

North Tyneside Council

Report to Cabinet

Date: 13 November 2017

ITEM 6(d)

Title: Armed Forces
Covenant

Portfolio(s): Deputy Mayor

Community Engagement

Cabinet Member(s):

Councillor Bruce
Pickard
Councillor Carole
Burdis

Report from Service

Area:

Corporate Strategy

Responsible Officer:

Jackie Laughton, Head of Corporate
Strategy

Tel: (0191) 643 5724

Wards affected:

All

PART 1

1.1 Executive Summary:

This report asks Cabinet to agree an updated Armed Forces Covenant. This Covenant aims to ensure that serving and former members of the Armed Forces and their families will face no disadvantage compared to other citizens in the provision of services provided by the Authority.

The Authority will, in adopting the Covenant, produce an Armed Forces Covenant annual report and action plan setting out the support provided over the past year and any additional actions for the coming year.

In addition it is also proposed that the Authority's recruitment policy be amended to offer any member of the Armed Forces (past or current) an interview for a post if they meet the requirements of the job specification in line with the Authority's recruitment policy in considering the essential and desirable criteria as appropriate.

The Authority will continue to facilitate a local forum to oversee work to support past and present members of the Armed Forces.

1.2 Recommendation(s):

It is recommended that Cabinet:

(1) agree, on behalf of the Authority, to sign up to the Armed Forces Covenant 2017-2021;

(2) authorise the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development to ensure that the Authority offers anyone who has served in the Armed Forces an interview for a post if they meet the requirements of the job specification in line with the Authority's recruitment policy in considering the essential and desirable criteria as appropriate; and

(3) authorise the Head of Corporate Strategy to review the Authority's policies and practices to ensure they support the principles set out in the Covenant.

1.3 Forward Plan:

Twenty eight days notice of this report has been given and it first appeared on the Forward Plan that was published on 21 August 2017.

1.4 Council Plan and Policy Framework

Whilst members of the Armed Forces are not explicitly identified in the Council Plan and Policy Framework, this report relates to the following priority(ies) in the 2016/19 Our North Tyneside Plan.

1.4.1 **Our people:** by welcoming and supporting all past and present members of the Armed Forces and their families.

1.4.2 **Our partners:** by encouraging others to sign up to the covenant and publish information about what actions they are taking to support past and present members of the Armed Forces.

1.5 Information:

1.5.1 Background

1.5.2 The North Tyneside Armed Forces Community Covenant is for serving and former members of the Armed Forces and their families working and residing in North Tyneside. This includes members of the Armed Forces both Regular and Reserve, in the Naval Service, the Army and the Royal Air Force, together with their families.

Paragraphs 1.5.3 – 1.5.5 of this report detail the provisions of the updated Armed Forces Covenant 2017-2021 as it relates to the Authority.

1.5.3 Principles of the Armed Forces Community Covenant:

The Covenant is a promise ensuring that those who serve or have served in the Armed Forces, and their families, should face no disadvantage compared to other citizens in the provision of public and commercial services. The Covenant focuses on helping to ensure members of the Armed Forces Community have the same access to government services and products as any other citizen. The Covenant is a voluntary statement of mutual support between a civilian community and its local Armed Forces Community.

The purpose of the North Tyneside Covenant is to support the Armed Forces Community working and residing in North Tyneside and to recognise and remember the sacrifices made by members of this Armed Forces Community. This includes in-Service and ex-Service personnel their families and widow(er)s.

For North Tyneside Council and the civilian community of North Tyneside the 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.

For the Armed Forces community, the Covenant encourages the integration of Service life into civilian life and encourages members of the Armed Forces community to help their local community.

By signing up to the Covenant the Authority is committing to produce an annual statement of how they have used this Covenant, and plans for the coming year. These reports will be produced in January each year and reviewed by the North Tyneside Armed Forces Forum.

1.5.4 Objectives and General Intentions

The North Tyneside Covenant complements the principles of the National Covenant “Our Community – Our Covenant”. The Authority has already been awarded a silver level in the covenant employer recognition scheme. Over the life span of this Covenant the Authority aims to achieve a gold level.

The Covenant aims to encourage all parties within the 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 (MOD), from statutory providers and from the Community and Voluntary Sector. These organisations already work together in partnership and the updated Covenant will ensure that the organisations actively review and develop, continuing to make North Tyneside a welcoming and supportive place for individuals and their families.

