

CABINET

2 July 2014

ARMED FORCES COMMUNITY COVENANT – PROGRESS REPORT

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

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RECENT REFERENCES:

CAB2463: Armed Forces Community Covenant for Winchester District, 13 March 2013

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

A Community Covenant is a voluntary statement of mutual support between a civilian community and its local Armed Forces Community.

Cabinet approved the Armed Forces Community Covenant (The Covenant) for Winchester in 2013. The Covenant was signed by key representatives from the civilian community and Armed Forces Community at the Annual Council Meeting of May 2013.

This report provides a summary of the work conducted by the Civil-Military Partnership Steering Group (CMPSG) over the last twelve months in accordance with the Community Covenant Action Plan workstrands.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1 That progress made under the Armed Forced Community Covenant be noted.
- 2 That the Head of Organisational Development be authorised to amend the Recruitment and Selection Policy to take account of the proposal in section 4.17 of the Report.

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DETAIL:

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Traditionally, the mutual obligations between the nation and its Armed Forces have been referred to as the “Military Covenant”. The coalition Government has sought to formalise such obligations in an “Armed Forces Covenant” and is encouraging local authorities and the ‘Armed Forces Community’ to work together to establish a *Community Covenant* in their area.
- 1.2 The Covenant for Winchester was prepared jointly by representatives of the Council and the Armed Forces from Winchester Garrison. The Covenant was formally approved by Cabinet and signed by key representative of all parties¹ at the Annual Council Meeting in May 2013.
- 1.3 A Community Covenant is defined as a voluntary statement of mutual support between a civilian community and its local Armed Forces Community. The aims of a Community Covenant are to:
- a) Encourage local communities to support the Armed Forces community in their areas;
 - b) Nurture public understanding and awareness amongst the public of issues affecting the Armed Forces community;
 - c) Recognise and remember the sacrifices faced by the Armed Forces Community;
 - d) Encourage activities which help to integrate the Armed Forces Community into local life; and
 - e) 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.

2 Background

¹ Winchester Council Leader, Mayor of Winchester, Commander Winchester Garrison, Chief Executive SE Reserves Forces and Cadets Association and the Royal British Legion.

- 2.1 Winchester City Council has always enjoyed a close and cordial association with the Armed Forces and the following Regiments have been awarded Freedom of Entry to the City status:
- a) The Adjutant General's Corps (Worthy Down)
 - b) The Rifles (Museum and HQ at Peninsula Barracks)
 - c) Princess of Wales Royal Regiment (Museum at Peninsula Barracks)
 - d) The King's Royal Hussars (Museum at Peninsula Barracks)
 - e) The Army Technical Foundation College (now the Army Training Regiment (Winchester) (ATR(W)) - Sir John Moore Barracks)
- 2.2 Winchester Garrison comprises of two active military bases namely the Defence College of Logistics, Policing and Administration (DCLPA) at Worthy Down and the ATR(W), as well as being home to the Regimental Museums located at Peninsula Barracks. In addition, the Defence School of Policing and Guarding, which is part of DCLPA, is covered by the Covenant, being based at Southwick Park and thus in the Winchester City Council area, but it is not formally part of Winchester Garrison.
- 2.3 Hampshire County Council has entered into a 'high level' covenant in support of its tri-service Civilian Military Partnership Board. This is complemented by the District Covenant.

3 Communication and planning

- 3.1 There is a long standing tradition of good relations between the Council and the Armed Forces Community, with many examples of mutual support and collaboration spread over many years. The signing of a formal Covenant brought with it an opportunity to formalise existing relationships and good practice between the two bodies (and other key stakeholders) and the opportunity to explore areas for continued co-operation and support.
- 3.2 In accordance with The Covenant, the Civil-Military Partnership Steering Group (CMPSG) has been established, meeting quarterly to direct and co-ordinate implementation of the Community Covenant Action Plan. The CMPSG comprises officer and Portfolio Holder representation from the Council, with Winchester Garrison being represented by the Station Commander Worthy Down, Commanding Officer ATR(W) and the Deputy Garrison Commander.
- 3.3 The CMPSG has proved to be a useful forum to discuss both new and emerging initiatives, ensuring that appropriate support and assistance is provided where possible. It is also used to monitor the progress of ongoing initiatives via the Community Covenant Action Plan. The Action Plan comprising of six workstrands was developed to reflect the work of both parties (see Appendix).

