

Cabinet – 24 April 2013

Armed Forces Community Covenant - Walsall

Portfolio: Councillor Bird, Leader of the Council

Related portfolios: None

Service: Resources

Wards: All wards

Key decision: No

Forward plan: No

1. Summary

The report informs of an opportunity for the local authority to establish an Armed Forces Community Covenant which aims to encourage local communities to support the service community in their area and nurture understanding and awareness amongst the public of issues affecting the Armed Forces community.

The establishment of such a covenant will also enable local groups to apply for grant funding from the Ministry of Defence (MOD) for practical projects which deliver rapid results and meet the aims of the scheme.

A Community Partnership Panel has to be established in order to provide the opportunity to have a dialogue with relevant bodies to support individuals and families who have served or currently serving based upon need and to consider applications prior to submission to the MOD.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Armed Forces Community Covenant at **Appendix 1** to the report be approved.
- 2.2 That the Leader of the Council and the Mayor be authorised to sign the Covenant on behalf of the Council.
- 2.3 That the official signing of the Covenant be held as an event in conjunction with the raising of the flag for Armed Forces Day on 24 June 2013.
- 2.4 That an Armed Forces Community Covenant Partnership Panel be established as required by the Government's Grant Scheme and that the membership of the panel consist of the lead signatories to the Covenant, that is:

- Leader of the Council
- Mayor

A representative from

- The Armed Forces Community (MOD)
- Royal British Legion
- Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association (SSAFA)
- West Midlands Police
- West Midlands Fire and Rescue Service
- NHS Walsall
- Walsall Clinical Commissioning Group
- Walsall College
- Walsall Housing Group.

2.5 That authority be delegated to the Executive Director, Resources in consultation with the Leader of the Council to establish operational arrangements for the administration of grant applications.

3. Report detail

The Armed Forces Covenant sets out the relationship between the nation, the State and the Armed Forces. It recognises that the whole nation has a moral obligation to members of the Armed Forces and their families and it establishes how they should expect to be treated.

It exists to redress the disadvantages that the Armed Forces community faces in comparison to other citizens, and to recognise sacrifices made. In some cases this will require special consideration, especially for those who have given the most, such as the injured and the bereaved.

Since the Armed Forces Covenant was published in May 2011 the government has introduced the Community Covenant, including a £30m grant scheme running between 2011 - 2015. It is the Community Covenant which Walsall would be signing up to with the establishment of an Armed Forces Partnership Panel, to facilitate liaison and the raising of issues, as well as the local focus of the Community Covenant grant.

The principle behind the Covenant is that the Armed Forces community should not face disadvantage because of its military experience.

Aims of the Armed Forces Community Covenant are to:

- encourage local communities to support the Armed Forces community in their areas, nurture understanding and awareness among the public of issues affecting the Armed Forces community
- recognise and remember the sacrifices faced by the Armed Forces community
 - encourage activities which help to integrate the Armed Forces Community into local life

- to 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

These principles will inform the approaches taken to address the particular challenges of Armed Forces personnel.

Community Covenants may look quite different from one location to another. This is a scheme where one size does not fit all, and the nature of the support offered will be determined by both need and capacity. It is expected that most Community Covenants will be led at local authority level.

Whilst some local authorities have made commitments with particular resource implications, the thrust of the covenant is the opportunity for dialogue between the Armed Forces and local authority. This dialogue, through the Armed Forces Partnership Board, seeks to find solutions to support individuals and families who have served or currently serve, based upon need. The board also provides the opportunity to prepare for the impact of a greater armed forces presence in the UK following the Army 2020 review.

The pledge sets out what a Community Covenant seeks to achieve in a particular area and, where possible, will be signed by representatives from all parts of the Community. In most cases the lead signatories will be a senior representative from the local authority and one from the services who will sign on behalf of the Armed Forces community (although the pledge may also be signed by those representing veterans' or families groups, especially in areas without a large serving presence).

By signing the Armed Forces Community Covenant, grant funding, set aside by the government as part of its commitment to armed forces and their families, can be accessed. The Community Covenant Grant scheme delivers financial support to projects at the local level, which strengthen ties or the mutual understanding between members of the armed forces community and the wider community in which they live. An application for funding can be submitted by any part of the community; this might include volunteer groups, charities, public bodies such as schools, and so on. Bids will be considered in the first instance by the Community Covenant Partnership Panel and can be between £250 and £250,000.

