter the marital status of their parents, should be considered part of this community while still dependent.

2.6 The Covenant presents an opportunity for Local Authorities to bring knowledge, experience and expertise to bear on the provision of help and advice to members of the Armed Forces community.

2.7 For the Armed Forces community, the Covenant encourages the integration of Service personnel, Veterans and their families into civilian life and to engage with their local community.

SECTION 3: OBJECTIVES AND GENERAL INTENTIONS

- 3.1 This Armed Forces Covenant defines the enduring, general principles that should govern the relationship between the Nation, the Government and the Armed Forces community.
- 3.2 The signatories to this Covenant will offer support and guidance to the local Armed Forces community and make it easier for serving personnel (regular and reserve), veterans and their families to access help and support from statutory providers.
- 3.3 The Covenant is intended to be a two-way arrangement; members of the Armed Forces community are encouraged to do as much as they can to support all aspects of their local community and promote activity which integrates serving personnel, veterans and their families into local community life.

SECTION 4: CORE INFRASTRUCTURE FOR COVENANT DELIVERY

- 4.1 The MOD publication *Armed Forces Covenant A Guide for Local Authorities* provides guidance on the core infrastructure for Covenant delivery, including the following recommendations.
 - a. **Armed Forces Champions & Lead Officers.** Each Local Authority will appoint an Armed Forces Champion (an elected member) and a Lead Officer, empowered to effect change across the Local Authority.
 - b. **Action Plans.** Each Local Authority will produce and publish an Action Plan to underpin the Covenant commitment; this will help to set out the overall direction and to ensure that the authority keeps on track.
- 4.2 **NHS Trusts.** Local Authorities must be aware of the role of the NHS in the county with reference to the NHS online guide *How to support the Armed Forces in the NHS* that provides resources and information on the Armed Forces agenda within the NHS, including how to advocate and demonstrate support to the Armed Forces community. The key elements of NHS activity are:
 - a. **Armed Forces Network.** The NHS Employers' Armed Forces Network is an opportunity for NHS staff leading on the Armed Forces agenda to share and learn from each other;
 - b. **Step into Health.** The Step into Health programme connects employers in the NHS to people from the Armed Forces community, by offering an access route into employment and career development opportunities;
 - c. **Reserve Forces Champions.** The NHS Reserve Forces Champions Scheme aims to increase the awareness of reservists within the NHS and to highlight the benefits of employing reservists.
- 4.3 **Regular Stakeholder Engagement.** Representatives from each Local Authority will meet regularly through the **Derbyshire Armed Forces Covenant Partnership Board**. These meetings will act as a forum where emerging challenges can be discussed and action taken to resolve them; also providing ideal opportunities to share good practice and to network.
- 4.4 **Communications.** The commitments made in this Covenant will be publicised so that local communities are aware of what is being done to deliver them. This will be achieved through dedicated web-pages or newsletters. Local Authority staff who deal with members of the public will be trained so that they are aware of how specific commitments impact upon local services and delivery.

SECTION 5: ACTIONS AND OUTCOMES

5.1 **Derbyshire Armed Forces Covenant Partnership Board.** Each Local Authority will be represented on the Derbyshire Armed Forces Covenant Partnership Board.

5.2 **Armed Forces Covenant Fund.** The best possible use will be made of the Covenant Fund, an enduring government grant awarded to projects that will benefit the Armed Forces community.

5.4 **Healthcare**

- a. Strive for equity of access to primary and secondary health care services for Service personnel and their dependents; Service family members should maintain their relative position on any NHS waiting list, if moved around the UK due to the Service person being posted.
- b. Veterans should receive priority treatment (subject to the clinical needs of others) in respect of NHS hospital treatment relating to a condition resulting from their service in the Armed Forces.
- c. Veterans should be able to access mental health professionals who have an understanding of Armed Forces culture.
- d. Ensure the Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) are aware of the potential difficulties faced by members of the Armed Forces community and identify ways in which the CCGs can be involved in Covenant delivery.
- e. Provide appropriate information to local GPs to ensure that they are aware of the provisions offered to ex-Service personnel under the Covenant.

5.5 **Education**

- a. Work with the Department of Children and Young People (DCYP) to determine the numbers and location of the children of serving personnel (regular and reservist), as well as dependent young people, to include Early Years and Children's Centres.
- b. Ensure that schools are aware of the Service Pupil Premium and are claiming all that they are entitled to. Determine ways in which Pupil Premium is spent and identify and share areas of good practice.
- c. Work with schools and local providers to identify where Service personnel's children might require additional support to help them deal with a parent being away from home for long periods of time, often in conflict situations. Children in some Service families may be considered more vulnerable than the general population because of the pressures they face, including PTSD.
- d. Ensure that policies enable a smooth transition for children from Forces families, alleviating any issues that may be experienced finding a school place mid-term, when a serving parent has been transferred to a new area of the UK; assist when issues arise at any other time relating to finding a school place for a dependent child.

