

STOCKTON-ON-TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET RECOMMENDATIONS

PROFORMA

Cabinet Meeting6th September 2012

1. Title of Item/Report

Update on progress against Stockton's Armed Forces Community Covenant (including actions from the Regional Scrutiny Review of the Health Needs of the Ex-Service Community)

2. Record of the Decision

Consideration was given to a report that detailed progress on the implementation of Stockton's Armed Forces Community Covenant.

In March 2012 Stockton Council and partners signed the Stockton Armed Forces Community Covenant. The Covenant was intended to encourage support for the Armed Forces working and residing in the Borough of Stockton-on-Tees, and to recognise and remember the sacrifices made by members of the community.

The Covenant commits the Council and Renaissance partners to:-

- support employees who volunteer for reserve duties;
- ensure that the voice of serving and ex-service personnel is heard through the Council's engagement mechanisms;
- report annually to Council on the impact of the Covenant;
- identify key officer and Member champions, and implement the other recommendations of the Regional Scrutiny Review of the Health Needs of the Ex-Service Community.

The Armed Forces had in return committed to deliver annual updates to both Members and updates on operational experiences and policy changes, and to be involved in community activities and events.

The final report of the Regional Health Scrutiny Committee following its review of the health needs of ex-service personnel was considered by Cabinet in February 2011. The review was an innovative and wide ranging piece of work covering physical, mental and socio-economic needs. The project received contributions from all 12 of the region's local authorities, the Ministry of Health, Department of Health, NHS bodies, and ex-service charities and personnel themselves, amongst others.

The review's 47 recommendations sought to ensure that ex-service personnel and their families were not disadvantaged due to their service in the Armed Forces.

Many of the recommendations were for external organisations (eg. NHS), or for local authorities but could be undertaken on a regional basis. For example, ANEC had agreed to take forward work in relation to improving the quality of the data flow between the armed forces and local authorities. In relation to the recommendations applicable to Stockton Council, in line with the Cabinet decision an action plan was agreed with officers and relevant Cabinet Members.

Overall the proposals sought to utilise existing generic support where possible, whilst recognising that through better identification of clients within services, existing services would be better able to meet their needs, and potentially refer clients to other services if appropriate. The Policy Officers' Group was tasked with co-ordinating the implementation of the local action plan. It was agreed to monitor this on a six-monthly basis.

The definition of someone who was ex-Service, or a veteran, was taken to mean those who had served in the UK Armed Forces, whether regular or reserve forces, at any time and irrespective of length of service, and also included those who served in the Merchant Navy in support of legally defined military operations (MoD).

These actions were subsequently incorporated into Stockton's Community Covenant which recognised the contribution made by the Armed Forces as a whole. The report therefore provided an overview of all measures taken to date to support the armed forces community in Stockton-on-Tees. The annual report to Council on the impact of the Covenant was scheduled for March 2013, and the report supported that process.

A report summarising progress to date was attached to the report. This also highlighted were actions originated from the regional review, as the Regional Health Scrutiny Committee continued to monitor them on a region-wide basis, and the report formed the basis of Stockton's submission to the next meeting.

There had been progress on a number of issues, and to further embed good practice it had been agreed to hold a seminar style event in order to bring together relevant service areas and key stakeholders. One of the intended outcomes for this was a better awareness of the range of information that was being collected, and how this could be brought

together to improve services.

It was recognised that responsibility for the covenant and actions from the review cut across a number of portfolios. It was agreed that for consistency and clarity one member should be identified as lead member/champion for this matter.

RESOLVED that:-

1. the progress report be noted.
2. the ongoing work to implement the actions be supported.
3. Councillor Beall be identified as lead member/champion for matters relating to the Armed Forces Community Covenant and Regional Scrutiny Review actions.

3. Reasons for the Decision

The final report on the regional scrutiny review on the health needs of ex-service personnel was considered by Cabinet in February 2011. It was agreed to implement and monitor those actions applicable to Stockton Council. In March 2012 the Council signed up to a local Community Covenant and many of the scrutiny recommendations were incorporated into the Covenant.

4. Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None

5. Declared (Cabinet Member) Conflicts of Interest

Councillor Nelson declared a personal interest in the item entitled Stockton Armed Forces Community Covenant... as he had a family member who was a member of the Armed Forces.

6. Details of any Dispensations

Not applicable

7. Date and Time by which Call In must be executed

Midnight on Friday 14 September 2012

Proper Officer
10 September 2012