

BOROUGH OF KETTERING

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Report Originator	Julia Beckett	<i>Fwd Plan Ref No:</i> A12/064	
Wards Affected	All	13 th March 2013	
Title	ARMED FORCES COMMUNITY COVENANT		

Portfolio Holder: Cllr Christopher Lamb

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- (i) To advise Cabinet about the Armed Forces Covenant and seek Cabinet's support to the signing of the Armed Services Covenant which will clarify existing policy regarding services available for the armed forces.
- (ii) To engage with the work of Northamptonshire County Council which has volunteered to take the lead on developing further links with bodies representing and supporting the armed forces.

2. INFORMATION

- 2.1 In May 2011 the Secretary of State for Defence published the Armed Forces Covenant (Appendix A). The Covenant is described as a moral obligation between the Nation, the Government and the Armed Forces. A key element of it is the Community Covenant which is a voluntary statement of mutual support between a civilian community and its local Armed Forces Community. The aim of the Covenant is to encourage local communities to support the Armed Forces Community in their area and promote understanding and awareness amongst the public of the issues that they face.
- 2.2 Local support for the Armed Forces Community may take many forms, from initiatives by local authorities to the actions of individuals. It may be through supporting service charities, through fundraising, military celebrations and open days, attending home-coming parades and repatriation ceremonies and offering commercial discounts. Simple demonstrations of support, such as displaying Armed Forces Day stickers have had a positive effect and boost the morale of the Armed Forces Community. The Community Covenant scheme aims to build on this level of support.
- 2.3 The Community Covenant is not intended to be one-way. It also recognises how much the Armed Forces community can do to help and support the wider Community, whether through participation in events and joint projects, or other forms of engagement.

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2.4 The principle behind the Covenant is that the Armed Forces Community should not face disadvantage because of its military experience. In some cases, such as the sick, injured or bereaved, this means giving special consideration to enable access to public or commercial services that civilians would not receive. The Covenant covers issues from housing and education to support after Service, and in it veterans have great importance.

2.5 The Government's Covenant guidelines set out five themes:

1. Encourage local communities to support the Armed Forces communities in their areas and vice versa.
2. Nurture public understanding and public awareness amongst the public of issues affecting the Armed Forces Community.
3. Recognise and remember the sacrifices faced by the Armed Forces.
4. Encourage activities which help to integrate the Armed Forces Community into local life
5. Encourage the Armed Forces Community to help and support the wider community.

2.6 This Council already does much to comply with the sentiments and guidelines as follows:

- The Council's Keyways Housing Allocations Scheme complies fully with the Armed Forces covenant. For example, members of the armed forces with an urgent housing need are placed in priority band A – our highest priority category for rehousing.
- The Council's Leisure Pass criteria includes concessions available to members of the armed forces and their families
- The Council has awarded Freedom of the Borough to the Royal Anglian Regiment, which will parade through Kettering Town next year.
- The Council supports Remembrance Sunday in Kettering in association with the Royal British Legion, and maintains war memorials either directly or through its grants scheme.

2.7 In addition, the County Council is leading a task group which will work with various groups representing and supporting armed forces personnel to identify and develop further opportunities for engaging with and encouraging the armed forces community.

2.8 This report allow the Council to express its support for this initiative and to develop further what it already does to help serving servicemen and women, their families and veterans and their families.

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3. **CONSULTATION AND CUSTOMER IMPACT**

The proposed Armed Forces Community Covenant aims to encourage charities, public agencies, businesses, communities and individuals to work together with the military to offer support in Northamptonshire.

4. **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

None as a result of this report.

5. **FINANCIAL RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

None as a result of this report.

6. **HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

None as a result of this report.

7. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

None as a result of this report.

8. **RECOMMENDATION**

The Executive Committee is asked to note the work already being done to support armed forces personnel and is recommended to sign up to the Armed Forces Community Covenant

Background Papers:

Title

Date

Contact Officer

Previous Minutes/Reports:

Ref:

Date: