

CABINET

Date of Meeting	Tuesday, 18 th December 2018
Report Subject	Armed Forces Covenant - Annual Report 2017/18
Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Corporate Management and Assets
Report Author	Chief Executive
Type of Report	Strategic

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is the second Annual Report of Flintshire County Council's Armed Forces Covenant.

The Armed Forces Covenant is a promise from the nation that those who serve or have served in the armed forces, and their families, are treated fairly. The Covenant is a national responsibility involving government, businesses, local authorities, charities and the public, encouraging local communities to support the Armed Forces in their area and to promote understanding and awareness.

The Council is committed to supporting the Armed Forces community by working with a range of partners who have signed our Covenant, including Flintshire Local Voluntary Council and the Royal British Legion. The purpose of the Flintshire Covenant is to encourage support for the Armed Forces community who work and/or live in Flintshire and to recognise and remember the sacrifices made by members of this Armed Forces community.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	Endorse the positive progress made in meeting the Armed Forces Covenant and support the commitments for further improvement.
2	Approve the Armed Forces Covenant Annual Report prior to publication on the Council's website.

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING THE ARMED FORCES COVENANT
1.01	<p>The Armed Forces Covenant aims to recognise the sacrifices made by the Armed Forces community within the County and help provide support for them and their families ensuring they do not face disadvantage because of military service. The Armed Forces community includes in-Service and ex-Service personnel, families and widow(er)s. The Covenant is a two-way arrangement and the Armed Forces community is encouraged to do as much as they can to support their community.</p> <p>The Council proudly hosted the North Wales Armed Forces Day in June 2013 and signed the Covenant in July 2013.</p>
1.02	<p>The Covenant covers issues affecting the Armed Forces community such as housing, education and welfare support after military service has ended and also supporting current service members and their families.</p>
1.03	<p>A multi-agency steering group has been established with members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Flintshire County Council employees who are veterans• Representatives of key Council services, including Benefits, Education, Housing, Social Services,• Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and their families Association (SSAFA)• Royal British Legion (RBL)• A representative of the Armed Forces• Flintshire Local Voluntary Council. <p>Councillor Andrew Dunbobbin is the Council's Armed Forces Champion and is the chair of this group.</p>
1.04	<p>The Steering Group agreed an action plan in 2016 to progress its work. Key achievements are set out in the Annual report and include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• completing 77% of actions set out in the plan;• receiving the Silver award from the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme for the Council's Veteran friendly employment policies and practices;• demonstrating commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant by promoting Reserves Day and Armed Forces Day;• the appointment of the Regional Armed Forces Liaison Officers (one appointed to North West Wales and the second post to cover North East Wales). These posts have created additional capacity in councils across north Wales accelerating progress to meeting the commitments in the Covenant and supporting local projects to access grants;• The Regional Armed Forces Liaison Officers have delivered training to the Mental Health team in Social Services to raise awareness of the needs of veterans, enabling them to provide more effective services;• In October 2017, North Wales Fire and Rescue Service (NWFRS)

	<p>signed the Flintshire Armed Forces Covenant; and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Veterans and armed forces personnel in possession of an MOD Defence Privilege Card can take advantage of the Welsh Government's free swimming initiative.
1.05	<p>As part of the World War One celebrations, Southdown Community School in Buckley researched a local hero, Frederick Birks, who was awarded the Victoria Cross for his gallantry in World War One. The school's work was recognised in a recent Estyn report, which stated:</p> <p><i>“When studying a local war hero pupils were encouraged to use their own opinions to shape their history lessons. As the project grew it influenced the class in a new direction. Pupils gained a sense of personal achievement by knowing that their ideas contributed to changes in what they studied. Pupils were given an open approach to class planning, which enabled them to produce their own play on their research findings.”</i></p>
1.06	<p>Also included in the report are areas to be addressed during the next 12 months:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council services to start capturing the profile of their customers who are members of the Armed Forces community. This will enable services to better understand the make-up of the Armed Forces community in Flintshire and their needs; • schools to start capturing whether any pupils/students are children of serving members of the Armed Forces or veterans; restructure the Armed Forces Steering Group to reflect the functions of the recently restructured Regional group which has been divided into a Strategic and a Delivery Group; and • publish an annual newsletter to keep the Armed Forces community up to date with our progress.
1.07	<p>The two Regional Armed Forces Liaison Officers have completed a mapping exercise of the Armed Forces community in North Wales and their needs. The following 12 months will also focus on addressing the gaps identified in their report either locally or on a regional basis.</p>

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	<p>There are no financial resource implications arising directly from this report. Covenant Funds are available from the MoD which will continue to be pursued to support projects and activities across Flintshire to support the Covenant.</p> <p>Employees in public facing services will complete basic awareness training to develop a better understanding of the needs of the Armed Forces community.</p>

3.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
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3.01	The Armed Forces Steering Group has been involved in the activities and improvements identified in the Annual Report.

4.00	RISK MANAGEMENT
4.01	Adhering to the commitments of the Covenant would ensure that Armed Forces, their families and veterans are treated fairly when accessing Council services.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	Appendix 1: Armed Forces Covenant Annual Report 2017/18.

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	<p>Armed Forces Covenant</p> <p>Contact Officer: Fiona Mocko, Strategic Policy Advisor Telephone: 01352 702122 E-mail: Fiona.mocko@flintshire.gov.uk</p>

7.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
7.01	<p>Armed Forces Community: includes in-service and ex-service personnel, their families and widow(er)s.</p> <p>Armed Forces Covenant: the Armed Forces Covenant is a promise of mutual support between a civilian community and its local armed forces community.</p> <p>Armed Forces Liaison Officer: a full time officer funded by the Armed Forces Grant to support local authorities deliver the commitments set out in the Armed Forces Covenant.</p>