

PERTH & KINROSS COUNCIL

Strategic Policy & Resources Committee

24 November 2021

ARMED FORCES COVENANT – ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT

Report by Chief Operating Officer
(Report No. 21/224)

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 recent successful Gold Award status under the Employer Recognition Scheme.

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 we will do all we 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 we reaffirmed our 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. We have identified Councillor Chris Ahern as our champion for Veterans and the Armed Forces and he has jointly chaired 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 recently reconvened for its first meeting since the covid pandemic (in a virtual meeting on 20 October 2021).

- 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 2019 ([Report No. 19/345](#)) (no report was tabled in 2020 due to the covid pandemic).

2 PROGRESS ACTIONS

- 2.1 Examples of our commitment to supporting Veterans and their families in the delivery of Services and in carrying out our civic responsibilities and as an employer include: -

- Continued to maintain and update the range of information available to Veterans on our website in a dedicated area – this includes an online version of the ‘Veterans First’ Guide for those leaving the Armed Forces and choosing to settling in Perth and Kinross
<http://www.pkc.gov.uk/adviceforveterans>
- Established a staff network in March 2021 for staff who are Veterans, Reservists or Adult Cadet Force Volunteers. There have been 2 virtual meetings chaired by the Armed Forces and Veterans Champion (in March and September). This is an opportunity to network with other employees and for individual contributions as a Reservist, Armed Cadet Forces Volunteer (ACFV) or Veteran to be acknowledged. By coming along members can tell us about their experiences and relevant issues in the workplace in relation to their role and the policies which can support them.
- In addition, to having a named Armed Forces and Veterans Champion the Corporate Equalities Team Leader remains a named Armed Forces and Veterans Council Officer to co-ordinate any responses to Veterans issues. 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.
- In June 2021 a Sway [bulletin](#) for staff was published to promote both Reservists Day (23 June) and Armed Forces Day (26 June)
- 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 75 staff completing the module in 2021 compared to 73 in 2020 and 72 in 2019.

- In August 2021 we issued communication internally and externally to Veterans, Reservists, and their families in response to the Afghanistan Crisis advising them of advice and support available in the event of this crisis evoking difficult memories for many of our Armed Forces family who may have served or known loved ones during the conflict in the country. We are also a participating Council in the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) Scheme (previously known as the Afghan Locally Engaged Staff (LES) Scheme) and additional support can be offered through our Veterans links to any Afghan person or their families settling in Perth and Kinross who worked for the UK Armed Forces in Afghanistan.
- Earlier this year we received confirmation that we had achieved the prestigious Gold Award in the Armed Forces Employer Recognition Scheme after an evaluation of our submission. Gold Award winners must demonstrate outstanding support for those who serve or have served. The Employers Recognition Scheme shows the commitment of an organisation by signing the Armed Forces Covenant and pledging its support to the Armed Forces Community - including Veterans, Reservists, Adult Cadet Force Volunteers and Armed Forces family members. Achieving Gold means an organisation has gone far beyond the basic principles. Many of our employees have served, are reservists or Cadet Force Volunteers and the skills they have brought with them have benefited us as an employer and our local population greatly –most evidently during the coronavirus pandemic.
- Both the Provost and Armed Forces Champion continued to either host or represent us at a number of Civic Events or events for the military during the years in question including:

Event	Date	Provost	Armed Forces Champion
Beating the Retreat (Fort George Inverness)	3/4 October 2019		✓
Informing Scotland – Armed Forces and Veterans Champions Gathering (Glasgow)	7 October 2019		✓
Highland RFCA Eastern Area Meeting (Cupar)	22 October 2019		✓
Remembrance Service (Polish War Graves Wellshill Cemetery)	3 November 2019	✓	✓
Meet Erskine Event	5 November 2019	✓	
Poppy Scotland Wreath Laying (Mercat Cross)	8 November 2019	✓	✓
Wreath Laying (51 Highland Memorial) and Black Watch Remembrance Service	8 November 2019	✓	
Remembrance Day Service (St. John's Kirk)	10 November 2019	✓	✓

Event	Date	Provost	Armed Forces Champion
Wreath Laying (Pullars Memorial)	11 November 2019		✓
Bowerswell Service of Remembrance	11 November 2019	✓	
Military Engagement Day (Pullar House and Queen's Barracks)	26 November 2019		✓
Royal Marine Band Concert (Perth Concert Hall)	27 November 2019	✓	
Black Watch Association 100 th Anniversary	11 December 2019	✓	
Armed Forces Champions (Civic Lounge)	10 January 2020		✓
Black Watch Burns Supper (Salutation Hotel)	1 February 2020		✓
Polish/UK Military Officers re Polish Cadet Visit (Wellshill Cemetery)	8 February 2020		✓
Pullars War Memorial Centenary of Unveiling	7 March 2020		✓
Armed Forces Covenant Legislation – Scotland consultation focus groups	15 October 2020		✓
Scottish Government Network Meeting – Local Authority Armed Forces Champions and 3 services (virtual)	28 October 2020		✓
Remembrance Service (St. John's Kirk – reduced numbers due to Covid) and Wreath Laying 51 Highland Memorial	8 November 2020	✓	✓
Wreath Laying (Pullars War Memorial)	9 November 2020		✓
Scottish Veterans Care Network Launch (virtual)	19 November 2020		✓
Ministry of Defence – response to future crisis (virtual)	11 March 2021		✓
Scottish Armed Forces Charity Manifesto	17 March 2021		✓
Armed Forces Firm Base Conference	17 March 2021		✓
SSAFA AGM (virtual)	16 April 2021		✓
SSAFA Case Worker meeting (virtual)	20 April 2021		✓
Veterans Scotland Hustings (virtual)	21 April 2021		✓
CETF/Local Armed Forces Partnerships Groups – Scotland (virtual)	14 June 2021		✓
Meeting with AFC DWP Arbroath (virtual)	18 June 2021		✓
Meeting with Moray Council re Armed Forces Covenant (virtual)	21 June 2021		✓
Armed Forces Day Flag Raising Ceremony	21 June 2021	✓	