The Covenant 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.

1.5.5 Measures to be taken by the Authority to support the Covenant

The Authority will actively support a local Armed Forces Forum that will bring together all stakeholders and be the focus for overseeing the Covenant. Notes from the meetings will be available to any interested party.

The North Tyneside Armed Forces Forum will feed directly into the regional Armed Forces Forum.

The Authority will produce an annual report updating on any actions taken over the past year and identified action plans for the coming year. These plans will be available on the Authority’s website.

A named lead Member will be appointed by Cabinet and will work alongside a named senior officer from the Authority.

A single point of contact officer will be identified and their name and contact details will be made available on the Council’s website.

1.5.6 Further measure to be taken by the Authority to support the Covenant

In addition to the above it is proposed that the Authority will offer anyone who has served in the Armed Forces an interview for a post if they meet the requirements of the job specification in line with the Authority’s recruitment policy in considering the essential and desirable criteria as appropriate.

1.6 Decision options:

The following decision options are available for consideration by Cabinet

Option 1

Cabinet can agree to support the Armed Forces Covenant and amendments to the recruitment policy.

Option 2

Cabinet can agree to support the Armed Forces Covenant but not the amendments to the recruitment policy.

Option 3

Cabinet can agree to support the amendments to the recruitment policy but ask for amendments to be made to the Covenant.

Option 4

Cabinet can request amendments to both the recruitment policy and the Covenant

Option 5

Cabinet can decide not to support the updating of the Covenant and changes to the recruitment policy.

Option 1 is the recommended option.

1.7 Reasons for recommended option:

Option 1 is recommended for the following reasons:

Option 1 allows for the updating of the Armed Forces Covenant and agreement that the recruitment policy changes to offer an interview for a post if they meet the requirements of the job specification in line with the Authority's recruitment policy in considering the essential and desirable criteria as appropriate.

1.8 Appendices:

The Draft North Tyneside Covenant is attached as Appendix 1.

1.9 Contact officers:

Felicity Shoesmith, Community and Voluntary Sector Liaison Manager,
tel: (0191) 643 7071

Lisa Rankin, Human Resources Specialist, tel: (0191) 643 5064

George Colquhoun, Policy, Intelligence and Research Advisor and Single Point of Contact, tel: (0191) 643 6447

Alison Campbell, Senior Business Partner, Finance tel: (0191) 643 7038

1.10 Background information:

The following background papers/information have been used in the compilation of this report and are available at the office of the author:

The current North Tyneside Covenant signed in 2012:
<http://my.northtyneside.gov.uk/sites/default/files/web-page-related-files/Community%20Covenant.pdf>

PART 2 – COMPLIANCE WITH PRINCIPLES OF DECISION MAKING

2.1 Finance and other resources

The covenant is about ensuring that the Authority takes account of the needs of past and present members of the Armed Forces. There are no additional budget implications arising from this report. All costs can be contained within existing corporate Strategy budgets

2.2 Legal

The Covenant is a voluntary commitment from the Authority to the Armed Forces community. There are no direct legal implications arising from the proposed measures to be taken to support the Covenant.

2.3 Consultation/community engagement

2.3.1 Internal Consultation

The Covenant has been developed following discussions with past and present members of the Armed Forces and with the support of the Senior Leadership Team.

2.3.2 External Consultation/Engagement

The new Covenant was discussed at the North Tyneside Armed Forces Forum on the 9th October. Discussions will take place with the members of the North Tyneside Strategic Partnership at their meeting in December 2017.

2.4 Human rights

This report aims to ensure that past and present members of the Armed Forces and their families should face no disadvantage compared to other citizens in the provision of public services.

2.5 Equalities and diversity

This reports aims to ensure that past and present members of the Armed Forces and their families should face no disadvantage compared to other citizens in the provision of public services.

2.6 Risk management

There are no risk management issues arising from this report.

2.7 Crime and disorder

There are no crime and disorder issues arising from this report.

2.8 Environment and sustainability

There are no environment and sustainability issues arising from this report.

PART 3 - SIGN OFF

- Deputy Chief Executive X
- Head(s) of Service X
- Mayor/Cabinet Member(s) X
- Chief Finance Officer X
- Monitoring Officer X
- Head of Corporate Strategy X