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**Decision Session – Executive Member for  
Culture, Leisure and Communities**

21 October 2019

Report of the Assistant Director (Communities and Culture)

**York Community Covenant Action Plan**

**Summary**

1. This report provides an update in relation to the Council's work with York's local armed forces through the Community Covenant. A new framework for action is proposed together with the establishment of a new delivery group, reporting to the York Armed Forces Community Forum, to assist with implementation of the plan.

**Recommendations**

2. The Executive Member is asked to:
  - a) Agree the new priority areas for action set out in paragraph 14.
  - b) Agree terms of reference for the Armed Forces Community Forum and for the Delivery Group set out in the annexes.

Reason: To strengthen City of York Council's delivery against the Community Covenant.

**Background**

3. In May 2011, the Government published the Armed Forces Covenant, which encouraged the adoption of Community Covenants between local communities and the local armed forces community in order to:
  - Encourage local communities to support the Armed Forces Community in their areas.
  - Nurture public understanding and awareness 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.
  - 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.
4. The Community Covenant was signed in York in December 2011 with representatives of City of York Council, the British Army, Royal Navy, Royal Air Force, veterans, charities and other key figureheads joining together to sign a scroll to mark the launch.

## **Progress**

5. **Early successes** included:
- Formation of a York Community Covenant Task group which has representatives from all the key organisations.
  - Implementation of an action plan with positive outcomes across a range of issues.
  - A number of local projects have accessed funding from the Community Covenant Grant Scheme.
  - Annual Armed Forces Day celebrations have been held in the City and more are being considered as we move forward.
6. **Employer Recognition Scheme:** An important recent success is that City of York Council has achieved the Gold Award in the Ministry of Defence's Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS). The award is the top accolade an organisation can receive and acknowledges the contribution the authority makes in going the extra mile in support of the armed forces community.
7. The Council is only the seventh employer in the whole of the Yorkshire and Humberside region to have won the award, which was launched by the Government five years ago. Now in its fifth year, the ERS rewards employers who employ and support those who serve, veterans and their families – typically by putting in place employment practices that support reservists to train and mobilise and veterans to transition to civilian life.
8. The Council has policies in place that mean reservists and cadet force adult volunteers get extra paid leave each year to enable them to attend training camps. It also offers a guaranteed interview

scheme to veterans and their spouses who meet the minimum criteria for any role. The award will formally be presented to the Council in November.

9. **The York and North Yorkshire Local Authorities Armed Forces Covenant Project:** City of York is the lead authority for the York and North Yorkshire Local Authorities Armed Forces Covenant Project. CYC has benefited from this partnership project in a number of ways, principally through the implementation of a comprehensive training programme which the project funded, a county-wide practitioners' conference that was organised, and through the research that was carried out.
10. **Training:** The partnership group has developed a comprehensive training programme including:
  - An introduction to the armed forces covenant and armed forces awareness. This is a one hour session delivered by local authority staff who have themselves been trained to deliver the material. The criteria for a local trainer is that they are a veteran with training delivery experience.
  - A train-the-trainer module delivered by Warwickshire County Council.
  - A military culture and transition session delivered by York St John University.
  - The military human - a full day or two half days delivered by York St John University.
  - An e-learning module based on Warwickshire County Council's e-learning module.
  - Forces Connect delivered three one-day training sessions at Hambleton District Council offices:
    - Elected Councillor Armed Forces Champion training
    - Service Champion Training
    - Armed Forces Awareness training for Call Centre and Frontline staff

11. The effectiveness of the training among the staff in each partner authority is measured through occasional surveys.
12. **A Practitioners' Conference** is being held on 11 October 2019 at the Pavilions Harrogate. This will provide an opportunity for the working group to showcase the successful work that has been achieved throughout the county and identify the challenges which can be faced by our Armed Forces Community.
13. **Research:** The cornerstone of this project has been research carried out across North Yorkshire and York by an organisation named Shared Intelligence, who have considerable experience in this work, with the aim of increasing our understanding of the needs of the armed forces community. In addition, a York focused armed forces community survey has been undertaken by the Council which yielded more information and insight into the armed forces community in York. Taken together these two pieces of research have provided a wealth of actionable information that has allowed clear priorities to be identified within a new work plan for York.

