



Staffing & Urgency Committee

24 October 2011

Report of the Cabinet Member for Leisure, Culture and Social Inclusion

A Community Covenant

Summary

1. This report asks Council to agree to establishing a Community Covenant with our local armed forces.

Background

2. 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 amongst 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
 - 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
3. The Community Covenant is signed by various members of the local community including representatives of the Armed Forces and the local authorities. It may also be signed by charities, volunteer groups and other parties keen to support the principles of the Community Covenant. It is intended to complement, at local level, the Armed Forces Covenant, which outlines the moral obligation between the Nation, the Government and the Armed Forces. The

core principle of the Covenant is that an individual should not be disadvantaged as a result of service.

4. Community Covenants have already been established in Oxfordshire, Hampshire, Vale of Glamorgan and North Yorkshire. Examples of things they include are:
 - ensuring that there is representation from the Armed Forces on our key strategic partnerships
 - supporting service leavers to resettle in their home towns, focusing particularly on enabling those with physical or mental health issues to gain relevant skills and employment
 - ensuring school admissions and transfers are made as smoothly as possible
 - ensuring that military personnel can access council information easily
 - providing opportunities for the Armed Forces to talk about their experiences on operations
 - encouraging businesses to display a window sticker or similar and to offer discounts to serving personnel and their families
5. Many people have become involved in supporting the Service community through Service charities, or more recently by participating in Armed Forces Day. In York in recent years we have supported the various battalions in their home coming parades, combat medal presentations, and freedom parades, and supported fundraising for Help for Heroes. Currently, we are working with the combined services for a major event during 2012. Even simple demonstrations of support, such as displaying the Armed Forces Day window sticker in cars and businesses, have had a positive effect and boosted the morale of our Armed Forces community. The Community Covenant scheme aims to build on this local level of support.
6. A Community Covenant Grant Scheme aims to deliver financial support to projects at the local level, which strengthen the ties or the mutual understanding between members of the Armed Forces Community and the wider community in which they live. Bids may only be submitted from areas which have already established a Community Covenant in their area, and applications are invited for sums from £100 to £250k.

7. Bids will be considered in the first instance by the Community Covenant Partnership at a local level. Bids that the Partnership are happy to endorse will be submitted to the MOD to be considered by the Community Covenant Grant Panel.
8. There are many types of projects that might be supported by this fund such as:
 - local infrastructure, such as a children's playground which might be used by children from both Service accommodation and the wider community
 - projects that increase the integration of Service personnel, veterans and their families with the wider community
 - projects that improve the health, welfare or financial literacy of Service personnel, veterans and their families
 - one-off activities, such as an activity camp involving the Armed Forces and local young people, in which the Scheme would meet the travel and subsistence costs of the Service participants
 - an exhibition at a local library etc, explaining what a local Armed Forces unit has recently been doing (e.g. in Afghanistan)
 - an "oral history" project, where the local branch of a regimental association, locally based Armed Forces personnel or a specific group of Armed Forces personnel recorded their experiences or discussed them with local schoolchildren
 - a community outreach project bringing veterans together with their non-Service equivalents to highlight what support is available for them in their local community or to increase the level of targeted support

The Potential for a York Community Covenant

9. With barracks at Strensall and Fulford, and an RAF base at Linton-on-Ouse (outside York boundaries but with York as the nearest large population centre), there are a number of service personnel who regard York as their home base. A York covenant will build upon strong foundations of our current links and areas of good practice such as:
 - *Heroes Welcome in York:* York is one of the many towns and cities across the UK running this scheme which provides discounts with many city centre businesses who proudly display the stickers.

- Assisting service leavers in finding employment by raising the awareness of skills to York Employers: Over the past 3 years the Council has been involved with 15 NE Brigade both at Imphal Barracks and Catterick Garrison in a series of events aimed at raising awareness amongst the York and North Yorkshire business community of the skills of military personnel when leaving the services.
- Taking advance notice of a posting as proof of residence for the purposes of school admissions to ensure that forces children are not disadvantaged when applying for school places

And it might incorporate new ideas and potential areas for development including:

- Widening the membership and remit of the York Service Families Forum to include RAF Linton-on-Ouse personnel alongside health and adult Services.
- Developing inter-generational community projects to strengthen community cohesion for service families
- Developing opportunities for RAF and Army input into city-wide and local information sharing events and community partnerships
- Including forces representation on strategic partnerships such as the York Economic Partnership and functional partnerships e.g. the Disabled Children Partnership which commissions and develops services for children with disabilities.
- Developing a closer working partnership around positive activities for young people and setting up mentoring and coaching opportunities between serving personnel and young people in schools

Initial meetings have taken place with representatives of the armed forces who are delighted with the Council's commitment to this initiative. Final areas for the York covenant will be established through further dialogue.

Corporate Priorities

10. This initiative will contribute to the Council Plan ambition to Build Stronger Communities and in particular the key outcome of safer, more inclusive communities.

Implications

11. **Financial:** Most areas within the Community Covenant will be taken forward within existing budgets. Any future proposals brought to members arising from the development of the Covenant will identify their financial implications.
12. There are no other additional implications arising from this report.

Risk Management

13. In compliance with the Council's risk management strategy there are no risks associated with the recommendations of this report.

Recommendations

14. Council is asked to pledge its support to establish a Community Covenant Partnership and instruct the Chief Executive to hold discussions with representatives of our local armed forces to progress this.
Reason: To support relationships between the people of York and our local armed forces.

Contact Details

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	Report Approved	✓	Date 22.9.11.
Specialist Implications Officer(s)			
Wards Affected:			All ✓
For further information please contact the author of the report			

Background Papers: File held by the author