



ADUR & WORTHING COUNCILS

Joint Strategic Committee
9 November 2021
Agenda Item 5

Key Decision: No

Ward(s) Affected: All

Supporting the Armed Forces Community Covenant

Report by the Chief Executive

1. Purpose

1.1 Adur & Worthing Councils are committed to supporting the armed forces and as part of this commitment have been signatories to the Armed Forces Community Covenant since 2013. The Covenant aims to ensure that members of the armed forces community receive the support and access to public services they require.

1.2 Adur & Worthing Councils have, as part of this work, developed a range of new commitments and actions to uphold the principles of the Covenant by:

- Recognising the sacrifices made by the armed forces community
- Encouraging support for the armed forces community
- Promoting understanding and awareness amongst the public
- Encouraging activities to help the community integrate into local life
- Supporting veterans and service families in employment with the Councils.

2. Recommendations

2.1 Members are requested to note and approve the work being undertaken to uphold the principles of the Armed Forces Community Covenant.

3. Context

3.1 Adur & Worthing Councils are committed to supporting the armed forces and as part of this commitment have been signatories to the Armed Forces Community Covenant since 2013. This commitment includes upholding the following objectives of the Covenant:

- That no member of the Armed Forces Community should face disadvantage in the provision of services compared with any other citizen
- That, in some circumstances, special treatment may be appropriate especially for the injured or bereaved.

3.2 The purpose of the Community Covenant is to encourage support for the Armed Forces community that is working and residing in Adur and Worthing and to recognise and remember the sacrifices made by members of the Armed Forces Community, particularly those who have given the most. This includes active service personnel, veterans, reservists, and the families of all who live or have lived in Adur and Worthing.

3.3 The Councils have appointed elected members to be Armed Forces Champions who have been asked by the Leaders of the respective councils to support these commitments and as part of this, to engage with and support the work of the broader West Sussex Civilian Military Partnership Board that is overseeing this work at strategic level. Our Armed Forces Champions are:

- Adur District - Councillor Andy McGregor
- Worthing Borough - Councillor Lionel Harman

4. Supporting the Principles of the Covenant

4.1 Adur and Worthing Councils have developed the following commitments, using the overall Covenant Strategy being led by the West Sussex Civilian Military Partnership Board. The Councils will, through these commitments, seek to uphold the principles of the Armed Forces Covenant by:

- recognising the sacrifices made by the armed forces community
- encouraging support for the armed forces community
- promoting understanding and awareness amongst the public
- encouraging activities to help the community integrate into local life

- supporting veterans and service families in employment with the councils.

4.2 The commitments set out below and in Appendix 1 are divided in two main areas of focus, our commitments as an employer and our commitments as a service provider and place leader.

Our Commitments as an Employer

4.3 We will seek to undertake the following actions as an employer:

- We will consult on the possibility of an interview scheme for former service personnel and veterans to ensure they get an interview if they meet the essential requirements of the role.
- We will offer reservists additional days paid leave each year (pro-rata for part time employees) for the continuous training period.
- Through line management arrangements we will offer support to military spouses and partners so that they know how to access the flexible working policy, the leave policy and the support available through the Councils' Employee Assistance Programme.
- We have and will continue to ensure that all new members of staff are told about the Covenant through our staff handbook and have an e-learning course available for staff to ensure they understand its meaning and our duties.
- We will offer mentoring to ex-services personnel upon employment to help their transition into civilian employment.
- Through the Volunteering Policy we will enable volunteering opportunities for our staff which support armed forces communities.

Our Commitments as a Service Provider and Place Leader

4.4 The councils will undertake the following actions when delivering services and activities with our residents and businesses:

- The councils will appoint elected Members to be Armed Forces Champions, who will support these commitments and engage with the work of the West Sussex Civilian Military Partnership Board who are overseeing this work at strategic level.
- The senior management team will promote the Armed Forces Covenant and its aims and the Head of Communities and Wellbeing will be the officer contact within the councils.
- We will actively work and engage with partners to promote the support that is available for service and ex-services people including social care, healthcare education and housing.
- The Councils will seek to support the financial well being for those most in need by disregarding (not taken into account) war pensions as income when calculating relevant benefits.

- Customer Service staff will be supported to signpost veterans to appropriate services inside and outside the councils. Other front line staff who come into contact with veterans will be encouraged to do the same.
- The councils' CRM project will, in time, allow customer flags for veteran status to be visible to all teams improving joined up service support. The likely timescale for completion of the CRM is 2023-24.
- We will continue our work in becoming 'trauma informed councils' ensuring staff are aware of the effect of trauma on members of the Armed Forces and how we are best able to respond and help.
- We will continue to fulfil our housing function through our Housing Allocation Policy with careful and due regard to the needs of service personnel and their families. The policy seeks to provide support for current and past members of the armed forces, plus bereaved spouses and civil partners.
- In responding to Armed Forces personnel and their families who have become homeless, we will seek to assist them through the above housing policy and referral to appropriate specialist services including support from Armed Forces charities in line with personnel wishes.
- Through our Wellbeing Hubs we will ensure service and ex-service members and their families will receive appropriate assistance including referral to trauma recovery and mental health services should these be required.
- We will develop a web page dedicated to the work of the Covenant that signposts people to information about the support and services available.
- We will acknowledge and give thanks for the work of the Armed Forces during the year, including flag flying on Armed Forces Day and holding an act of Remembrance each year.
- We will work with our business partners (e.g. Chamber of Commerce) as part of our Covid recovery plan, to encourage local businesses to consider participation in the national "Heroes Welcome" scheme
- We will actively seek opportunities to support the Armed Forces Community within the Adur and Worthing including the promotion of grant applications to the Community Covenant Fund .