- 3.4 The signing of the Covenant last year was marked by the Mayor of Winchester with a function at Abbey House. This brought together representatives of the Council, the Armed Forces Community and other key stakeholders representing veterans and reservists. Further to the event, a raft of networking opportunities has been exploited.

4 Initiatives

- 4.1 Various initiatives have been undertaken in the twelve months since the Covenant was signed.

Education and Young People

- 4.2 Trailblazer Project. The Council funded the [‘Trailblazer’ music project](#) for young people, which allows young people aged between 12 – 18 years to learn how to play, write music, perform or follow a career in the music industry. The project is delivered jointly by Winnall Rock School and SoCo Music Practitioners at five sites, including Worthy Down Community Centre, as a result of close co-operation between the project and Army Welfare Service Community Development worker. The project has been extremely successful, benefitting a large number of service dependants’ children. To help extend the life of the project, a bid for Community Covenant Funding has been submitted supported by Winchester Garrison.
- 4.3 Academic Links. Both major Units in the Winchester Garrison have extensive links with Winchester’s academic providers, enabling the sharing of information and good practice in education. The links include the University of Winchester, Sparsholt College and Peter Symonds College. Initiatives undertaken this year include the start of a debating series between Worthy Down Potential Officers and the University’s international relations students, a guest lecture delivered at the University by an officer from Worthy Down, the start of an annual sports competition between DCLPA and the University, staff development visits and sharing of experience in delivering training and training support. In addition, both military Units have representatives from Winchester’s academic providers on their Independent Advisory Panel (IAP), which helps spread good ideas and Ofsted experiences.
- 4.4 LIBOR Support Fund for State Schools. Working in support of local primary schools, £32,000 has been secured via the MOD LIBOR Support Fund for State Schools with Service Children. This will enable local improvements at Harestock Primary School, South Wonston Primary School and Henry Beaufort Secondary School. In addition, this will fund access to an Educational Psychologist in the Garrison, providing service families with the opportunity to better understand (and mitigate) the impact of absences on children.

Health and Well Being

- 4.5 Health and Wellbeing Partnership. As a direct result of improved communication and awareness facilitated by the Covenant, the Armed Forces

Community are now formally represented² at the Winchester Health and Wellbeing Partnership Meetings. This provides a direct link through which the Armed Forces Community can engage directly with health providers. This is a critically important link, with access to health services a key issue for the Armed Forces Community, especially dependants of serving personnel (see Appendix ref 2.1). The Armed Forces Community is currently gathering evidence to identify relevant issues to be raised at the forum.

- 4.6 Disabled and injured service personnel. In accordance with Appendix ref 2.3, the Armed Forces Community is now represented at the District Disability Sports Forum.³ The initiative to optimise care pathways for disabled and injured service personnel has been advertised to the Headquarters 145(South) Brigade Personnel Recovery Branch who are best placed to signpost service personnel who can benefit from the Winchester Exercise Referral Scheme (Appendix ref 2.4).
- 4.7 Use of leisure and recreation facilities. A well-established initiative enables serving personnel to get 20% discount for use of facilities at River Park Leisure Centre and Meadowside Leisure Centre (Appendix ref 2.7). This initiative, along with many others, continues to be advertised to the Armed Forces Community. In addition, the Council has promoted the opportunity to extend discounts to the Armed Forces Community which have been developed with the Garrison HIVE office.
- 4.8 The Armed Forces Community continues to make its facilities available to external users across the Garrison. By way of example, the ATR(W) swimming pool is used by an external club three evenings a week, with discussions under way to extend the use to four evenings, along with access to the gymnasium. A myriad of clubs have taken advantage of access to Worthy Down facilities for many years. South Wonston Cubs have recently made Worthy Down their temporary home.(see Appendix ref 2.2)

Environment and Infrastructure (Housing and Facilities)

- 4.9 Housing options. Work is ongoing to deliver the commitment to support service leavers to secure appropriate housing (Appendix ref 3.1 and 3.2 refers). In the last twelve months, two service leavers have been assisted in securing a home through Hampshire Home Choice by direct matching them to a property. The Covenant has streamlined access to key personnel within the City Council, who have worked in tandem with the Armed Forces Community on a number of other cases.

