

# Perth And Kinross Council

30 August 2023

## ARMED FORCES COVENANT PROGRESS REPORT

Report by the Head of Innovation  
(Report No. 23/235)

### 1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide members with a Progress Report in relation to the Council's commitment under the Armed Forces Covenant.

### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that Council:
- (i) Notes the content of this report and approves the continued work in relation to the Council's commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant.

### 3. STRUCTURE OF REPORT

- 3.1 This report is structured over the following sections:

- Section 4: Background/Main Issues
- Section 5: Proposals
- Section 6: Conclusion
- Appendices

### 4. BACKGROUND / MAIN ISSUES

- 4.1 The Armed Forces Covenant is a promise by the nation that those who serve or have served in the Armed Forces, and their families, should be treated fairly and should not face disadvantages when seeking to access public or private goods and services in the UK.
- 4.2 The Covenant is a voluntary pledge. Organisations may choose to sign up in order to demonstrate their support for the Armed Forces Community and for the principles of the Covenant. All organisations – public, private or voluntary and small, medium or large – are welcome to sign the Covenant.
- 4.3 Perth & Kinross Council first signed the Covenant in December 2012, reaffirming this commitment in September 2017.
- 4.4 Signatories to the Covenant also have the opportunity to be recognised by the Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS). This is awarded at different levels (bronze, silver and gold). The Council received Gold Award in 2021 recognising the highest standard in how we deliver the ERS which is reviewed every 5 years by the Ministry Of Defence. As a Gold Award member, we also

support those Silver and Bronze Award holders who wish to work towards the Gold Award and our local Armed Forces and Veterans Champion meets regularly with champions from local organisations from both the public and private sectors to share our experience and good practice.

- 4.5 The work relating to the Armed Forces Covenant has always been co-ordinated by the Council's Armed Forces and Veterans Champion – an Elected Member role. 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 officer contacts in Council service areas of Housing, Education, Employability, Welfare Rights and Human Resources have also been identified for specific issues relating to Veterans and Reservists.
- 4.6 There is now a new legal Duty to have due regard to the Armed Forces Covenant (set out in the [Armed Forces Act 2021](#) which came into force in November 2022).
- 4.7 The Duty says that organisations must demonstrate “due regard” to the principles of the Covenant and make a ‘conscious consideration’ of the needs of the Armed Forces community. When carrying out the functions covered by the Duty (listed below), appropriate weight should be placed on the principles of the covenant.
- 4.8 The Duty Applies to some of the Council's housing and education functions only – it also applies to certain health functions provided by NHS Tayside (including functions delegated to the Integrated Joint Board).

Housing Functions:

- Allocation policies for social housing
- Homelessness (strategic and advice/provision of accommodation)
- Grants for adaptations

Education Functions:

- Admissions (including placing requests)
- Transport
- Attendance
- Additional Support Needs
- Educational provision, attainment and curriculum
- Student wellbeing

4.9 An Action Plan is in place to track the ongoing progress in relation to this work across all Council areas, including those specific functions covered by the new Duty. This ensures that the services listed above are continuously assessing the potential impact on those covered by the Duty. This applies to the following members of the Armed Forces Community, collectively defined in the Act as 'Service people':

- a. members of the regular forces and the reserve forces;*
- b. members of British overseas territory forces who are subject to Service law;*
- c. former members of any of Her Majesty's forces who are ordinarily resident in the UK; and,*
- d. relevant family members [of those in (a) to (c) above].*

4.10 An assessment of impact must address and answer the following questions:

- *Is the service provided in scope? (i.e. the functions listed in 4.8)*
- *Is the person affected a member of the Armed Forces Community in scope? (i.e. as defined in 4.9 a-d)*
- *Have they experienced a disadvantage compared to someone in a similar position who is not a member of the Armed Forces community?*
- *Are they someone for whom special dispensation could be justified?*

4.11 The Statutory Guidance is available in full [here](#) which provides more detail.

4.12 Part of the Armed Forces and Veterans Champion role includes committee membership on the Highland Reserve Forces and Cadets Association which has an oversight of local cadet forces. The local champion maintains regular contact with and undertakes visits to local cadet units. Our Armed Forces and Veterans Champion who has been in post for six years, has also been involved in supporting and advising new Champions in other local authorities as well as developing a terms of reference for the wider national role. This has now been agreed with the Scottish Government and issued to all Local Authority champions for support and action.

