

Military Covenant - Motion at Council

Cabinet

Date: 5th September 2012

Author: Chief Executive and Leader of the Council

Wards /Locality Affected /Parishes Affected: All

1. Purpose and Reasons

- 1.1 This report responds to the motion arising from the Council meeting of 29th March 2012 (Minute 131 of Council 2011/12) on the adoption by the Council of a Military Covenant. An Armed Forces Community Covenant, as it is formally known, is a statement of mutual support between a civilian community and the serving members, veterans and families of local armed forces community. This report indicates how the Council is able to work with its partners to support to the principles of the Covenant.

2. Recommendations

Cabinet is requested to recommend to the Council that:

- 2.1 Swindon Borough Council enters into an Armed Forces Community Covenant by way of the signing of a covenant agreement at the Royal Yeomanry Freedom event to be held on Sunday 21st October 2012 at the Civic Offices, Swindon.
- 2.2 The Council's participation in the Armed Forces Community Covenant reflects the commitments set out in paragraph 3.6 of this report.
- 2.3 The Director of Law and Democratic Services in consultation with the Leader of the Council, Board Directors and other partner organisations be authorised to prepare and finalise the detail of the Armed Forces Community Covenant to be signed on 21st October 2012.
- 2.4 The Mayor, the Leader of the Council and the Leader of the Opposition and Minority Group be authorised to sign the Covenant on behalf of the Council.

3. Detail

- 3.1 At the Council meeting on 29th March 2012, the following motion was moved by the then Mayor, Councillor Ray Ballman and seconded by the then Deputy Mayor (now Mayor) Councillor Mick Bray (Minute 131 2011/12):

“This Council supports the Armed Forces Community Covenant and asks the Chief Executive, in consultation with colleagues in the Health Sector, to report to Cabinet on this matter in order that a Community Pledge can be signed when the Royal Yeomanry take up the Freedom of the Borough on 21st October 2012.”

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- 3.2 The motion received the unanimous support of the Councillors present at the meeting.
 - 3.3 An Armed Forces Community Covenant is a statement of mutual support between a civilian community, which includes the Council, the Health Authority, Voluntary organisations, serving members and family of the Armed Forces and Veterans.
 - 3.4 Work is being under taken by the Director of Law and Democratic Services to prepare the Covenant with Council officers meeting with military and other partner organisations. These meetings have included Board Directors of the Council, representatives of voluntary and business organisations, the Royal Yeomanry and SEQOL. Meetings are shortly to be held involving health and other partners. These meetings aim to identify the ways in which partners, including the Council, can align their actions and services to the principles and aims of the Covenant. It is anticipated that by October 2012 a range of partners will take part in the signing and entering into of the Covenant.
 - 3.5 The aims and objectives of the Covenant are to:
 - 3.5.1 Encourage local communities to support the Armed Forces Community in their areas.
 - 3.5.2 Nurture public understanding and awareness amongst the public of issues affecting the Armed Forces Community.
 - 3.5.3 Recognise and remember the sacrifices and challenges faced by the Armed Forces Community.
 - 3.5.4 Encourage activities that help to integrate the Armed Forces Community into local life.
 - 3.5.5 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.
 - 3.6 The Council's commitment to the Community Covenant is by way of:
 - 3.6.1 Recognising the achievement of the Borough's Royal Territorial Army Regiment, the Royal Yeomanry by supporting the Freedom of the Borough Parade in October 2012 and likewise that of any other armed forces unit within the Borough.
 - 3.6.2 Encourage adult involvement with Cadet Forces by attending Passing Out parades, awards evenings and by involving Cadets in Mayoral functions and events, for example, Remembrance Day Services at the Cenotaph and Freedom Parades.
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Further information on the subject of this report can be obtained from Stephen Taylor, Direct Dial Telephone Number (01793) 463012, staylor@swindon.gov.uk.

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- 3.6.3 Encourage schools, voluntary organisations and charities to access the Community Grant Scheme which will fund projects aimed at strengthening the ties and the mutual understanding between members of the Armed Forces Community and the wider community in Swindon.
- 3.6.4 Provide a housing ladder of opportunity for veterans who need to access affordable social housing. Members may wish to note that a review of the Council's Housing Allocations Policy is currently underway and consideration will be given as part of this exercise to how support can be provided to military personnel and veterans.
- 3.6.5 Assist with requests for adapted homes for wounded soldiers.
- 3.6.6 Support and recognise the achievements of staff who volunteer in Military Reservist Units.
- 3.6.7 Support service personnel, their dependents and veterans to access the health care/social health care they need in partnership with the Borough's health care providers.
- 3.7 The motion at Council proposed that "a Community Pledge can be signed when the Royal Yeomanry take up the Freedom of the Borough on 21st October 2012". This proposal has been welcomed by the Royal Yeomanry and other military partners.
- 3.8 It is proposed that the Mayor, the Leader of the Council, the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the Minority Group be authorised to sign the Covenant on behalf of the Council, alongside other community partners.

4. Implications, Diversity Impact Assessment and Risk Management

Financial and Procurement Implications

- 4.1 There are no direct financial implications for the Council. The Council's use of existing budgets will enable it to support the covenant as many of these aspects reflect current Council practices.
- 4.2 In August 2011 a Community Covenant Scheme was established by the Ministry of Defence to support financially projects which strengthen the ties or the mutual understanding between members of the Armed Forces Community and the wider community in which they live. Up to 30 million has been earmarked for projects over a four year period which should meet aims of the Community Covenant. The grant scheme will consider applications for funding between £100 and £250,000. It is possible that projects in support of the Covenant and its aims will be able to access this funding. Although none have been identified at this time.

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Legal and Human Rights Implications

- 4.2 Legal and Human Rights implications have been taken fully into account in the preparation of this report. It is considered that the recommendations of the report are compatible with Convention rights.

All Other Implications (including Staff, Sustainability, Health, Rural, Crime and Disorder)

- 4.3 There are no direct implications associated with this report.

Links to One Swindon, Strategic Objectives, Plans and Policies

- 4.4 The Community covenant reflects a One Swindon approach and a number of the commitments will have links to One Swindon and other corporate objectives and plans.

Diversity Impact Assessment

- 4.5 A Diversity Impact Assessment (DIA) has not been undertaken at this point. When SBC policies (such as Housing Allocations) are revised, they will be required to reflect the requirements of the Military Covenant and any additional government guidance. It is at this point that DIAs will need to be completed and will clearly set out any positive impact applied to current or former military personnel as a consequence of the covenant.

Risk Management

- 4.6 There are none identified linked to this report.

5. Consultees

- 5.1 The Board Director Commissioning, Board Director, Service Delivery, InSwindon, Royal Yeomanry, Chief Executive of SEQOL

6. Background Papers

- 6.1 None.

7. Appendices

- 7.1 None.

8. Key Decision/Decision in Forward Plan

- 8.1 This is not a Key Decision and is included in the Cabinet Forward Plan for September 2012.