4. Council priorities

Themes of the Covenant will include ensuring access to information about Council services, employment, skills and training, housing, health and wellbeing, community safety, community involvement and engagement. The signing of the covenant and potential allocation of grant funding will support these priorities in the Sustainable Community Strategy, the Corporate Plan and the Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

5. Risk management

All Covenant grant funding will be received by the local authority and will be managed in line with the current grants manual procedures to ensure all terms and conditions are fully met.

6. Financial implications

No direct financial implications in establishing and administering the panel and drafting the covenant as this will be met from existing resources.

It should be noted that applications for funding are more likely to be successful if other forms of funding have also been sourced.

7. Legal implications

The MOD have imposed terms which require each member of the partnership to be accountable for the governance and audit of the spend by applicants. The Executive Director will need to put in place administrative arrangements to ensure compliance with these terms.

8. Property implications

None

9. Staffing implications

The Panel will be administered by the Council's Democratic Services and Financial Services from within existing resources. Existing Council partner structures and chains of communication will be used to engage with the community.

10. Equality implications

The covenant exists to redress the disadvantages that the Armed Forces community faces in comparison to other citizens, and to recognise sacrifices made. It is not intended to provide advantage to those with an armed forces connection.

11. Consultation

Executive Directors, the Borough Management team and Borough Operations group have been consulted and support the Covenant.

Background papers

Appendix One Telford and Wrekin Community Covenant Cabinet Final version

Author

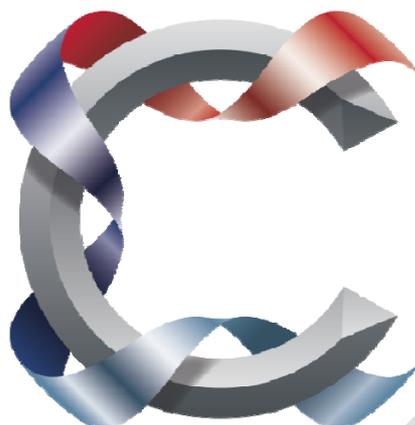
Olivia Clymer
Programme Management
☎ 0743 262 5255



Rory Borealis
Executive Director
7 April 2013



Leader of the Council
16 April 2013



Community Covenant

ARMED FORCES COMMUNITY COVENANT

Between

Walsall Council, Representatives of the Public, Voluntary Sectors,
The People of Walsall

And

The Armed Forces Community in Walsall

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

Signatories

Commander xxxxxx
MOD contact
24th June 2013

Cllr Mike Bird
Leader of Walsall Council
June 24th 2013

Signed on behalf of the Armed Forces Community

Cllr xxxxxx
Mayor of the Walsall
24th June 2013

Signed on behalf of Walsall Council

Mr Mick Birch
Chief Fire Officer, Walsall
24th June 2013

Signed on behalf of Walsall Council

Signed on behalf of Walsall Fire and Rescue Service

To be confirmed
24th June 2013

To be confirmed
24th June 2013
Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association

Signed on behalf of Royal British Legion

Signed on behalf of SSAFA

Dave Sturman
Chief Superintendent,
West Midlands Police
24th June 2013

Signed on behalf of West Midlands Police

Dr Amrik Gill
Chair
24th June 2013

Signed on behalf of NHS Walsall Clinical Commissioning Group

Gary Fulford
Managing Director,
Walsall Housing Group 24 June 2013

Signed on behalf of Walsall Housing Group

Ben Reid
Chair
24th June 2013

Signed on behalf of Walsall Health Care

Jatinder Sharma
Chair
24th June 2013

Signed on behalf of Walsall Health Care

DRAFT

Section 1: Participants

1.1 This Armed Forces Community Covenant is made between:

The serving and former members of the Armed Forces and their families working and residing in Walsall

And

Walsall Council

And

The Public and Voluntary Sector in Walsall

And

The People of Walsall

Section 2: Principles of the Armed Forces Community Covenant

- 2.1 The Armed Forces Community Covenant is a voluntary statement of mutual support between a civilian community and its local Armed Forces Community. It is intended to complement the Armed Forces Covenant, which outlines the moral obligation between the Nation, the Government and the Armed Forces, at the local level.
- 2.2 The purpose of this Community Covenant is to encourage support for the Armed Forces Community working and residing in the Borough of Walsall and to recognise and remember the sacrifices made by members of this Armed Forces Community, particularly those who have given the most. This includes in-Service and ex-Service personnel, their families and widow(er)s in the Borough.
- 2.3 For Walsall Council and partner organisations, the Community Covenant presents an opportunity to bring their knowledge, experience and expertise to bear on the provision of help and advice to members of the Armed Forces Community. It also presents an opportunity to build upon existing good work on other initiatives such as the Welfare Pathway.
- 2.4 For the Armed Forces Community, the Community Covenant encourages the integration of Service life into civilian life and encourages members of the Armed Forces Community to help their local community.
- 2.5 As a Cooperative Council, Walsall Council is committed to applying the Cooperative Values of openness and honesty, ownership, fairness and respect and involvement in the delivery of this Community Covenant.