5. Delivery of the Commitments and New Web Page

- 5.1 Each of the Armed Forces Covenant commitments and actions has an identified responsible officer and progress will be monitored against the commitments on a 6 monthly basis.
- 5.2 We have developed a new webpage that sets out our commitments and also provides information on sources of support and advice for both members of the armed forces and those seeking to support them. We have benchmarked this work against other councils in the region and we feel this work, supported

within existing budgets, is an example of good practice. We will update the webpage and our commitments as we monitor progress and receive further feedback and information.

6. Engagement and Communication

- 6.1 The development of the commitments and actions has been developed in response to the ongoing engagement and consultation work of West Sussex Civilian Military Partnership Board that includes representation by the armed forces, the work of the Armed Forces Champions in the community and feedback from service users and staff.
- 6.2 Additional information has been used from consultation and engagement activities by the national and regional branches of the Armed Forces Community Covenant.

7. Financial Implications

- 7.1 There are no unbudgeted financial implications in this report. Each commitment will be delivered as part of existing service plans and budgets.

8. Legal Implications

- 8.1 Allocation to social housing is governed by Part VI of the Housing Act 1996
- 8.2 The Homelessness (Priority Needs for Accommodation) Order 2002 placed the priority for former members of the armed services on a statutory basis.
- 8.3 The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 has new duties on housing authorities to intervene earlier to prevent homelessness and to take reasonable steps to relieve homelessness for all eligible applicants, not just those that have priority need.
- 8.4 Section 111 of the Local Government Act, 1972 allows the Councils to do anything which is calculated to facilitate, or is conducive or incidental to, the discharge of any of their functions, which includes the signing of the Armed Forces Covenant and the appointment of a Champion for the Armed Forces

Officer Contact Details:

Catherine Howe, Interim Chief Executive
Telephone: 01903 221001 Email: catherine.howe@adur-worthing.gov.uk

Richard Tuset, Policy Officer

Telephone: 01273 962831 Email: richard.tuset@adur-worthing.gov.uk

Sustainability & Risk Assessment

1. Economic

- 1.1 It is hoped that the new commitments and actions will support the armed forces and their families in a range of ways, including access to schooling, skills training and sustainable employment.

2. Social

2.1 Social Value

- 2.1.1 Our Armed Forces have made and continue to make the greatest possible sacrifices for our country, often the ultimate sacrifice. The Covenant and our commitments seek to support and thank the armed forces and their families for their service. Through events such as Armed Forces Day and Remembrance Sunday, we will create opportunities for the communities of Adur and Worthing to better understand and value the work of the Armed Forces.

2.2 Equality Issues

- 2.2.1 Service personnel and their families face unique challenges and as a result have specific needs, often relating to health and wellbeing, housing, schooling and employment. The development of the commitments and actions presented in this report have been developed in response to feedback from the West Sussex Civilian Military Partnership Board that includes representation by the armed forces, plus the work of the Armed Forces Champions in the community and feedback from service users and staff. Additional information on the needs of the armed forces and their families has been gained from consultation and engagement activities by the national and regional branches of the Armed Forces Military Covenant.

2.3 Community Safety Issues (Section 17)

- 2.3.1 There are no specific implications but community safety issues will be considered as part of the ongoing work of the Covenant.

2.4 Human Rights Issues

- 2.4.1 The commitments and actions presented in the report intend to support and ensure the human rights of serving service personnel, veterans, reservists, and the families of all who live or have lived in Adur and Worthing.

3. Environmental

- 3.1 There are no specific environment and sustainability implications identified.

4. Governance

- 4.1 This report provides the Joint Strategic Committee with the proposed actions Adur & Worthing Councils intend to undertake to uphold the commitments made by each of the Councils in 2013 when they signed the Armed Forces Community Covenant. The actions also form part of the Councils' strategic Thrive agenda as described in "Platforms for our Places : Going Further", where we commit to helping everyone in our community to improve their own lives and the places they live.

Appendix 1



ADUR & WORTHING COUNCILS

Armed Forces Community Covenant Commitments

1. Context and Purpose

Adur District Council and Worthing Borough Council have been signatories to the Armed Forces Community Covenant since 2013 and are committed to upholding the key objectives of the Covenant:

- That no member of the Armed Forces Community should face disadvantage in the provision of services compared with any other citizen.
- That, in some circumstances, special treatment may be appropriate especially for the injured or bereaved.

