

PERTH & KINROSS COUNCIL

Strategic Policy & Resources Committee

27 November 2019

ARMED FORCES COVENANT – ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT

Report by Depute Chief Executive (Report No. 19/345)

PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to provide members with an Annual Progress Report in relation to the Council's commitment under the Armed Forces Covenant and to advise members of the intention to seek the Gold Award in 2020.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Perth & Kinross Council has a long and proud tradition of supporting the Armed Forces. The Armed Forces Covenant was brought in under the Armed Forces Act 2011 to recognise sacrifices made by the armed forces and to work with businesses, local authorities, charities and community organisations to support the forces through services, policy and projects.
- 1.2 The Covenant is a promise from the nation to those who serve or who have served, and their families, which says the Council will do all it can to ensure they are treated fairly and not disadvantaged in their day to day lives.
- 1.3 At a local level, the Covenant is a declaration of mutual support between a civilian community and its local armed forces and is a public commitment by Perth & Kinross Council to support defence personnel; provide a supportive environment for reservists and to being a strong advocate of the Armed Forces.
- 1.4 The Covenant must be signed by a senior person in the authority who can ensure that commitments are implemented and maintained. Members will recall agreeing that the Council would reaffirm its commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant and this was done by the Provost at a Ceremony in September 2017.
- 1.5 Many local authorities have an 'Armed Forces Champion'. The role of a 'champion' is often to make sure that the local authority achieves its commitments to the armed forces community and any blockages are resolved. The Council has identified Councillor Chris Ahern as its champion for Veterans and the Armed Forces and he jointly chairs a Covenant Partnership Group with the Commanding Officer, 7 Scots. The Group consists of representatives from Council service, Veterans groups and partner agencies in the statutory and third sectors and meets at least twice per annum. The last meeting was held on 8 May 2019.

- 1.6 Members also agreed that an annual report be submitted to this Committee on progress of the support provided to the Armed Forces. This report provides such a progress update on actions taken by the Council since the last progress report in November 2018 (Report No. 18/392 refers).

2 PROGRESS ACTIONS

- 2.1 Consultation with Council Services has identified a range of examples of the Council's commitment to supporting Veterans and their families in the delivery of Services, in carrying out our civic responsibilities and as an employer. Examples include: -

- Further copies of the 'Veterans First' guide (updated in 2018) for those leaving the Armed Forces and choosing to settle in Perth and Kinross know what help and support is available to them when they are making their transition from military life in terms of housing options, employment, welfare advice etc were produced and issued in 2019. The guide remains widely available across Perth and Kinross including GP surgeries; Council offices; libraries; to all Elected Members and a range of Veterans Support and third sector groups. The guide is also available online.
- Maintained the range of information available to Veterans on the website in a dedicated area <http://www.pkc.gov.uk/adviceforveterans> as well as developing a dedicated internal Sharepoint site for Veterans Issues.
- In addition, to having a named Armed Forces and Veterans Champion, the Council nominated the Corporate Equalities Team Leader as a named Armed Forces and Veterans Council Officer in 2018 to co-ordinate any responses to Veterans issues. Both the Armed Forces and Veterans Champion and the named Council officer also represented the Council at the Annual Armed Forces and Veterans Champions Gathering in Glasgow on 7 October 2019. Named contacts in Council service areas of Housing, Education, Welfare Rights and Human Resources have also been identified for specific issues relating to Veterans and Reservists.
- The Council also takes its Civic and representative duties in relation to the Armed Forces, Veterans and Reservists seriously with both the Provost and the Armed Forces and Veterans Champion represented at a number of events during the last 12 months (Table 1 below)

