

STOCKTON-ON-TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET RECOMMENDATIONS

PROFORMA

Cabinet Meeting4th September 2013

1. Title of Item/Report

Armed Forces Annual Report

2. Record of the Decision

Consideration was given to a report that presented the first Annual Armed Forces Report to Council. It summarised the work with the Armed Forces and the progress so far on the implementation of Stockton's Armed Forces Community Covenant. It also outlined proposed projects for the coming year and included a statement from the Commanding Officer of 102 Battalion REME.

On 18th January 2012 the following motion was submitted in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 12.1. Moved by Councillor Cook, seconded by Councillor Beall:-

“The Council recognises the contribution the Armed Forces community makes in defence of the realm, often sacrificing some civilian freedoms, facing danger and, sometimes, suffering serious injury or death as a result of their duty. The Council also recognises the vital role the families of Armed Forces personnel have in supporting their operational effectiveness.”

The motion requested Council support the signing of a local community covenant in partnership with the Armed Forces community. To agree to work and act together to honour the national Armed Forces Covenant. To work with the Armed Forces community locally, recognising and remembering the sacrifices made and in the provision of help and advice to support integration into civilian life.”

The motion was carried with full Council support.

Following the motion to Council Stockton Council and partners signed the Stockton Armed Forces Community Covenant on March 7th 2012. 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. A Members Policy seminar was delivered in October as part of this commitment. A further seminar would be requested once the Armed Forces were in a position to inform the Council how changes to the services and local Armed Forces bases/ units would impact on the Borough, probably early 2014.

As part of their commitment to the covenant an annual statement had been prepared by the Commanding Officer for 102 Battalion REME and this was attached to the report.

The Armed Forces Community Covenant identified 4 Member Champions Cllr Steve Nelson, Housing and Community Safety, Cllr Mike Smith – Transport and Regeneration, Cllr David Coleman – Access and Communities with Cllr Jim Beall – Adult Services and Health and Deputy Leader being the lead Member Champion.

The actions from the Regional Healthy Scrutiny Committee on the Health Needs of the Service Community were incorporated into Stockton's Community Covenant which recognised the contribution made by the Armed Forces as a whole. 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. An action plan was developed and monitored by the regional committee until 31st March 2013. Stockton's actions were incorporated into the delivery of the Community Covenant.

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. Once all local authorities signed their individual Community Covenants a Regional Charter was signed on 9th October 2012 on behalf of the following partners:-

- The Armed Forces Community in the North East
- The Association of North East Councils (on behalf of all of the 12 Councils in the North East Region)
- The NHS in the North East
- The Royal British Legion
- JobCentrePlus
- Northumbria Probation Trust
- Durham Tees Valley Probation Trust
- North East Chamber of Commerce
- The Prison Service
- Voluntary Organisations North East (VONNE)
- Northumbria Police
- Durham Police
- Cleveland Police

The report provided an overview of all measures taken to date to support the armed forces community through the Community Covenant in Stockton-on-Tees.

2014 would be a significant year for commemoration as it would be 100 years since the start of the First World War and 70 years since the D-Day landings. Tees Valley had been successful in an Arts Council funding bid which would see a year-long programme of events commemorating the First World War. The events were primarily educational and all children across the Borough would be engaged in activities in schools, libraries and museums.

There had been achievements across each of the pillars of the Community Covenant but there was some way to go. In the coming year work would be undertaken on the following priorities:-

- Protocols for Information and Intelligence sharing
- Updating of the JSNA
- Expansion of the Youth Programme across the Tees Valley (currently

piloted in Redcar and Cleveland)

- Expansion of the TEWV Veterans Mental Health Awareness Programme
- Improved links to employers and employment opportunities
- Investigation of the need for specialist Ex-Service personnel housing units
- Submission of a bid for a sustainable model of cross-sector support for Armed Forces Community to the Community Covenant Grant Scheme.
- Commemoration of the First World War and the 70th Anniversary of the D-Day landings.
- Establish an Armed Forces Community of Interest group as part of the LSP refresh.

RECOMMENDED to Council that:-

1. The progress report and support on-going work to implement the actions be noted.
2. The report be endorsed.

3. Reasons for the Decision

It was agreed by Council to receive an Armed Forces Annual Report following the motion to Council to sign a Community Covenant.

4. Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None

5. Declared (Cabinet Member) Conflicts of Interest

None

6. Details of any Dispensations

N/A

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

Midnight on Friday, 13th September 2013

Proper Officer
09 October 2013