

TEWKESBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to:	Executive Committee
Date of Meeting:	1 February 2023
Subject:	Armed Forces Covenant
Report of:	Community and Economic Development Manager
Head of Service/Director:	Head of Development Services
Lead Member:	Lead Member for Health and Wellbeing
Number of Appendices:	None

Executive Summary:

The Government launched a Community Covenant Grant Scheme in August 2011, with the aim of strengthening the ties between members of the Armed Forces community, the wider community in which they live and local agencies.

This report seeks to re-affirm support through agreement to re-signing the Armed Forces Covenant, with the aim to show continued Borough Council commitment to the Armed Forces and their families based within the Borough.

Recommendation:

The Committee is asked to agree to the signing of the Gloucestershire Armed Forces Community Covenant.

Financial Implications:

There are no new financial implications for the council arising from this report. Any additional funding will be sourced from the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust as detailed in the report.

Legal Implications:

Under Section 1 of the Localism Act the Council can do anything that individuals generally may do subject to certain statutory prohibitions, restrictions, and limitations.

By signing the Armed Forces Covenant the Council are demonstrating their intention to support the Armed Forces community and give due regard of the Armed Forces Community when writing policy and making decisions in relation to healthcare, education and housing

Environmental and Sustainability Implications:

None at this stage.

Resource Implications (including impact on equalities):

By signing the Covenant, the Council would not be committing any extra resources. However, any projects carried forward as part of the grant scheme, may approach the Council for match funding.

The Council will review, where it can, support for those involved with or veterans of the armed forces in relation to employment within the Council, by developing some specific HR objectives across the next 6-12 months.

Safeguarding Implications:

None directly resulting from this report.

Impact on the Customer:

By signing the Covenant, the Council commits to working in partnership with the Armed Forces located within the Borough. It is anticipated that this partnership working would lead to improved social, community and cultural opportunities for both the Armed Forces and the local community.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In May 2011 the Government published the Armed Forces Covenant, which outlines the moral obligation of the Government and society to the Armed Forces community.
- 1.2 In support of the National Covenant, the Government also launched a Community Covenant Grant Scheme, with the aim of strengthening the ties between members of the Armed Forces community, the wider community in which they live and local public agencies.
- 1.3 A Community Covenant is a voluntary statement of mutual support between a civilian community and its local Armed Forces community. The Community Covenant is signed by various members of the local community including representatives of the Armed Forces and Local Authorities. It may also be signed by charities, volunteer groups, businesses and other parties keen to support the principles of the Community Covenant. It is intended to complement, at local level, the Armed Forces Covenant, which outlines the moral obligation between the Nation, the Government and the Armed Forces.
- 1.4 The Council originally agreed to sign the covenant in 2011. The Council has been requested to re-affirm this commitment and re-sign the covenant.
- 1.5 Located within Tewkesbury Borough are two Armed Forces bases; Allied Rapid Reaction Corp (ARCC) based at Imjin barracks in Innsworth and the Defence, Storage and Distribution Centre (DSDC) at Ashchurch.

2.0 AIMS OF THE COVENANT

2.1 The Armed Forces Covenant exists between the people of the UK and the Armed Forces and their families. It lays out the principles that should exist in the relationship between the Armed Forces and the rest of the Nation, including respect, support and fair treatment. It makes clear that no-one who has served should face disadvantage from their service and that, in some cases, special consideration is appropriate. Through its membership, Gloucestershire County Council has made a commitment to the wider Armed Forces Covenant, to support the Armed Forces community within Gloucestershire. The District Councils have also been requested to make this commitment.

2.2 The aims of the Covenant are as follows:

- Encourage local communities to support the Armed Forces community in their areas.
- Encourage the Armed Forces community to help and support the wider community, whether through participation in events and joint projects or other forms of engagement.
- Promote understanding and awareness among the public of issues affecting the Armed Forces community.
- Recognise and remember the sacrifices made by the Armed Forces community.
- Encourage activities which help to integrate the Armed Forces community into local life.

2.3 In addition, the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust has £10million a year to fund projects that support the Armed Forces Community and local grants of up to £20,000 are made available for local projects that support Community Integration and/or Delivery of Local Services. Funding is only available for areas where the Covenant has been signed.

2.4 The Armed Forces Act 2021 amended the Armed Forces Act 2006 outlining Local Authorities must have due regard to the needs of the armed forces, including any disadvantages and special provision may be required. This is particularly in relation to health, schools and housing, including the following housing functions: allocations policy for social housing; tenancy strategies; homelessness; and disabled facilities grants.

2.5 Since the Covenant has been signed, the Council has worked with the military on a number of existing and potential initiatives and including anti-social behaviour issues, housing, grants and sports facilities. The Council also regularly attends partnership meetings with the military and partners. Recent projects that the Gloucestershire Armed Forces Covenant Partnership are working on include the development of an Armed Forces Hub to provide advice, counselling and a social setting, a recently appointed Armed Forces Social Prescriber and a South-West outreach vehicle.

2.6 To enable the Council to re-affirm commitment to the covenant, the recommendation is that the Council signs the Covenant. The Military Covenant falls within the portfolio of the Lead Member for Health and Wellbeing, and therefore will be the signatory. Signing the covenant will demonstrate support for the Armed Forces community within the Borough, help promote best practice and the potential to benefit from the Ministry of Defence grant scheme.

3.0 CONSULTATION

3.1 The Lead Member for Health and Wellbeing has been briefed.

4.0 ASSOCIATED RISKS

4.1 There may be reputational issues if the Covenant is not signed.

5.0 MONITORING

5.1 Any activities resulting from the Community Covenant would be monitored and reported back.

6.0 RELEVANT COUNCIL PLAN PRIORITIES/COUNCIL POLICIES/STRATEGIES

6.1 The Council Plan priority of 'Housing and Communities' has the potential to be positively impacted through the Military Covenant.

Background Papers: Executive Committee - 7 December 2011

Contact Officer: Community and Economic Development Manager
Tel. 01684 272094
Email: andy.sanders@tewkebury.gov.uk

Appendices: None.