Table 1 – Civic Engagements Armed Forces, Veterans and Reservists 2018/19

Date	Event	Attended by Provost	Attended by Armed Forces and Veterans Champion
04/11/18	Polish War Graves – wreath laying (Wellshill)	√	√
09/11/18	Poppy Scotland – Wreath Laying	√	√
09/11/18	Service of Remembrance – Black Watch Museum Balhousie Castle	√	√
09/11/18	Pullars War Memorial Wreath Laying	-	√
11/11/18	51 Highland Division Memorial North Inch Perth Wreath Laying	√	√
11/11/18	Armistice Day Remembrance Sunday – WW1 Centenary. Church Service, Civic and Military Parades, Walk of Gratitude and Civic Reception and Entertainment programme at Concert Hall	√	√
05/02/19	5 Soldiers Production at Perth Theatre	√	√
06/04/19	Highland Reserve Forces and Cadets Association (HRFCA) AGM – Queens' Barracks	-	√
07/04/19	Armed Forces Appreciation Day at Knockhill organised by HRFCA	-	√
18/04/19	HRFCA Employer Engagement Evening – Supper at MOD Caledonia and Royal Marine Concert Carnegie Hall Dunfermline	√	-
25/04/19	Unforgotten Heroes Conference Stirling	-	√
01/05/19	SSAFA AGM	-	√
06/05/19	Russian Aircrew Memorials at Errol and Fearnan – wreath laying	√	√
01/06/19	Royal British Legion Scotland Conference 2019 – Dewars Centre	√	-
08/06/19	Guest at RASC/RCT Perth Branch Dance	√	-
15/06/19	Black Watch Association 100th Anniversary Service Balhousie Castle	√	√
20/06/19	Perth Academy Flowers of the Forest Celebration Event	√	-
22/06/19	Korean War Memorial Wreath Laying – Lindsay Court Old High Street Perth	√	√
24/06/19	Armed Forces Day Flag Raising Event and Civic Reception Balhousie Castle	√	√
18/08/19	City of Perth Salute and Freedom of Perth event to confer the Freedom of the City to Brigadier Sir Melville Jameson, who retired as Lord-Lieutenant of Perth and Kinross in July 2019	√	√
26/09/19	Opening of the WW100 Scotland Exhibition Balhousie Castle	√	-
03/10/19	Beating the Retreat Fort George Inverness	-	√
09/10/19	Armed Forces meeting CO 7 SCOTS	-	√
22/10/19	HRFCA Eastern Area Meeting	-	√

- On 26 June 2019 an Inside News Bulletin was published to promote both Armed Forces Day and Reservists Day, this also included promoting the time off for public duties policy. The Armed Forces Flag was also flown at 2 High Street, Perth.
- On 26 November 2019 an engagement event was planned with members of the 7 SCOTS Reserve Force to promote the reservists and cadet force adult volunteering opportunities to staff.
- Special leave with pay of up to 15 days per annum for reservists to attend annual training camps remains in place.
- Special leave with pay of up to 15 days per annum for Cadet Force Adult Volunteers to attend local detachments and annual camps remains in place.
- The 'Armed Forces Covenant for Frontline Workers' eLearning module remains available for all frontline employees with 29 (+14 in 2018/19) staff completing it and 147 (+ 40 in 2018/19) staff having the module 'in progress' since September 2017.
- Since November 2017 the Council has had the Silver Award in the Armed Forces Employer Recognition Scheme in relation to the work of the Covenant supporting Armed Forces, Reservists and the Cadet Forces. The intention is to express an interest to submit an application for the Gold Award when the scheme opens again in late November 2019. Positive discussions have already been held with the Regional Employer Engagement Director of the Highland Reserve Forces and Cadets Association who has intimated that he is supportive of the Council submitting an application. He has also made initial recommendations in relation to the Action Plan which has been drafted in preparation for the submission in March 2020 which aims to enhance the Council's existing work in this area. Members will be kept informed of progress.
- Following consultation with Veterans' groups, a site outside St Johns Kirk has been identified for a War Memorial for the area.
- Both the Provost and Armed Forces and Veterans Champion have also attended the local Armed Forces and Veterans Breakfast Club with the Armed Forces and Veterans Champion also attending the Edinburgh Veterans Breakfast Club on a consultative visit in January 2019.

2.2 Work will continue with Council services and Veterans Support organisations to respond to issues relating to Veterans in the year ahead. The Armed Forces and Veterans Champion will continue to attend all the Perth Veterans Club meetings as at present.

3 PROPOSALS

The following proposals are being made:

- 3.1 The Council reaffirms its commitment to its responsibilities under the Armed Forces Covenant and awaits an update on the Gold Award submission in the Employer Recognition Scheme in 2020.

4 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 It is recommended that the Committee approve the content of this report.

Authors

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Approved

Name	Designation	Date
Jim Valentine	Depute Chief Executive (Chief Operating Officer)	12 November 2019

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1. IMPLICATIONS, ASSESSMENTS, CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

Strategic Implications	
Community Plan / Single Outcome Agreement	Yes
Corporate Plan	Yes
Resource Implications	
Financial	None
Workforce	None
Asset Management (land, property, IST)	None
Assessments	
Equality Impact Assessment	None
Strategic Environmental Assessment	None
Sustainability (community, economic, environmental)	None
Legal and Governance	None
Risk	None
Consultation	
Internal	Yes
External	None
Communication	
Communications Plan	Yes

a) Strategic Implications

This report supports the delivery of the Strategic Objectives within the Community Plan/Single Outcome Agreement 2013-2023 and Corporate Plan 2013-2023.

b) Consultation

Internal

All Council Services have been consulted in preparation of this report

c) Communication

Internal and external communication will be arranged to raise awareness and actively promote the Council's commitment in the Armed Forces Covenant to Council employees and the wider community.