Section 3: Objectives and General Intentions

- 3.1 The Armed Forces Community Covenant complements the principles of the Armed Forces Covenant which defines the enduring, general principles that should govern the relationship between the Nation, the Government and the Armed Forces community
- 3.2 It aims to encourage all parties within a community to offer support to the local Armed Forces community and make it easier for Service personnel, families and veterans to access the help and support available from the Ministry of Defence, from statutory providers and from the Charitable and Voluntary Sector. These organisations already work together in partnership at a local level.
- 3.3 The scheme is intended to be a two-way arrangement and the Armed Forces Community are encouraged to do as much as they can to support their community and promote activity which integrates the Service community into civilian life.

Section 4: Measures

The Borough of Walsall Council recognises that it can support in-Service and ex-Service personnel their families and widow(er)s through a range of measures that fall broadly within thematic areas;

4.1 Working together

Through the 'Walsall Community Covenant Partnership' we will work together to deliver the commitments within this Covenant. The Partnership will comprise of the organisations who have signed the Covenant and a range of partners who can contribute towards identifying and addressing the needs of the Service community.

4.2 Access to information

Walsall Council will ensure that information about all of its services are made available to both current and former members of the armed forces, to ensure that they are aware of how they may benefit from the services provided by the Council.

Walsall Council will work with the organisations representing both current and former members of the armed forces, to put effective communication channels in place to ease access to Council services.

4.3 Employment

Jobcentre Plus and Department for Work and Pensions are committed to supporting ex-forces personnel in finding and securing employment on entering civilian life through a range of initiatives. We will work with members of the Community Covenant Partnership to identify opportunities where we can work together to promote and deliver these supporting initiatives.

Walsall Council Economic Development Team will recognise and promote the skills of the Armed Forces Community during engagements with local businesses and provide support in respect of self employment and business start up.

Walsall Council in recognition of the considerable transferable skills that those with an Armed Forces background can bring to the delivery of Council services, will commit to short-listing all former Service personnel who match the person specifications for our vacancies.

4.4 Skills and Training

Walsall College will develop mentoring, training and skills programme which will support those leaving the services and their families to secure employment or develop their own businesses.

4.5 Housing

Once discharged Walsall Council's Housing Options Team and local registered providers will give advice and guidance on what housing options are available and next steps. This advice will be tailored to individual circumstances. In certain cases the Local Authority will have a statutory duty to assist with accommodation.

The Walsall Mortgage Scheme is already highlighting the scheme to any people with an armed forces connection.

4.6 Health and well-being

The organisations involved in health provision in Walsall are united in support of the Covenant and are content to capture and share non confidential figures, to provide Walsall with an indication of those in the Borough with an armed forces connection. Walsall Health Care NHS Trust and the Walsall Clinical Commissioning Group will be mindful of the particular challenges of this group and will use their community programmes for example on smoking cessation and health eating, as well as communications channels to raise awareness of the covenant and needs of this group.

4.7 Community involvement and engagement

Walsall Council will engage with and consult Armed Forces families on service planning, delivery and evaluation, through high quality inclusive community engagement for example through the Area Partnerships structure.

Walsall Council will ensure that where relevant the needs of the Armed Forces Community are considered when developing policies and are documented to ensure equitable treatment.

Section 5: Contact Personnel and Telephone Numbers

MOD DCDS (Pers&Trg) Covenant Team

Address: DCDS (Pers) Covenant Team

Zone D, 6th Floor
Ministry of Defence
Main Building
Whitehall
London, SW1A 2HB
Email address: covenant-mailbox@mod.uk

In-Service representative(s)

Contact Name: Sheila Stephenson
Title: Community Engagement Lead
Telephone: 01743 262450
Address: 143 (WM) Brigade
Cophorne Barracks
Shrewsbury, SY3 8LZ
Email address: 143x-hq-g9-mci-so2@mod.uk

Walsall Council

Contact Name: John Garner
Title: Head of Democratic Services
Telephone: 01922 654366
Address: Walsall Council
Democratic Services
Council House
Walsall,
WS1 1TW
Email address: garner@walsall.gov.uk

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 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.