

Gloucester City Council

Meeting:	Cabinet	Date:	11 November 2020
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 support offered to current and former members of the armed forces, reservists and their families as part of our commitment to the Gloucestershire Armed Forces Community Covenant ('the Covenant').

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.

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 and this position is appointed to (or re-appointed to) annually by the Council.
- 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 The 2011 census results indicated that over 300 serving members of the military were living in Gloucester at the time of the survey, not including partners or children.
- 3.6 In January 2019 the Ministry of Defence estimated that by 2028 there will be 1.6 million veterans living in the UK with over a half of all veterans being aged 65 or older and 87% of all veterans being male.
- 3.7 Gloucestershire is home to 18 Army Cadet detachments with 2 of these being located in Gloucester, namely - Malmesbury Road Platoon and the Gloucestershire ACF Band & Corps of Drum.
- 3.8 In the previous 12 months, 22 individuals who identified as service or ex service personnel have been re-housed in Gloucester through the Gloucestershire Homeseeker Choice Based Lettings Scheme.
- 3.9 We are required to comply with the Code of Guidance on Homelessness 2018 and have regard to armed forces personnel in our housing allocation scheme. In addition, we are committed to improving housing outcomes for members and ex-members of the armed forces. The countywide Homeseeker plus allocations policy gives additional preference in terms of re-housing armed forces members. Members of the armed forces have a local connection to the district of their choice. This greater level of choice evidences the additional preference afforded to those who are serving or have recently served in the armed forces.

- 3.10 In addition to any duties owed under the homelessness legislation, on discharge members of the armed forces with Homeless priority need (i.e. dependent children or vulnerable as a result of disability) will be awarded Gold band for 6 months from the discharge date. Those that are homeless with a non - priority need are given Silver band from their discharge date. Should they become homeless again within 5 years of the discharge priority need or unintentionally homeless applicants will be awarded Gold band again for 6 months from Notice being received.
- 3.11 The 'duty to refer' applies to the Ministry of Defence under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, therefore they are required to refer any service personnel facing homelessness within 56 days to the local housing authority. This enables access to housing services as early as possible in the process and increase access to social housing.
- 3.12 The charity Alabare run a 12 bed home for veterans based in Longlevens which is the second of their Gloucestershire properties.
- 3.13 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. It is these customer facing aspects of the Council which are likely to be more relevant to our Armed Forces.
- 3.14 The Council is also represented by Councillors and senior officers at several annual events to mark a range of important dates such as Remembrance Day but also events to celebrate our local armed forces community operating out of Imjin Barracks. Sadly, this year many of the public events have been postponed or celebrated virtually due to Covid 19, however, the Council recognise both the historical and ongoing sacrifices and efforts of our armed forces by marking key dates with the flying of flags.
- 3.15 Our District Council partners in addition to Gloucestershire County Council are also signed up to the Covenant and continue to work together to improve how councils can collaborate as a network, with a particular focus on -
- 1) Identifying where contributions can be made to the South West Regional Development Project;
 - 2) Obtaining a better understanding of the needs of children and young people in the armed forces community;
 - 3) Opportunities for applications to the £10m Military Covenant Fund, and
 - 4) Future networking arrangements
- 3.16 South West Consortium of local authorities, (Forces Connect South West) has now launched their new outreach vehicle and has a dedicated Outreach Officer/ Driver. Funded by the MOD Covenant Trust Fund the new outreach vehicle is part of a package of resources developed to raise awareness of the covenant

and make a difference in the support provided to the whole military community in the South West.

3.17 The Armed Forces Covenant Fund launched in 2015 provides £10m each year to support members of the Armed Forces community. Applications are welcomed from Local Government, to support local delivery of Armed Forces Covenants. To date the Council has not applied for funding.

3.18 During the course of the Covid-19 pandemic we have welcomed the support of Military Planners from the Armed Forces who have supported a number of our response efforts.

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 and continue to make.

7.0 Future Work and Conclusions

7.1 The Council's new website includes a page dedicated to information about the support we can offer to Armed Forces Personnel and veterans and includes resources and links to other pages.

7.3 Officers within front line services, particularly those in Community Wellbeing & Housing to provide advice and signpost ex serving personnel supporting them to do things where they live. The Council, through the Gloucester Lottery, offers small grants to support residents who are not currently involved in local community activities to develop projects using the asset based community development approach and such an opportunity may assist somebody with what can often be a difficult transition period.

7.4 Gloucester City Council remains committed to our Armed Forces community and an annual update report for Cabinet will continue to be provided each autumn.

8.0 Financial Implications

8.1 Financial implications are discussed within the report and appendix. 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.

Background Documents:

Gloucestershire Armed Forces Community Covenant