The purpose of the Community Covenant is to encourage support for the Armed Forces community that is working and residing in Adur and Worthing and to recognise and remember the sacrifices made by members of the Armed Forces Community, particularly those who have given the most. This includes serving service personnel, veterans, reservists, and the families of all who live or have lived in Adur and Worthing.

The Councils have appointed elected members to be Armed Forces Champions¹ who have been asked by the Leaders of the respective Councils to support these commitments and as part of this, to engage with and support the work of the broader West Sussex Civilian Military Partnership Board that is overseeing this work at strategic level.

Adur & Worthing Councils have developed the following commitments, using the overall Covenant Strategy being led by the West Sussex Civilian Military Partnership Board.

¹ The Leaders confirm the Armed Forces Champions shortly after the Annual Council Meetings. Nominations are via a Leader's report. Armed Forces Champions are Member appointments.

2. Principles and Aims

The Councils recognise the value service personnel, reservists, veterans and military families (together the Armed Forces Community) bring to the life of the Adur and Worthing and its communities. The Councils will, through these commitments, seek to uphold the principles of the Covenant by:

- recognising the sacrifices made by the armed forces community
- encouraging support for the armed forces community
- promoting understanding and awareness amongst the public
- encouraging activities to help the community integrate into local life
- supporting veterans and service families in employment with the Councils.

In upholding these principles the Councils will work in partnership with local representatives of armed forces organisations, major charities and other local authorities. The Councils will also support the West Sussex Civilian Military Partnership Board, which includes local stakeholders such as other district and borough councils, the NHS, the armed forces community and armed forces charities.

3. Commitments and Actions

We will work in partnership with the Armed Forces community to understand the unique challenges they face and provide guidance and support so they can easily access, help shape and improve the services that they need. We will work to ensure our staff and Members understand these commitments and apply them in all they do within the Councils and their communities.

Our Commitments as an Employer

We will undertake the following actions to fulfil the Covenant as an employer:

- We will consult on the possibility of an interview scheme for former service personnel and veterans to ensure they get an interview if they meet the essential requirements of the role.
- We will offer reservists additional days paid leave each year (pro-rata for part time employees) for the continuous training period.
- Through line management arrangements we will offer support to military spouses and partners so that they know how to access the flexible working policy, the leave policy and the support available through the Councils' Employee Assistance Programme.
- We have and will continue to ensure that all new members of staff are told about the Covenant through our staff handbook and have an e-learning course available for staff to ensure they understand its meaning and our duties.
- We will offer mentoring to ex-services personnel upon employment to help their transition into civilian employment.
- Through the Volunteering Policy we will enable volunteering opportunities for our staff which support armed forces communities.

Our Commitments as a Service Provider and Place Leader

The Councils will undertake the following actions when delivering services and activities with our residents and businesses:

- The Councils will appoint elected Members to be Armed Forces Champions, who will support these commitments and engage with the work of the West Sussex Civilian Military Partnership Board who are overseeing this work at strategic level.
- The senior management team will promote the Armed Forces Covenant and its aims and the Head of Communities and Wellbeing will be the officer contact within the Councils.
- We will actively work and engage with partners to promote support available for service and ex-services people including social care, healthcare education and housing.
- The Councils will seek to support the financial well being for those most in need by disregarding (not taken into account) war pensions as income when calculating relevant benefits.
- Customer Service staff will be supported to signpost veterans to appropriate services inside and outside the Councils. Other front line staff who come into contact with veterans will be encouraged to do the same.
- The Councils' CRM project will, in time, allow customer flags for veteran status to be visible to all teams improving joined up service support. The likely timescale for completion of the CRM is 2023-24.
- We will continue our work in becoming 'trauma informed Councils' ensuring staff are aware of the effect of trauma on members of the Armed Forces and how we are best able to respond and help.
- We will continue to fulfil our housing function through our Housing Allocation Policy with careful and due regard to the needs of service personnel and their families. The policy seeks to provide support for current and past members of the armed forces, plus bereaved spouses and civil partners.
- In responding to Armed Forces personnel and their families who have become homeless, we will seek to assist them through the above housing policy and referral to appropriate specialist services including support from Armed Forces charities in line with personnel wishes.
- Through our Wellbeing Hubs we will ensure service and ex-service members and their families will receive appropriate assistance including referral to trauma recovery and mental health services should these be required.
- We will develop a web page dedicated to the work of the Covenant that signposts people to information about the support and services available.
- We will acknowledge and give thanks for the work of the Armed Forces during the year, including flag flying on Armed Forces Day and holding an act of Remembrance each year.
- We will work with our business partners (eg Chamber of Commerce) as part of our Covid recovery plan, to encourage local businesses to consider participation in the national "[Heroes Welcome](#)" scheme
- We will actively seek opportunities to support the Armed Forces Community within the Adur and Worthing including the promotion of grant applications to the [Community Covenant Fund](#).

4. Monitoring and Governance

- These commitments and the delivery of the Covenant's aims will be overseen by the Armed Forces Champion lead members.
- The lead members will attend the West Sussex Civilian Military Partnership Board to share learning and report progress.
- The Champions will work with Adur & Worthing Councils' Members to support the achievement of the Covenant's aims.