Event	Date	Provost	Armed Forces Champion
Unveiling of Perth Tri Services War Memorial and Flag Raising Ceremony	26 June 2021	✓	✓
attendance at the D-Day: Soldiers of Sacrifice Sculpture exclusive preview event at The Black Watch Museum	13 July 2021	✓	
Informal lunch Black Watch Association	28 July 2021	✓	✓
Meeting CO 7 Scots and Senior officers at Queen's Barracks	5 October 2021		✓
Armed Forces Covenant Silver Awards Ceremony (Scone Palace)	7 October 2021		✓
Veterans Housing Scotland Reception (Edinburgh)	14 October 2021	✓	✓
Armed Forces Covenant Employer Recognition Scheme Gold Award Presentation (Edinburgh Castle)	21 October 2021	✓	✓
Wreath Laying (Polish War Graves Wellshill Cemetery)	7 November 2021	✓	✓
Wreath Laying (51 Highland Memorial)	11 November 2021	✓	
Wreath Laying (Perth Tri Service War Memorial)	11 November 2021	✓	✓
Wreath Laying (Pullars Memorial)	12 November 2021		✓
Remembrance Service (St. John's Kirk)	14 November 2021	✓	✓

2.2 Work will continue with Council services and Veterans Support organisations to respond to issues relating to Veterans in the year ahead.

3. PROPOSALS

The following proposals are being made:

3.1 The Council continues to commit to its responsibilities under the Armed Forces Covenant and will continue to report on an annual basis.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 It is recommended that members note the content of this report.

Authors

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Approved

Name	Designation	Date
Karen Donaldson	Chief Operating Officer (Corporate & Democratic Services)	9 November 2021

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	Yes
Risk	Yes
Consultation	
Internal	Yes
External	Yes
Communication	
Communications Plan	Yes

1. Strategic Implications

Community Plan / Single Outcome Agreement

1.1 This report supports all outcomes in the Community Plan:

- (i) Giving every child the best start in life
- (ii) Developing educated, responsible and informed citizens
- (iii) Promoting a prosperous, inclusive and sustainable economy
- (iv) Supporting people to lead independent, healthy and active lives
- (v) Creating a safe and sustainable place for future generations

Corporate Plan

1.2 This report supports all outcomes in the Corporate Plan:

- (i) Giving every child the best start in life;
- (ii) Developing educated, responsible and informed citizens;
- (iii) Promoting a prosperous, inclusive and sustainable economy;
- (iv) Supporting people to lead independent, healthy and active lives; and
- (i) Creating a safe and sustainable place for future generations.

2. Resource Implications

Financial

- 2.1 There are no additional financial implications arising directly as a result of this report at this time. Ongoing work is managed within existing budgets and any new developments which arise in the future will be subject to budget approval as appropriate.

Workforce

- 2.2 There are no additional workforce implications arising directly as a result of this report at this time. Ongoing work is managed within existing officer workloads.

Asset Management (land, property, IT)

- 2.3 There are no additional Asset Management implications arising as a result of this report at this time. Any new proposed developments which arise in the future will be subject to the relevant approval process at that time.

3. Assessments

- 3.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, the Council is required to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between equality groups. Carrying out Equality Impact Assessments for plans and policies allows the Council to demonstrate that it is meeting these duties.
- 3.2 This section should reflect that the proposals have been considered under the Corporate Equalities and Fairness Impact Assessment process (EFIA) with the following outcome:
- 3.3 A screening assessment using the Integrated Appraisal Toolkit has determined that the proposal is **not relevant** for the purposes of EFIA

Strategic Environmental Assessment

- 3.4 The Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 places a duty on the Council to identify and assess the environmental consequences of its proposals.
- 3.5 The proposal recommended in this paper has been considered under the Act and the pre-screening has identified that the proposal will have no environmental effects, it is therefore exempt. The reason for concluding this is that the recommendation in this report will have no direct environmental effects.

Sustainability

- 3.6 Under the provisions of the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 the Council has to discharge its duties in a way which contributes to the achievement of sustainable development. In terms of the Climate Change Act, the Council has a general duty to demonstrate its commitment to sustainability and the community, environmental and economic impacts of its actions.
- 3.7 No steps are required to be taken in this area.

Legal and Governance

- 3.8 The Head of Legal and Governance has been consulted during the development of this Strategy.

Risk

- 3.9 Any risks associated will be mitigated by the monitoring and reporting procedures which have been put in place for the work concerned.

4. Consultation

Internal

- 4.1 This report has been developed across services within the Council.

External

- 4.2 The report contains reference to work with strategic partners and will be shared with them when approved.

5. Communication

- 5.1 Internal and external communication will be used to continue to raise awareness and actively promote the Council's commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant

2. BACKGROUND PAPERS

No other background papers were referred to in the preparation of this report.

3. APPENDICES

No appendices.