



## **North Devon Council**

Report Date: Monday, 4 September 2023

Topic: Armed Forces Covenant

Report by: HEAD OF CUSTOMER FOCUS

### **1 INTRODUCTION**

1.1 This report is to outline the work and policies NDC have in place with regard to supporting both veterans and serving military in order to give councillors the necessary assurance we are in a position to sign a new Armed Forces Covenant

### **2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

2.1 To approve the North Devon Council proposed Armed Forces Covenant document as outlined in Appendix A.

### **3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

3.1 To demonstrate North Devon Councils commitment to support both veterans & serving military.

### **4 REPORT**

4.1 The Armed Forces Covenant is a promise by the nation that those who serve or have served in the Armed Forces, and their families, should be treated fairly and should not face disadvantages when seeking to access public or private goods and services in the UK.

4.2 The Covenant is a voluntary pledge and organisations can choose to sign up in order to demonstrate their support for the Armed Forces Community and for the principles of the Covenant.

4.3 Following a Devon wide covenant signed in 2012, the Armed Forces launched a new Covenant in May 2021 which this report relates to.

4.4 Following consultation with all NDC services, the following demonstrates our commitment:

#### **4.4.1 Promoting the Armed Forces:**

Promoting we are an Armed Forces friendly organisation through digital and social media channels & publishing our Covenant pledge on our website

#### **4.4.2 National Events:**

Promoting Armed Forces Day, Reserves Day, the Poppy Appeal Day and Remembrance activities through digital and social media channels

#### 4.4.3 Veterans, Reserves & Service spouses & partners

We welcome job applications from veterans, reservists spouses & partners who meet the criteria in job specifications.

Additional time off work entitlement for Reservists allows for up to 12 days paid leave per annum (pro rata) for training. If an employee is actually called up, the required paid time off work will be granted and any salary adjustments necessary will be made as per the official procedures issued to the Council.

#### 4.4.4 Supporting Housing Needs

Veterans and serving personnel are identified when applying for Housing Support via type of service, dates of service and service number which enables North Devon Council to offer suitable advice. The Devon Home Choice Policy (Devon Social Housing Register) provides various provisions for both veteran and serving personnel with regard to banding and local connection.

For Disabled Facilities Grants North Devon Council identifies members and ex-members of the armed forces. Where a means test is required any income from the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme will be disregarded.

Our Outreach team work closely with veterans, monitoring welfare & providing wraparound support.

#### 4.4.5 Additional Support:

We offer discounted rates for charities (including Armed Forces related) for use of our Pannier Market and events where trade collections are required. War Disablement Pension and War Widows payments are disregarded when calculating Council Tax support.

We regularly provide Community Councillor funding to the Chivenor Military Ladies Choir & welcome applications from Armed Forces charities and local organisations.

We provide an annual grant to Citizens Advice Bureau who, along with NDC, routinely refer clients to RBL, SSAfA, Ops Fortitude & Ops Courage.

4.5 Taking the above points 4.4.1 – 4.4.5 into account, we feel the Council are in a position to sign up to a new Armed Forces Covenant which is shown in Appendix A.

4.6 We will have the opportunity to update the Covenant as and when any policies are reviewed in the future.

## 5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no resource implications in adopting the Covenant.

## 6 EQUALITIES ASSESSMENT

Members of the armed forces, present or in the past and their families should face no disadvantage in accessing the provision of public services and in some cases, such as the injured and the bereaved that special consideration is appropriate.

## 7 ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

7.1 There are no environmental implications

## 8 CORPORATE PRIORITIES

8.1 What impact, positive or negative, does the subject of this report have on:

8.1.1 Improving customer focus – Offers support for those in our community who are or have served in the armed forces.

## 9 CONSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

9.1 Article of Part 3 Annex 1 Para 1 (e)  
Delegated

## 10 STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY

This report contains no confidential information or exempt information under the provisions of Schedule 12A of 1972 Act.

## 11 BACKGROUND PAPERS

The following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:  
A Guide for Local Authorities: How to deliver the Covenant in your area  
(England  
(The background papers are available for inspection and kept by the author of the report).

## 12 STATEMENT OF INTERNAL ADVICE

The author (below) confirms that advice has been taken from all appropriate Councillors and Officers: Sarah Higgins, Head of Customer Focus