


Agenda Item No:	6	
Committee:	Cabinet	
Date:	18 March 2024	
Report Title:	District-wide Armed Forces Military Covenant	

1 Purpose / Summary

- 1.1 To consider a proposal to sign an updated District-wide Armed Forces Military Covenant (AFC) as a commitment to current and legacy armed forces personnel living the Fenland District.

2 Key Issues

- 2.1 The Armed Forces Covenant (AFC) is a commitment to ensure those who serve, have served, and their families are treated fairly.
- 2.2 It's a mutual understanding of respect and support between the local authority and the armed forces community.
- 2.3 The Council signed a community covenant 13 years ago which involves the County Council, District Councils, Police, Fire and the NHS and the existing covenant is seen as too vague and does not accurately represent and align with our remits as a local authority.
- 2.4 Therefore, the main objectives in signing a new covenant as set out in Appendix A is to reaffirm our commitment.
- 2.5 There are no additional resources needed in order to sign the AFC.

3 Recommendations

- 3.1 Cabinet is recommended to:
- Approve the signing of the AFC as set out in Appendix A by Cllr Wallwork, the Portfolio Holder with Responsibility for the AFC.

Wards Affected	All
Forward Plan Reference	
Portfolio Holder(s)	Cllr Susan Wallwork – Portfolio Holder for Community, Health, Environmental Health, CCTV, Community Safety & Military Covenant
Report Originator(s)	Dan Horn – Assistant Director Ashley Godfrey – Community Support Manager
Contact Officer(s)	Dan Horn – As above Carol Pilson – Corporate Director
Background Papers	Armed Forces Covenant: guidance and support - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

1 BACKGROUND AND INTENDED OUTCOMES

- 1.1 The Armed Forces Covenant (AFC) is a commitment to ensure those who serve, have served, and their families are treated fairly.
- 1.2 It's a mutual understanding of respect and support between the local authority and the armed forces community. The AFC recognises the unique sacrifices made by our military personnel and aims to provide them with equal access to essential services and opportunities.
- 1.3 The Council signed a community covenant 13 years ago which involves the County Council, District Councils, Police, Fire and the NHS and the existing covenant is seen as too vague and does not accurately represent and align with our remits as a local authority.
- 1.4 Therefore, the main objectives in signing a new covenant as set out in Appendix A is to reaffirm our commitment and refresh AFC mindsets across the council and will also allow service specific pledges to be made which will prove that this is not merely a symbolic gesture but a tangible commitment to upholding our responsibility

2 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 Below are examples of pledges we are likely to make as part of signing a new AFC:
 - Engage with partners to ensure that Housing Statutory Duty is observed using best practice
 - Map local AFC Community members and the support that is available to them
 - Provide all staff with access to AFC Training
 - Regularly review and improve digital and hardcopy AFC support information
 - Promote the AFC to all partners including online training modules
 - Engage with and support internal staff from the AF Community
 - Support Armed Forces Day, Remembrance and other Civic Events
 - Work through Employer Recognition Scheme to provide best support for Armed Forces Community potential employees and current staff.
 - Ensure that all staff are considering the Armed Forces Community when dealing with residents
 - Ensure that staff are able to provide the best signposting and support for customers who have a connection to the Armed Forces
 - Support further collaboration between the Armed Forces Peterborough and Cambridgeshire Board and other partnerships
 - Link with and support local AF Community support groups

- Target AFC Community with grant funding information, training and employment support
 - Create support information for service leavers settling in Fenland
 - Ensure AFC Community are considered in Community Strategies
- 2.2 Moving forward, as we already have been accredited as a Bronze Award Holder we're aiming to apply to become a Silver Award holder in the UK Defence Employer Recognition Scheme, supported by Cllr Wallwork as Armed Forces Champion.
- 2.3 Signing a new AFC, with the above pledges, will support our silver award application by demonstrating our dedication to serve the Armed Forces community through all council services.

3 CONSULTATION

N/A

4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

N/A

5 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Legal Implications

5.2 There are no specific legal implications connected with the recommendations set out in this report.

5.3 Financial Implications

5.4 The Council (along with all other Councils in Cambridgeshire & Peterborough) is contributing £8333 per year from April 2024 for 3 years for a post to help meet all our duties and responsibilities towards our Armed Forces.

5.5 Equality Implications

5.6 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.

5.7 Equality Impact Assessments for service areas relative for the covenant relate to ensuring fairness in what the Council does.

SCHEDULES

Appendix A – AFC



Fenland District Council

We commit to uphold the Armed Forces Covenant and support the Armed Forces Community. We recognise the contribution that Service personnel, both regular and reservist, veterans and military families make to our organisation, our community and to the country.

Signed on behalf of:

Fenland District Council

Signed:

Name:

Position:

Date:



The Armed Forces Covenant

An Enduring Covenant Between

The People of the United Kingdom
His Majesty's Government

– and –

All those who serve or have served in the Armed Forces of the Crown

And their Families

The first duty of Government is the defence of the realm. Our Armed Forces fulfil that responsibility on behalf of the Government, sacrificing some civilian freedoms, facing danger and, sometimes, suffering serious injury or death as a result of their duty. Families also play a vital role in supporting the operational effectiveness of our Armed Forces. In return, the whole nation has a moral obligation to the members of the Naval Service, the Army and the Royal Air Force, together with their families. They deserve our respect and support, and fair treatment.

Those who serve in the Armed Forces, whether Regular or Reserve, those who have served in the past, and their families, should face no disadvantage compared to other citizens in the provision of public and commercial services. Special consideration is appropriate in some cases, especially for those who have given most, such as the injured and the bereaved.

This obligation involves the whole of society: it includes voluntary and charitable bodies, private organisations, and the actions of individuals in supporting the Armed Forces. Recognising those who have performed military duty unites the country and demonstrates the value of their contribution. This has no greater expression than in upholding this Covenant.

Section 1: Principles of The Armed Forces Covenant

1.1 We, Fenland District Council, will endeavour to uphold the key principles of the Armed Forces Covenant:

- *Members of the Armed Forces Community should not face disadvantages arising from their service in the provision of public and commercial services.*
- *In some circumstances special provision may be justified, especially for those who have given the most, such as the injured or bereaved.*

Section 2: Demonstrating our Commitment

2.1 We recognise the contribution that Service personnel, reservists, veterans, the cadet movement and military families make to our organisation, our community and to the country. We will seek to uphold the principles of the Armed Forces Covenant by:

- Engage with partners to ensure that Housing Statutory Duty is observed using best practice.
- Map local AFC Community members and the support that is available to them.
- Provide all staff with access to AFC Training
- Regularly review and improve digital and hardcopy AFC support information.
- Promote the AFC to all partners including online training modules.
- Engage with and support internal staff from the AF Community
- Support Armed Forces Day, Remembrance, and other Civic Events
- Work through Employer Recognition Scheme to provide best support for Armed Forces Community potential employees and current staff.
- Ensure that all staff are considering the Armed Forces Community when dealing with residents.
- Ensure that staff are able to provide the best signposting and support for customers who have a connection to the Armed Forces
- Support further collaboration between the Armed Forces Peterborough and Cambridgeshire Board and other partnerships.
- Link with and support local AF Community support groups.
- Target AF Community with grant funding information, training, and employment support
- Create support information for service leavers settling in Fenland.
- Ensure AF Community are considered in Community Strategies

2.2 We will publicise these commitments through our literature and/or on our website, setting out how we will seek to honour them and inviting feedback from the Armed Forces Community and our customers on how we are doing.