Safer and Stronger Communities

- 4.10 Civic events. The commitment to ensure appropriate levels of support and representation at civic and community events perhaps best illustrates the progress made under The Covenant. Levels of co-operation and mutual

² By the Deputy Garrison Commander.

³ Mr Brendan Frow, Worthy Down.

support are arguably at an all-time high; long established events continue to be well executed (Remembrance, Armed Forces Flag Raising etc) as a result of excellent collaboration and this has been extended to the Garrison Civic Reception, WW1 Commemoration events and a raft of other engagements at various levels including support to Parish Council events (Appendix ref 4.1, 5.1 and 5.2).

- 4.11 Community Covenant Grants. Opportunities to exploit the Armed Forces Community Covenant Grant Scheme are being explored at various levels. This has included bids (inter alia) to support the Hat Fair, Trailblazer (see section 4.2 above) and a commitment to support South Wonston Parish Council's aspiration to build a new pavilion. (Appendix ref 4.2).
- 4.12 Flooding relief. February 2014 saw significant and widespread flooding across Winchester District. The response was co-ordinated at District level by the Council and involved many agencies. This included personnel drawn from all Services who were involved in the co-ordination of effort and in direct action on the ground across the District. The military operation, known as 'Operation PITCHPOLE', saw personnel manning the 24-hour emergency centre, assisting with the filling and distribution of sand bags and delivering specialised engineering solutions to help stem the flow of water. Winchester Garrison played a key role in supporting the flood relief efforts, acting as a forward operating base, and delivering real time life support (accommodation, feeding and logistics) to over 2,500 deployed military personnel over a 3 week period.
- 4.13 Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership. The Armed Forces Community are now represented at meetings of the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP), as well as continuing to attend Home Front meetings. This helps to foster stronger links between the Armed Forces Community and the emergency services. (Appendix ref 4.5 & 4.6).

Recognise and Remember

- 4.14 World War One remembrance. 2014 marks the centenary of the start of the First World War and lots of activity is taking place to commemorate the event. Many communities and organisations will be arranging their own activities and these will be supported where possible by both the Council and the Armed Forces Community. This may include representation at selected events and also through co-ordinated promotion of events through the countywide website portal <http://www3.hants.gov.uk/1914>.
- 4.15 One initiative of the Council has been to offer poppy seeds to communities across the District. This has been a very popular initiative, with all parish councils taking up the offer and all schools being sent a bag of seeds. They have been encouraged to scatter them in appropriate places within their community, which will hopefully lead to a swathe of poppies across the District during the summer months.

- 4.16 Sounding the Retreat. Winchester Garrison will be hosting the annual 'Sounding the Retreat' event in June 2014 at Sir John Moore Barracks. In the spirit of the Covenant, particular effort has been made to invite a broader cross-section of the community to this year's event, with the Council being consulted in the compilation of the guest list. This includes community activists and representatives of local organisations that are involved with important initiatives or which have achieved noteworthy accomplishments during the year. This approach should help increase the perception of the Armed Forces as an important and active part of the local community.

Economy and Skills

- 4.17 Council recruitment practice. It has been suggested that the Council could adopt an employment practice being investigated by some other local authorities (e.g. Rochdale) that would guarantee an interview for any ex-service personnel applying for a post. The Head of Organisational Development is happy for the Council to adopt this practice, subject to member approval.

5 Future priorities

- 5.1 A priority in the next twelve months will be to exploit the improved links in the area of Health and Well Being to secure positive outcomes for Service Family dependents.
- 5.2 Scoping and delivery of initiatives to support reserve force personnel and their dependents, promoting the benefits of employing reserve force personnel with local business forums in accordance with the Covenant, will also be pursued.
- 5.3 Efforts will be made to establish appropriate and enduring Veteran representation (Royal British Legion) at all future CMPSG meetings.
- 5.4 Winchester Garrison will continue to develop links with the local community and make the wider community aware of Project WELLESLEY developments. The Defence College of Logistics, Policing and Administration will move to Worthy Down in 2018, as a result of redevelopment of the site. It is likely that the Council will be formally requested to consider granting the College Freedom of Entry to the City.
- 5.5 A workstrand to promote the adoption of Corporate Covenants by local businesses will be explored over the coming months.
- 5.6 Efforts will be made to maximise the opportunities to bid for Community Covenant Grant funding for projects in the Winchester area.
- 5.7 Winchester Garrison's links with academic providers will be developed further to share good practice and experience.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

6 COMMUNITY STRATEGY AND PORTFOLIO PLANS (RELEVANCE TO):

- 6.1 The Covenant supports the Winchester District Community Strategy outcome of Active Communities, by strengthening relations between the civilian and military communities.

