

PERTH & KINROSS COUNCIL**Strategic Policy & Resources Committee****13 September 2017****ARMED FORCES COVENANT****Report by Corporate Human Resources Manager**

The purpose of this report is to seek approval for the Council to sign the Armed Forces Covenant.

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. It would be co-signed by a member of the Armed Forces.
- 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.
- 1.6 The Covenant requires employers to make a range of written and publicised promises to set out their support to members of the Armed Forces community who work in their business. By signing up to the covenant employers must be proactive in supporting veterans, and service spouses/partners, by being flexible to their needs when recruiting and during employment. This includes encouraging active participation in local and national activities such as the annual Armed Forces flag raising day in June, the City of Perth Salute on 20 August 2017 and participation of local cadets in all civic parades such as Kirking of the Council.

- 1.7 Human Resources has worked closely with the Highland Reserve Forces Regional Employer Engagement Director to review our support for Reservists and Cadet Adult Volunteers. Earlier this year the Corporate Management Group reviewed our provisions for Employees Supporting the Community including support for the Armed Forces, Police Scotland and Scottish Fire & Rescue Service. These opportunities will be promoted to staff in order to raise awareness of the benefits to individuals, the Council as employer and our communities.
- 1.8 Earlier this year the Council was nominated for the Silver Award in the Armed Forces Employer Recognition Scheme and has now been advised that this has been approved. Arrangements are in hand to attend the formal Ceremony to receive this award in recognition of our support for the Armed Forces and Cadets.

2 CONSULTATION WITH SERVICES

- 2.1 Consultation with Council Services has identified a wide 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: -
- A 'Veterans First' guide was published in 2012 to ensure 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. All Community Planning partners and a range of other support agencies contribute to this guide.
 - Promotion of external support available such as combat stress which is a 24 hour helpline for the military community and their families.
 - Special leave with pay of up to 15 days per annum for reservists to attend annual training camps.
 - Special leave with pay of up to 15 days per annum for Cadet Force Adult Volunteers to attend local detachments and annual camps.
 - Annual Armed Forces flag raising day, City of Perth Salute and other events in Perth and Kinross.
 - Work with the Veterans Bereavement Support Local Undertakers Group to offer assistance to those who serve or have served in the Armed Forces or Merchant Navy who have passed away with no means for a funeral or no family to assist with the cost of the funeral.
 - Grant funding contribution towards the Stand Easy Project, a two week Tayside wide theatre project for Wounded, Injured or Sick Veterans.

- SSAFA were invited to contribute to the Fairness Commission conversations to camera to ensure veterans issues were represented to commissioners.
 - The remit of the PKAVS Mental Wellbeing hub has been expanded to include work with veterans.
- 2.2 Council Services are reviewing the commitments in the 'Veterans First' guide with a view to producing a refreshed version with additional commitments which will be accessible as a downloadable pdf document on the Council's website.
- 2.3 In addition, an 'Armed Forces Covenant for Frontline Workers' eLearning module is available for roll out to all frontline employees.

3 PROPOSALS

The following proposals are being made:

- 3.1 The Committee approves the signing of the Armed Forces Covenant by stating the Council's commitment to support defence personnel; provide a supportive environment for reservists and to being a strong advocate of the Armed Forces. A sample of the covenant is in Appendix 1.
- 3.2 The existing Veterans First' guide can be accessed as a downloadable pdf document at <http://www.pkc.gov.uk/article/19759/Advice-for-Veterans>. This guide is currently under review and a refreshed guide will be published shortly.
- 3.3 The 'Armed Forces Covenant for Frontline Workers' eLearning module is rolled out to all frontline employees.

4 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 The first duty of Government is the defence of the realm. Our Armed Forces fulfil that responsibility on behalf of the Government, sacrificing some civilian freedoms, facing danger and, sometimes, suffering serious injury or death as a result of their duty. Families also play a vital role in supporting the operational effectiveness of our Armed Forces.
- 4.2 Signing the Covenant demonstrates corporate social responsibility and vital partnership working with Armed Forces which in turn support the objectives of the Community Plan, encouraging more employees to become involved in volunteering to protect the people and community of Perth and Kinross.
- 4.3 It is recommended that the Committee authorise signing of the Armed Forces Covenant for Perth & Kinross Council in recognition of the efforts to support defence personnel; provide a supportive environment for reservists and continue to being a strong advocate of the Armed Forces.

Authors

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Approved

Name	Designation	Date
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1. IMPLICATIONS, ASSESSMENTS, CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

Strategic Implications	Yes / None
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 will be arranged to Council employees and the wider community.

2. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Draft Armed Forces Covenant