## **5. PROPOSALS**

5.1 Examples of our recent actions which set out 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:

- Updated and reissued our 'Veterans First' Guide – a booklet with information for those people leaving the Armed forces and settling in Perth and Kinross. This was undertaken in partnership with the local branch of SSAFA (a services charity) – the guide is available online and in booklet form.
- Continued to maintain and update the range of information available to Veterans on our website in a dedicated area – <http://www.pkc.gov.uk/adviceforveterans>

- Continued to offer a network for staff who are Veterans, Reservists or Adult Cadet Force Volunteers and for any staff members who have family members serving in the forces. These network meetings are chaired by the Armed Forces and Veterans Champion. This is an opportunity to network with other employees and for individual contributions as a Reservist, Adult 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.
- Issued bulletins for staff to promote both Reservists Day and Armed Forces Day.
- Introduced special leave with pay of up to 15 days per annum for reservists to attend annual training camps remains in place.
- Introduced 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.
- Promoted and updated to the 'Armed Forces Covenant for Frontline Workers' eLearning module to reflect the new responsibilities under the Duty. The module remains available for all frontline employees with 42 staff completing the module in 2022 and 65 staff completing the module so far in 2023. Previous completion numbers were 2019 (72); 2020 (73) and 2021 (75).
- Developed and delivered an awareness raising session with identified staff contacts about the new legislative requirements under the Armed Forces Covenant Duty.
- Produced a pop up banner and information leaflet for staff about the Armed Forces Covenant Duty which will be used for staff learning and development and corporate induction.
- Approved a budget of £5,000 specifically for this area of work in the Council budget setting process in February 2023. This spend is continually monitored and to date the spend is £1,047 made up as follows:
  - Contribution to British Legion Conference £400
  - New pop-up banner £71
  - Reprint of Veterans First booklets £535
  - Staff information flyers £41
- Re-established the Firm Base meetings (Covenant Partnership) with the local reserve force (7 Scots) and veteran support organisations – chaired by the local Armed Forces and Veterans Champion.

- Both the Provost (or Depute) and Armed Forces and Veterans Champion continued to either host or represent us at a number of Civic Events or events for the military during the years in question (2022 and 2023) including:

Event	Date	Provost (or Depute)	Armed Forces Champion
Royal British Legion (Scotland) Annual Conference	20 May 2022		✓
SSAFA Jubilee Concert	2 June 2022	✓	✓
Armed Forces Day Parade	25 June 2022	✓	✓
Visit by Polish Cadets to lay wreaths at Polish War Graves	15 July 2022	✓	
Celebration of the Life of Flight Lieutenant Ernie Holmes DFC	20 July 2022		✓
Hosted Defence and Naval Attache from Netherlands	20 July 2022		✓
New CO 7 Scots introductory meeting	30 August 2022	✓	✓
Black Watch Annual Dinner	24 September 2022	✓	
Launch of Scottish Poppy Appeal (Holyrood)	26 October 2022		✓
Dundee City Council Festival of Remembrance	5 November 2022		✓
Polish War Grave Remembrance Service	6 November 2022	✓	✓
Pullars War Memorial Remembrance Ceremony	11 November 2022		✓
Remembrance Service Perth War Memorial	11 November 2022	✓	✓
Wreath Laying 51 <sup>st</sup> Highland Division Memorial	13 November 2022	✓	
Annual Service of Remembrance (St Johns Kirk)	13 November 2022	✓	✓