7 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

- 7.1 There are no resourcing implications arising directly from this report. The recommendation to amend the Council's recruitment practice may generate a small number of additional numbers to be included for interview, but not sufficient to create a resourcing implication.

8 RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES

- 8.1 All of the military members of the CMPSG are expected to leave their current appointments (on assignment) over the next 7 months. The associated risks to delivery and to the momentum of existing work strands is mitigated by the existence of the Covenant and the undertaking to conduct a full handover of responsibilities (and contacts) to new appointees from the current incumbents.
- 8.2 Any other risks or implications that arise as a result of collaboration linked to the Covenant will be considered at the time.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

Armed Forces Community Covenant for Winchester -

<http://www.winchester.gov.uk/community/armed-forces-community-covenant/>

Armed Forces Community Covenant for Hampshire - <http://www3.hants.gov.uk/adult-services/welfarepathway.htm>

Armed Forces Covenant - <https://www.gov.uk/the-armed-forces-covenant>

APPENDICES:

Covenant Action Plan

COMMUNITY COVENANT ACTION PLAN

Ser (a)	Issue/Activity (b)	Output/Effect (c)	Responsibility (d)
1 Education and Young People			
Work in partnership with Hampshire County Council (HCC) and local education establishments to support service children so that they are not disadvantaged emotionally or academically during their childhood and teenage years, because they are from a service family and, as far as possible, do not underachieve because of the career choices of their parents.			
1.1	Represent the interests of, and include where appropriate, the Armed Forces Community in Winchester District at the Local Children's Partnerships.	Maintain the principle of no disadvantage.	Armed Forces Community (AFC) & Lorraine Ronan (Winchester City Council - WCC)
2 Health and Wellbeing			
Work in partnership with HCC and other health sector partners to build and develop further work, services and relationships focused on promoting the health, safety and wellbeing of the Armed Forces community, including: access to benefits and health services; focus on mental health and wellbeing, and building a sense of belonging for families locally.			
2.1	Represent the interests of, and include where appropriate, the Armed Forces Community in Winchester District at strategic partnerships such as the Winchester District Health and Well Being Partnership Board.	Maintain the principle of no disadvantage.	Lorraine Ronan (WCC)
2.2	Continue to explore opportunities to make sports and other facilities available in accordance with MOD policy guidelines building on the existing links established across all Garrison Units.	Strengthens relationships with local communities and optimises use of MOD facilities.	AFC
2.3	Provide representation at the District Disability Sports Forum.	Optimise care pathways for disabled and injured service personnel.	AFC
2.4	As appropriate, encourage the referral of injured service personnel to the Winchester Exercise Referral and River Park Buddy Schemes.	Optimise care pathways for disabled and injured service personnel.	AFC