### **Potential Action Areas**

14. The research led to the Armed Forces Community Forum identifying the following priority areas for action:
  - **Advocacy:** Designing processes to support and enable members of the armed forces community to express their views and concerns as well as to access information, services, and practical support.
  - **Awareness Raising:** Through events and networking, raising the profile of the Covenant and encouraging others to sign / play their part.
  - **Training:** Continuing to developing training for staff in awareness of issues relevant to the armed forces community (through direct delivery, e-learning and train the trainer) and rolling this out within the public sector and third sector organisations in the city and potentially making it available to the private sector.
  - **Schools:** A schools partnership is already in place focussing on the needs of armed forces community children and strong policies, procedures and practices are in place. We will continue this work and build awareness of it.

- **Employers:** Seeking to understand and develop good employer practice of reservists, ensuring that the Council continues to lead by example and building relationships with employers and business groups in York as armed forces friendly employers.
- **Improving transition:** Working with our North Yorkshire partnership colleagues in order to further understand how transition is experienced by the various ranks of the armed forces communities and their families and developing pilot approaches to support career transition.
- **Family:** The York Armed Forces Community Survey received a significant response from armed forces community families, spouses and partners. There is the potential for family support, social groups and related initiatives.
- **Health:** Working with health professionals and organisations to ensure suitable care packages are in place, for example, exploring the potential for a veteran friendly accredited GP practice scheme in certain York practices.
- **Housing:** The research highlighted the need for a conversation regarding housing provision for the armed forces community in York. The starting point will be to organise an information event, housing support session or some form of workshop that could inform/support members of the armed forces community and their housing needs.
- **Volunteering:** The community survey highlighted a potential group of volunteers who are interested in exploring volunteering opportunities both opportunities for veterans to volunteer and opportunities to support the armed forces community through volunteering.
- **Geographical representation:** The York Armed Forces Community Survey generated a map indicating through post code where there are concentrations of members of the armed forces community. A high volume of respondents came from Fulford and Strensall as you would expect, but there were also significant numbers in Westfield, Acomb, Holgate and Heworth wards. We can now explore with ward members and ward teams appropriate projects in these wards including the potential for using local community hubs to provide appropriate sign-posting.

