

FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

REPORT TO: COMMUNITY PROFILE & PARTNERSHIPS
OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

DATE: MONDAY, 7 JANUARY 2013

REPORT BY: CHIEF EXECUTIVE

SUBJECT: FLINTSHIRE COMMUNITY COVENANT

1.00 PURPOSE OF REPORT

To recommend the adoption of an Armed Forces Community Covenant between the Council, The Armed Forces in Flintshire and representatives from the Voluntary, Business, Health and Education Sectors.

2.00 BACKGROUND

The Community Covenant Scheme was launched by the Government in 2011. The Scheme was announced by the Prime Minister as part of a wider Armed Forces Covenant package in May 2011 when it was agreed that the principles of the Armed Forces Covenant be written into Law.

The Armed Forces Act 2011 includes the following principles:

- Recognising the unique nature of Service
- Ensuring that there is no disadvantage e.g. in accessing public services, as a result of Service in the armed Forces;
- Allowing special treatment where justified e.g. in the case of injured personnel

In November 2011 the Welsh Government published their Package of Support for the Armed Forces Community in Wales. The Welsh Government document should be read in conjunction with and compliments the MOD's Covenant and sets out specific policies that the Welsh Government plans to implement. To date the Welsh Government has:

- contributed to the production of an annual Armed Forces Covenant Report
- appointed an Armed Forces Advocate (June Milligan, Director General Local Government and Communities)
- established an Expert Group on the needs of the Armed Forces Community in Wales which meets bi-annually and is chaired by the Minister for Local Government and

- Communities;
- improved communications with the Armed Forces Community to ensure they receive information on services and support they are entitled to
 - Welsh regulation, inspection and audit agencies will provide the checks and balances with regard to local authorities, health etc., on how they are operating.

Community Covenants are voluntary statements of mutual support between civilian communities and their local Armed Forces community. They are intended to complement, at a local level, the Armed Forces Covenant, which outlines the mutual obligations between the Nation, the Government and the Armed Forces.

Community Covenants aim to:

- Encourage local communities to support the Armed Forces community in their areas
- Nurture public understanding and awareness of the issues affecting the Armed Forces community
- Recognise and remember the sacrifices faced by the Armed Forces Community
- Encourage activities which help to integrate the Armed Forces community into local life
- 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.

As highlighted above the Welsh Government is encouraging local authorities and their partners to develop Community Covenants. Appendix 1 shows the current position across Wales; 7 local authorities have signed a Covenant, 11 are in the process of signing and 4 have not yet begun.

The Ministry of Defence has also made available a Community Covenant Grant Scheme to deliver financial support to projects at the local level, which strengthen the ties or the mutual understanding between members of the Armed Forces Community and the wider community in which they live. £30 million is available from the MOD until 2015 and applications are invited for sums from £100 to £250,000, although it is likely that bids for smaller amounts of funding will be favoured to support local projects that deliver tangible benefits.

At its meeting on the 24th February 2012, the Welsh Local Government Association agreed to the development of a Memorandum of Understanding between Welsh Local Government and the Armed Forces Community in Wales which is in the process of being signed.

3.00 CONSIDERATIONS

Appendix 2 to this report is a draft outline of a Flintshire Community Covenant which is based on the 'model' Community Covenant issued by the MOD. Section 4 of the Covenant, "Measures" outlines the role that Flintshire County Council, together with its partner agencies, will actively promote in the development of a Covenant.

It is proposed to include the following measures within the Covenant:

- Establish an on-line service library of organisations with a remit to provide assistance and support to members of the Armed Forces Community. A designated web page will enable the service library to be accessible for members of the Armed Forces Community to find the assistance they need and will be used by council staff as a signposting resource.
- Flintshire County Council will publicise an established single point of contact via its Flintshire Connects Centres; employees will be trained to provide appropriate advice and support, or provide a "signpost" facility to encourage the community to make their status known so that all available help and advice from the council and other organisations can be provided.
- Flintshire County Council will collect data on the range and frequency of services accessed by the Armed Forces Community. The management information derived from this data will be utilised to help improve services offered to the Armed Forces Community.
- Flintshire County Council will engage with its partners in the private, public and voluntary sectors, health and business sectors, in addition to Reservists, TAs and Cadet Forces to identify opportunities to fulfil the objectives of the Community Covenant.

The development of a Community Covenant will need to be a multi agency approach and representatives from the health, voluntary, business and educational establishments and the Armed Forces will be crucial to the success of the Covenant. A suggested list of partner agencies is included on page 2 of the appended draft Community Covenant.

Once all the partners are on board and agreement has been reached, a signing ceremony will take place to launch the Community Covenant.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Aaron Shotton will champion the Armed Forces Community Covenant.

More information about Community Covenants can be found at the following sites:

www.britishlegion.org.uk
www.mod.uk/covenant

4.00 RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are requested to recommend :

- I. the adoption of a Community Covenant for Flintshire as appended;
- II. recommend the signatories as proposed; and
- III. recommend the launch of the Community Covenant

5.00 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None directly associated with this report. However, once a Community Covenant is signed and implemented; access to various funding streams is increased.

6.00 ANTI POVERTY IMPACT

None.

7.00 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

None.

8.00 EQUALITIES IMPACT

The purpose of the community covenant is to ensure that Members of the Armed Forces and their families are not disadvantaged in accessing public services.

9.00 PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

None directly associated with this report.

10.00 CONSULTATION REQUIRED

As outlined within the report and Community Covenant with partner agencies.

11.00 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN

None.

12.00 APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Wales Community Covenant Map
Appendix 2 – Draft Flintshire Community Covenant

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT) 1985
BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

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