

Gloucester City Council

Meeting:	Cabinet	Date:	8th November 2017
Subject:	Armed Forces Community Covenant Update		
Report Of:	Cabinet Member for Communities & Neighbourhoods		
Wards Affected:	All		
Key Decision:	No	Budget/Policy Framework:	No
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Appendices:	1. Gloucester City Council – Specific Measures		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To provide an update to Cabinet on the work carried out by the Council to support current and ex-service personnel as part of the Gloucestershire Armed Forces Community Covenant ('the Covenant') and to seek ongoing endorsement of such activity.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 Cabinet is asked to **RESOLVE** that:

- (1) Work undertaken to support current and ex-service personnel as part of the Council's ongoing commitment to the Covenant be endorsed, and
- (2) An annual update of achievements against the Covenant will be received by Cabinet and that this is programmed into the Cabinet Forward Plan.

3.0 Background and Key Issues

- 3.1 An Armed Forces Covenant exists between the people of the UK and the Armed Forces and their families. It lays out the principles that should exist in the relationship between the Armed Forces and the rest of the Nation, including respect, support and fair treatment. It makes clear that no-one who has served should face disadvantage from their service and that, in some cases, special consideration is appropriate.

- 3.2 A Gloucestershire Armed Forces Community Covenant ('the Covenant') stands alongside the Armed Forces Covenant and is a voluntary statement of mutual support between the people of Gloucestershire and the local Armed Forces community.
- 3.3 Through its membership of the Covenant, Gloucester City Council has made a commitment to the wider Armed Forces Covenant, to support the Armed Forces community within Gloucester and the wider County. Cllr Andy Lewis represents the Council as its Armed Forces Champion.
- 3.4 In following these commitments, the Council is involved in a number of areas to support the Armed Forces, their families and those who have served to be a part of the wider community. The aims of the Covenant are as follows –
- Encourage local communities to support the Armed Forces community in their areas;
 - 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;
 - Promote understanding and awareness among the public of issues affecting the Armed Forces community;
 - Recognise and remember the sacrifices made by the Armed Forces community, and
 - Encourage activities which help to integrate the Armed Forces community into local life.
- 3.5 A list of specific measures that the Council implements in support of the Covenant is included at Appendix 1 and covers areas such as housing advice & support, enabling and supporting events and charitable causes and access to Council services.
- 3.6 It will be important moving forward to ensure that as a Council we continue to engage with armed forces personnel or their representative groups to identify any needs and support they require from the Council or one of its partner agencies.

4.0 Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) Considerations

- 4.1 For the Armed Forces Community, the Covenant encourages the integration of service life into civilian life and encourages members of the Armed Forces community to help their local community.

5.0 Alternative Options Considered

- 5.1 There are no alternative options for consideration

6.0 Reasons for Recommendations

- 6.1 The Council are committed through the Gloucestershire Armed Forces Community Covenant to work in partnership and act together to honour the covenant and encourage support for the Armed Forces Community working and residing in the City and to recognise and remember the sacrifices that they have made.

7.0 Future Work and Conclusions

- 7.1 This report recommends that Cabinet continue to receive an annual report in respect of the Covenant and in addition provide support to the Council's Armed Forces Champion.

8.0 Financial Implications

- 8.1 There are no financial implications associated with this report.
(Finance have been consulted in the preparation of this report)

9.0 Legal Implications

- 9.1 There are no legal implications associated with this report.
(One Legal have been consulted in the preparation of this report)

10.0 Risk & Opportunity Management Implications

- 10.1 N/A

11.0 People Impact Assessment (PIA):

- 11.1 The PIA Screening Stage was completed and did not identify any potential or actual negative impact, therefore a full PIA was not required.

12.0 Other Corporate Implications

Community Safety

- 12.1 There are no community safety comments associated with this report.

Sustainability

- 12.2 There are no sustainability comments associated with this report.

Safeguarding

- 12.3 There are no safeguarding comments associated with this report.

Staffing & Trade Union

12.4 There are no staffing or trade union comments associated with this report.

Press Release drafted/approved

12.5 It is intended to take advice from the Communications Team as to whether there is merit in doing a County wide press release given that Leadership Gloucestershire are the strategic leads for the Armed Forces Community Covenant and in the past an Annual County Update Report has been prepared.

Background Documents:

Gloucestershire Armed Forces Community Covenant

Appendix 1 – Gloucester City Council Specific Measures

Theme	Measure(s)
Organisational Development	Staff who are members of the Territorial Army or other military support service are supported through flexible working arrangements.
Building Control	For Armed Forces personnel returning from duty with a disability, the Council provides free Building Control advice provided and will not charge for any applications made for extensions or alterations to their home.
Remembrance Sunday Event	The Council continues to work with armed forces on events including the sale of poppies for Remembrance Sunday and the promotion of Armed Forces Day through internal & external communications and inclusion in the Council's events calendar.
Armed Forces Day Committee	Representatives of the Council sit on the Armed Forces Day Committee.
British Legion Poppy Day	The Council will continue to support the British Legions Poppy Day through an arrangement with GL1 for free use of accommodation for The Remembrance Sunday event.
War Memorial, Cenotaph & War Graves	The Council commits to maintaining to a high standard the war memorial at the cenotaph in Gloucester Park and the war graves at Tredworth Cemetery.
Army Recruitment Events	The Council will continue to support recruitment events by enabling access to suitable sites
Housing Advice & Homelessness	Over the past 12 months 9 applicants have been re-housed in Gloucester through the Gloucestershire Homeseeker Choice Based Lettings Scheme where they had been a member of the armed forces, thus being deemed as priority need having regard to The Localism Act
Benefit Claimants	<p>Where applicants are in receipt of housing benefit (HB) and/or council tax support (CTS), in common with most local authorities, the City Council has adopted a policy to disregard as income some extra elements of war disablement pensions.</p> <p>The intention of the policy is that Housing Benefit (HB)/Council Tax Support (CTS) claimants who get certain war pensions should get more HB/CTS than they otherwise would. This currently applies to 19 cases.</p> <p>In 2016/17 the Council awarded an extra £33,618 in HB as a result of this policy, and the Council received subsidy from DWP covering 75% of this expenditure - therefore the cost to the City Council of this policy in 2016/17 was around £8,404.</p>
Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP)	There is further help with housing costs through the use of DHP and the Council has a local procedure on awarding DHP whereby we would disregard as income some extra elements of war disablement pensions (the same as in housing benefit). There is no requirement to record this. However, Officers believe the number of DHP customers who have benefited from this will be low.

Cont.

Theme	Measure(s)
Under-occupation Reductions in Housing Benefit	Legislation continues to assist armed forces personnel in that a bedroom used by members of the armed or reserve forces will not be counted as a 'spare' room whilst they are away from their main place of residence. This is providing that they have an intention to return to the property and they were in fact treated as a non-dependant person prior to their absence.
Access to Council Venues	The Council offers discounts to Defence Privilege card holders to use at the City's museums and the Guildhall.