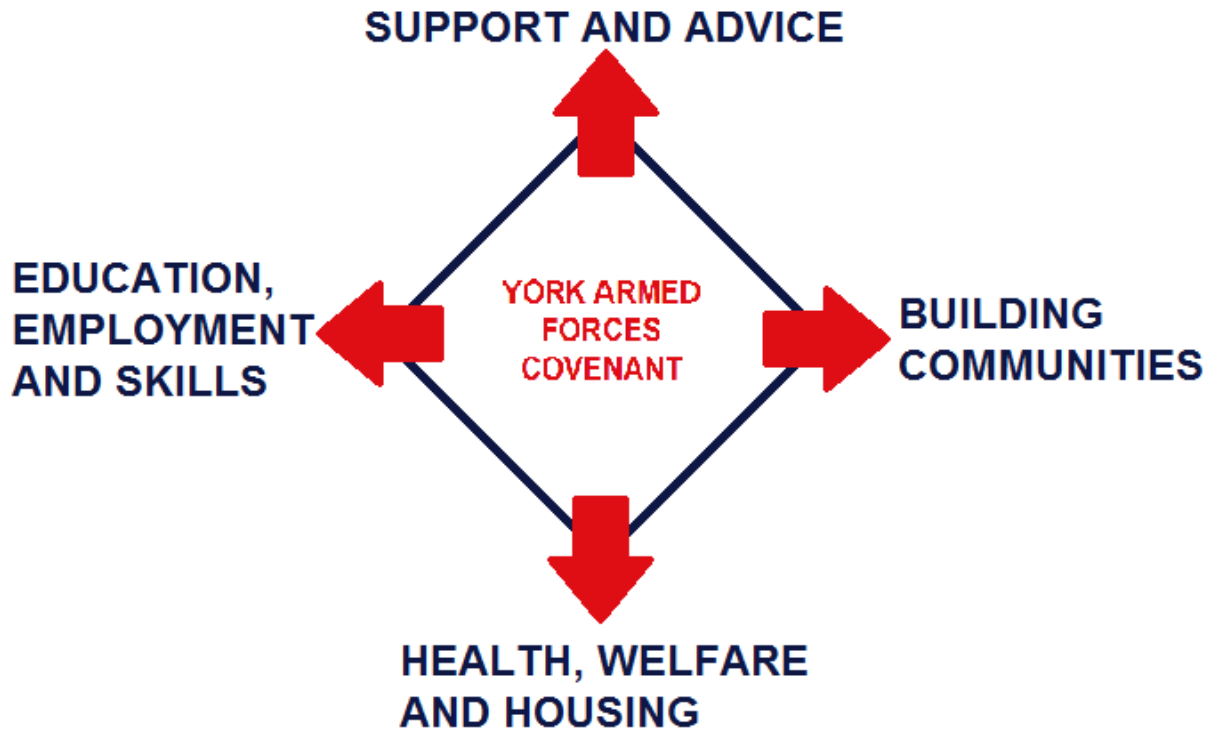
## Action Plan Development Workshop

15. An action plan development workshop took place on 30 July hosted by York CVS. 70 people attended from the private, public and charity sectors. Speakers included:
  - Stuart Horton MOD Defence Transition Service Manager for the North talking about what we can do as a community to support transition.
  - Jason Tether from Atkins Global on how we can better link those leaving the military with employers.
  - Tim Moon of the Council talking about Community Led Housing and veterans' housing needs.
  - Craig Waugh from the Council introducing the *Live Well York* project. The output from the workshop has been used to further refine the work plan.
  
16. A follow-up event for the voluntary sector took place on 18 September convened by CVS. The purpose of the event was to explore how the charity sector in York could support and serve the armed forces community in York. Speakers included:
  - Laura Clark the interim head of Communities and Equalities and an RAF veteran.
  - Captain Simon Gibney Welfare Officer Royal Signals based at Fulford barracks.
  - WO2 Jamie Hartley RAMC, 34 Field Hospital, Queen Elizabeth Barracks, Strensall.
  
17. In the discussion it was identified that the third sector has a unique role to play in terms of offering support to the armed forces community through existing provision across the city. Key items to explore further included:
  - Local armed forces awareness training for the sector.
  - Development of a York Armed Forces directory of support.
  - Encouraging York charities to sign the covenant.
  
18. With regard to the York Armed Forces Directory this will be a comprehensive resource covering contact, advice and referral information. This document is now in advanced stages of

production and will shortly be trialled in specific, targeted situations / locations.