5.6 Mobility and Deployment

- a. Identify and share best practice regarding house purchase/rental, enabling service personnel to settle in local communities, working alongside mortgage providers etc. particularly those who have signed the Armed Forces Covenant for businesses.
- b. Ensure the Armed Forces community works closely with council and private housing teams in support of their role of providing advice and support to households leaving the Armed Forces or being re-located within the UK.

5.7 Housing

- a. Maintain strong relationships between Local Authorities and the Armed Forces community to ensure timely and accurate information is given and received regarding movement of Service personnel and their housing needs and aspirations.
- b. Ensure that Local Authorities are mindful and remain aware of the particular issues faced by Service personnel and their families. This includes identifying best practice in solving the most challenging of circumstances where a service family or household is settling in our region from another part of the UK or where the housing need is the result of separation or divorce within a Service family.
- c. Raise awareness of housing issues and develop solutions and support systems required to solve or prevent such issues; such as homelessness by Veterans.

5.8 Social Isolation and sense of community

- a. Promote best practice engagement in communities across Derbyshire, including support to those experiencing social isolation.
- b. Support the development of projects as identified by local communities, making use of the Covenant Fund as appropriate.

5.9 Transition

- a. Raise awareness of the issues experienced by the Armed Forces community, including the challenge of career change, and offer support and information on issues arising during transition into civilian life.
- b. Raise awareness, during transition, and offer support, signposting and information to get involved in volunteering and community action as a pathway to health and wellbeing, developing personal interests, helping others and increasing employability
- c. Ensure that injured Service persons transitioning to the civilian world are able to access supported housing or support to enable their existing home to be modified to meet their needs and that they are quickly and compassionately assessed on their level of care requirements.

5.10 Employment and Employers

- a. Promote mutually beneficial relationships between employers and Defence, by advocating the transferable skills and attributes that Armed Forces personnel bring to the civilian workplace as an economic asset.
- b. Promote the Armed Forces Covenant for business, encouraging employers to sign the Covenant in order to pledge commitments to support Defence personnel by:
 - **Promoting the Armed Forces:** promoting the fact that we are an Armed Forces-friendly organisation, to our staff, customers, suppliers, contractors and wider public;
 - **Veterans:** supporting the employment of veterans, recognising military skills and qualifications in our recruitment and selection process. Working with the Career Transition Partnership (CTP) in order to establish a tailored employment pathway for Service leavers;
 - **Service Spouses & Partners:** supporting the employment of Service spouses and partners; working with and advertising vacancies with the military Families Federations and other agencies. Providing flexibility in granting leave for Service spouses and partners before, during and after a partner's deployment;
 - **Reserves:** supporting our employees who are members of the Reserve Forces: recognising the need to be flexible with regard to leave for annual Reserve Forces training; supporting any mobilisations and deployment. Actively encouraging members of staff to become Reservists;
 - **Cadet Organisations:** supporting our employees who are volunteer leaders in military cadet organisations, recognising the need to be flexible with regard to leave for annual training camps and courses. Actively encouraging members of staff to become volunteer leaders in cadet organisations. Supporting local military cadet units;
 - **Armed Forces Charities:** supporting Armed Forces charities with fundraising and supporting staff who volunteer to assist.

5.11 **Remembrance and Recognition.** Promote participation in and support for events and functions to celebrate and remember the sacrifices of our Armed Forces Personnel, both past and present. This will include: the Poppy Appeal; Remembrance Sunday; Armistice Day; Armed Forces Day; Reserves Day.

5.12 Information sharing

- a. Raise awareness of the Armed Forces Covenant throughout Derbyshire and particularly to the Public Sector through development of resources and discussion.
- b. Identify good practice within communities which promote greater visibility of the Armed Forces, their contribution and needs.
- c. Promote the Armed Forces Covenant Fund to community groups and Forces personnel.

Section 6: Signatories

Derbyshire County Council

Signed:

Name:

Position:



Amber Valley Borough Council

Signed:

Name:

Position:



Bolsover District Council

Signed:

Name:

Position:



Chesterfield Borough Council

Signed:

Name:

Position:



Derby City Council

Signed:

Name:

Position:



Derbyshire Dales District Council

Signed:

Name:

Position:



Erewash Borough Council

Signed:

Name:

Position:



High Peak Borough Council

Signed:

Name:

Position:



North East Derbyshire District Council

Signed:

Name:

Position:



Peak District National Park Authority

Signed:

Name:

Position:



South Derbyshire District Council

Signed:

Name:

Position:



THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

Royal Navy

Signed:

Name: Commodore David Elford ADC OBE RN

Position: Naval Regional Commander Eastern England



Army

Signed:

Name: Colonel Adam Fraser-Hitchen C Eng

Position: Dep Commander (Reserves) HQ 7 Inf Bde and East



Royal Air Force

Signed:

Name: Gp Capt Gordon Bettington

Position: Deputy Commandant RAFC Cranwell