Royal Gun Salute (Stirling Castle)	14 November 2022		✓
Visit to SSAFA – Christmas Gathering	13 December 2022	✓	
Black Watch Burns Supper	1 February 2023		✓
Highland Reserve Forces and Cadets Association AGM	25 March 2023		✓
SSAFA Perth and Kinross Branch AGM	13 April 2023		✓
Army Cadet Charitable Trust – Beating the Retreat (Edinburgh Castle)	29 April 2023	✓	
Royal British Legion (Scotland) Annual Conference	26 May 2023		✓
Visit to TS Fair Maid (Sea Cadets Perth)	18 June 2023		✓
Armed Forces Day Flag Raising Ceremony and Veterans First booklet launch	19 June 2023	✓	✓
Veterans Housing Scotland Reception (Glasgow City Chambers)	19 June 2023		✓
Armed Forces Day Parade and Service	24 June 2023	✓	✓
Visit to Dundee Therapy Garden for Veterans	29 June 2023		✓
Opening of the Hauntings Sculpture (Balhousie Castle)	30 June 2023	✓	✓
Polish Cadet Forces Visit to Perth and Kinross	21 July 2023		✓

5.2 We will continue to prioritise this work within our Council services and with Veterans Support organisations to respond to issues relating to Veterans, promote the importance of this area and fulfil the commitments of our Duty in the year ahead.

## 6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 As evidenced in this report, the Council continues to commit to its responsibilities under the Armed Forces Covenant and will do so going forward in line with the new Duty.

### Author

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### Approved

Name	Designation	Date
Clare Mailer	Executive Lead (Strategic Planning & Transformation)	4 August 2023

## APPENDICES

- No appendices

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## 1. IMPLICATIONS, ASSESSMENTS, CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

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

### 1. Strategic Implications

#### Community Plan/Single Outcome Agreement

1.1 This report supports all of the priorities within the Community Plan 2022-27:

- (i) *Reducing Poverty (including child poverty, fuel poverty and food poverty)*
- (ii) *Mental and physical wellbeing*
- (iii) *Digital participation*
- (iv) *Skills, learning and development*
- (v) *Employability*

#### Corporate Plan

1.2 This report supports the objectives within the draft new Corporate Plan:

- (i) *Children and young people grow up safe, respected, well-educated, and confident in their ability to realise their full potential;*
- (ii) *People and businesses are increasingly able to prosper in a local economy which support low carbon ambitions and offers opportunities for all;*
- (iii) *People can achieve their best physical and mental health and have access to quality care and support when they need it;*



- (iv) *Communities are resilient and physically, digital and socially connected;*
- (v) *Perth and Kinross is a safe and vibrant place, mitigating the impact of climate and environmental change for this and 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 may arise in 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 resources.

### 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 the 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:

- (i) Assessed as **not relevant** for the purposes of EqIA

### Strategic Environmental Assessment

- 3.2 The Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 places a duty on the Council to identify and assess the environmental consequences of its proposals.

### Sustainability

- 3.3 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. Under the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 the Council also has a duty relating to climate change and, in exercising its functions must act:
- in the way best calculated to delivery of the Act's emissions reduction targets;

- in the way best calculated to deliver any statutory adaptation programmes; and
- in a way that it considers most sustainable.

3.4 No steps are required to be considered relating directly to this report.

#### Legal and Governance

3.5 The Head of Legal and Governance Services has been consulted during the development of this report.

#### Risk

3.6 Any risks associated will be mitigated by the monitoring and reporting procedures which are in place for the work concerned.

### **4. Consultation**

#### Internal

4.1 This report has been developed through work across all services within the Council.

#### External

4.2 The work reported here contains reference to the partnership work which goes on with strategic partners in all sectors to deliver on our commitment under the Armed Forces Covenant.

### **5. Communication**

5.1 The report will be made available internally and externally when approved.

### **2. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

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