Ser (a)	Issue/Activity (b)	Output/Effect (c)	Responsibility (d)
2.5	Liaise with the Armed Forces regarding specific needs for disablement adaptations through Disabled Facilities Grants.	Co-operate with the Defence Infrastructure Organisation to minimise time taken to adapt accommodation and make best use of local initiatives.	Steve Tong (WCC)
2.6	Explore opportunities with the University of Winchester to provide discounts to serving personnel for use of sports facilities at Winchester Sports Stadium.	Financial benefit and recognition.	Mandy Ford (WCC)
2.7	In partnership with DC Leisure, provide 20% discount to serving personnel for use of sports facilities at River Park Leisure Centre and Meadowside Leisure Centre.	Financial benefit and recognition.	Mandy Ford (WCC)
3 Housing and Facilities			
Work in partnership to deliver better support to the Armed Forces Community and achieve better housing outcomes for veterans and families through improved information and advice on housing options.			
3.1	Apply the principle of no disadvantage to Service personnel and their families leaving the Armed Forces when applying to Hampshire Home Choice.	Practical application of the no disadvantage principle as per the Armed Forces Covenant.	Amber Russell (WCC)
3.2	Provide a bespoke personalised service recognising the support needs of ex-military personnel, particularly through supported accommodation for single homeless people.	Improved outcomes for vulnerable veterans.	Steve Tong (WCC)
4 Safer and Stronger Communities			
Create opportunities for Armed Forces' representatives to become part of the Local Authority and Community Planning Partnership Structures, including emergency planning, neighbourhood planning and developing local services, including transport.			
4.1	Collaborate to ensure appropriate levels of support and representation at civic and community events	AFC across Winchester District invited to participate and contribute to planning and execution as/when able.	Steve Lincoln / Eloise Appleby (WCC) & AFC

Ser (a)	Issue/Activity (b)	Output/Effect (c)	Responsibility (d)
4.2	Exploit Armed Forces Community Covenant Grant opportunities	Identify appropriate projects that would benefit communities (inc. AFC).	Melissa Fletcher (WCC) & AFC
4.3	Road safety measures that will benefit the community e.g. cycle paths, traffic calming measures and community transport.	Identify opportunities and support Parish Council efforts.	WCC & AFC
4.4	Work together to find solutions to access problems experienced by Service personnel and their families who do not have private transport.	Reduce impact of social isolation caused by location of Garrison Units.	WCC & AFC
4.5	Support the work of the Community Safety Partnership, collaborating where possible on awareness raising campaigns.	Support to local initiatives using subject matter expertise.	AFC
4.6	Support and attend Home Front meetings	Encourage community participation and improve quality of life for all residents	Sandra Tuddenham (WCC)
4.7	Advocate to the voluntary and community sector, other partner agencies, contractors and service providers to encourage consideration of the needs of Armed Forces personnel.	Recognition.	Steve Lincoln / Eloise Appleby (WCC)
4.8	Represent the wider community on any of the Independent Advisory Panels where appropriate	Good communication, promotion of the AFC reputation locally and feedback on local issues	WCC
5 Recognise and Remember Support the needs of the Armed Forces Community during Operational deployments and on transition/becoming a veteran including support for injured and disabled personnel.			
5.1	Honour Remembrance Sunday and other key events	Recognition and preservation of moral component.	David Blakemore (WCC) & AFC

Ser (a)	Issue/Activity (b)	Output/Effect (c)	Responsibility (d)
5.2	Support Armed Forces Week	Recognition. Encourage and promote events within the District during Armed Forces Week in conjunction with the AFC.	David Blakemore (WCC)
5.3	Arrange Anniversary and Home Coming Parades and facilitate Post Operational Tour Presentations	Recognition and assistance to information campaign.	David Blakemore (WCC)
5.4	In partnership with Winchester BID, encourage local businesses to provide discounts and other forms of support for military and ex-military personnel.	Financial benefit and recognition.	Kate Cloud (WCC)
5.5	Support the Services in relation to their Freedom of the City.	Recognition and preservation of moral component. Strengthen Service links with Winchester.	David Blakemore (WCC)
5.6	Disregard War Widows Pension and War Disablement Pension in assessing Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit claims.	Financial benefit and preservation of moral component.	Gill Cranswick (WCC)
5.7	Work together to deliver a joined-up programme of events to commemorate the centenary of the start of the First World War in 1914.	Recognition and preservation of moral component. Strengthen Service links with Winchester.	Eloise Appleby (WCC) & AFC

Ser (a)	Issue/Activity (b)	Output/Effect (c)	Responsibility (d)
6 Economy and Skills			
Identify measures to support ex and transitioning Service personnel and Service families to achieve positive employment outcomes.			
6.1	Provide curatorial and marketing support for Winchester's military museums.	Awareness and increased use of facilities.	Ellen Simpson (WCC)
6.2	In partnership with Southern Entrepreneurs, offer advice / guidance to service leavers re future business start-up.	Improve prospects for veterans.	Kate Cloud (WCC)
6.3	Jobs Fairs	Target specific requirements of AFC.	Kate Cloud (WCC)