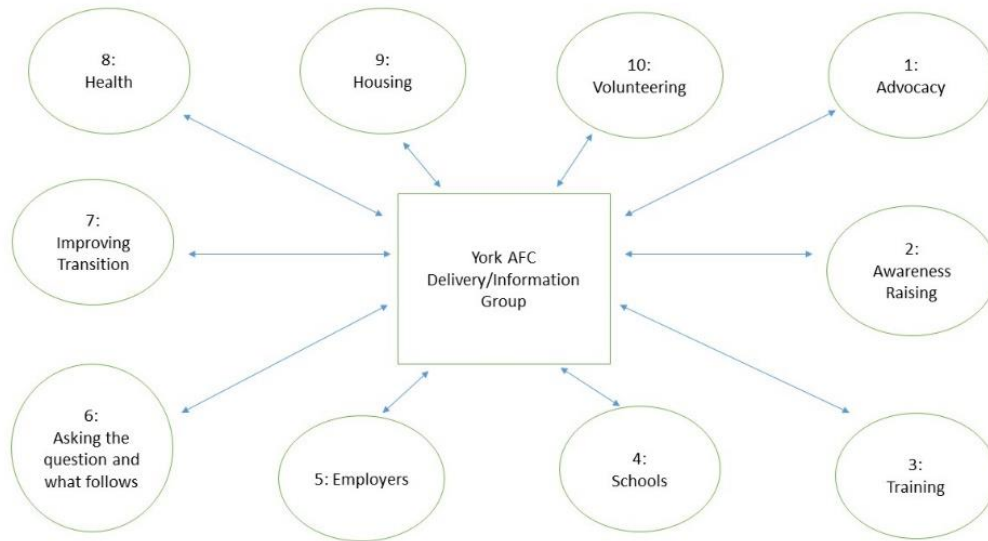
### **The Action Plan**

19. The action plan will now be organised in line with the 4 pillars of the Armed Forces Covenant:



### **Governance Proposals**

20. To improve delivery of the plan it is proposed to have an executive group to oversee the Covenant work and a delivery / information group where most of the work will be undertaken / co-ordinated.
21. The current Armed Forces Covenant Community Forum will become the York Armed Forces Covenant Forum Executive. Its main purpose will be to act as the accountable body for the delivery of the action plan as outlined in the terms of reference (see Annex A).
22. A new Action Plan Information and Delivery Group will be established. Its main purpose will be to coordinate and deliver the implementation of the action plan (see terms of reference at Annex B). It will also act as an informal hub for sharing of information and best practice (see diagram below).



23. Members of the current forum will be invited to identify which group they will best fit with.

### Options

24. It is open to the Executive Member to:

- Propose any amendment to the terms of reference.
- Propose any amendment to the covenant action plan.

### Analysis

25. The report reaffirms the Council's commitment to the Community Covenant. The action plan provides further details of the projects and work areas that the Council is committed to deliver, working in partnership with the York Community Covenant Group.

### Council Plan

26. The Community Covenant contributes to all the Council Plan themes ensuring that the Armed Forces Community is able to benefit from all of them and helping to build strong, resilient and supported communities.

### Implications

27. **Financial:** There are no immediate financial implications arising from this report. Projects identified through York Armed Forces Forum will seek to draw down external funding via the Community Covenant national fund.



28. **Equalities:** The Community Covenant action plan seeks to address equality issues within this community of identity.
29. There are no **Human Resources, Crime and Disorder, Legal, Information Technology, Property** or **Other** implications arising from this report.

### Risk Management

30. In compliance with the Council’s risk management strategy the main risks that have been identified associated with the proposals contained in this report are those which could lead to the inability to meet business objectives and to deliver services, leading to damage to the Council’s reputation and failure to meet stakeholders’ expectations. The level of risk is assessed as “Low”. This is acceptable but means that regular monitoring is required of the operation of the new arrangements.

### Contact Details

|  |   |   |             |          |
|--|---|---|-------------|----------|
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| Ian Cartwright<br>Armed Forces Covenant<br>Officer   | <b>Report<br/>Approved</b>  | ✓ | <b>Date</b> | 7.10.19. |
| <b>Specialist Implications Officers:</b>   |   |   |             |          |
| <b>Wards Affected:</b>   |   |   | <b>All</b>  | ✓        |
| <b>For further information please contact the author of the report</b>   |   |   |             |          |

### Annexes

- A. Terms of reference for the Executive Group
- B. Terms of reference for the Delivery / Information Group

### Abbreviations

CYC – City of York Council  
ERS - Employer Recognition Scheme  
GP - General Practitioner

MOD – Ministry of Defence

RAF – Royal Air Force