



SHEFFIELD CITY COUNCIL Cabinet Report

Report of: Laraine Manley, Executive Director, Resources

Date: 9th November 2011

Subject: Community Covenant

Author of Report: Julie Bullen, 2736972

Summary:

The purpose of the report is to seek approval to implement the Community Covenant in Sheffield. This local Community Covenant complements the national Armed Forces Covenant and is a statement of mutual support between the civilian and local armed forces community. The covenant encourages local communities to support the Armed Forces Community in the local area.

Reasons for Recommendation:

The Community Covenant ensures that services:

- recognise the contribution made by the Armed Forces Community;
- remember the sacrifices made by members of the Armed Forces Community;
- share knowledge, experience and expertise to provide help and advice to members of the Armed Forces Community;
- encourage the integration from Service life into civilian life.

These aims are supported by Sheffield City Council.

The signing of a local Community Covenant Pledge opens access to the National Community Covenant Grant Scheme.

Recommendation:

Cabinet is asked to:

1. Approve and pledge support for a Community Covenant in Sheffield;

2. Approve the establishment of an Armed Forces Forum to provide oversight of all the activity within Sheffield relating to the Community Covenant;
3. Approve that a Lead Officer be identified to work with other agencies to take the Community Covenant forward, agreeing an action plan, to arrange and publicise events, and oversee its implementation.

Category of Report: OPEN

Statutory and Council Policy Checklist

Financial Implications
NO Cleared by: Chris Nicholson
Legal Implications
NO Cleared by:
Equality of Opportunity Implications
YES Cleared by: Adele Robinson
Tackling Health Inequalities Implications
NO
Human rights Implications
NO:
Environmental and Sustainability implications
NO
Economic impact
NO
Community safety implications
NO
Human resources implications
NO
Property implications
NO
Area(s) affected
City Wide
Relevant Cabinet Portfolio Leader
Councillor Dore, Leader of the City Council
Relevant Scrutiny Committee if decision called in
Overview & Management Scrutiny Committee
Is the item a matter which is reserved for approval by the City Council?
NO
Press release
YES

SHEFFIELD COMMUNITY COVENANT

1.0 SUMMARY

- 1.1 At full Council on 2nd March 2011, a motion was passed to create a 'Sheffield Community Covenant' in order to ensure that local services such as housing, education and social care are appropriate to support the needs of local armed forces community; and that a report is brought to Cabinet after full consultation with local military representatives.
- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to seek approval to implement the Community Covenant in Sheffield. This local Community Covenant complements the National Armed Forces Covenant and is a statement of mutual support between the civilian and local armed forces community. The covenant encourages local communities to support the armed forces community in the local area.

2.0 WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR SHEFFIELD PEOPLE

- 2.1 In March 2011, the council acknowledged and thanked members of our armed forces from Sheffield, and the rest of the UK, for risking their lives and wellbeing to protect our freedom.
- 2.2 The Armed Forces Community includes those in-service including reservists, veterans and those who care for, depend on or are close family members of these groups of people.¹
- 2.3 It is estimated that one person in six in the UK is currently serving or is a member of the ex-service community either a veteran of the armed forces or a carer, dependent or close family member of a veteran. People as young as 17.5 years can be sent on active service, so veterans are often much younger than people realise. Nearly a quarter of people seeking help from organisations such as the Royal British Legion are below the age of 44. We know that there have been around 300 new entrants to the Armed Forces from Sheffield in the last 5 years, the majority of which are aged 17-19 years old and there are 1,300 individuals in Sheffield receiving a pension or compensation following active service from the Military of Defence.
- 2.4 The establishment of a Community Covenant in Sheffield aims to ensure that the local armed forces community is not disadvantaged in the services offered in Sheffield. This will also give local people and service providers an opportunity to support Service personnel returning to their communities.

¹ "Family member" means spouse, dependent child, parent or sibling, where they are supporting or supported by the serviceman / woman.

- 2.5 The Covenant will also enable the Armed Forces Community to contribute their skills and experience to the local community.

3. OUTCOMES AND SUSTAINABILITY

- 3.1 The outcome is a pledge agreed by the City Council and the local Armed Forces Community, which commits to improving the transition from Service life into civilian life.
- 3.2 By implementing the Community Covenant the people of Sheffield will be able to access the Community Covenant Grant Scheme. This is a fund of £30million available during this and the next three financial years which provides financial support to projects that strengthen the ties between members of the Armed Forces Community and the community in which they live.
- 3.3 The Community Covenant does not seek to replace the existing good work already put into place by public service providers, charities, etc but to build upon it. It also provides a mechanism to ensure the Armed Forces Community are aware of the support available to them.
- 3.4 The establishment of an Armed Forces Forum (AFF), if approved, will monitor the effectiveness of the Covenant and ensure the sustainability of the outcomes sought through individual projects. Support from the AFF is the first stage of the grant application process.

4.0 MAIN BODY OF THE REPORT

- 4.1 In September 2010, a Task Force was elected to report on the national Military Covenant and identify, assess and recommend innovative ways in which the government and society as a whole could fulfil its obligation to rebuild the Military Covenant. One of the recommendations of the Task Force was for Local Authorities, Private Companies and individuals to pledge support to a Community Covenant.
- 4.2 A Community Covenant is a voluntary statement of mutual support between a civilian community and its local Armed Forces Community. A more detailed explanation of the Community Covenant Scheme – how it works and what it means – is provided in **Appendix 1**.
- 4.3 The Community Covenant was initially launched in five locations – Hampshire, Portsmouth, North Yorkshire, Oxfordshire and Doncaster and all local authorities are now being encouraged to participate in the scheme.
- 4.4 Since May 2011, Sheffield City Council has worked with partners and the local armed forces community to develop a Community Covenant for Sheffield and this is provided in **Appendix 2**.

- 4.5 The aims of the Community Covenant will be to:
- encourage local communities to support the Armed Forces Community in their area;
 - nurture understanding and awareness amongst the public of issues affecting the Armed Forces Community;
 - recognise the contribution made by the Armed Forces Community;
 - remember the sacrifices faced by the Armed Forces Community;
 - encourage activities which help to integrate the Armed Forces Community into local life;
 - 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.
- 4.6 The Covenant places commitments on the Council and its partners, to support service personnel, ensuring they are not disadvantaged by virtue of what they do and using the principal of social justice as its starting point.
- 4.7 It allows Sheffield to pledge its support but meet its obligations in its own way rather than imposition by central government and should not impose significant costs on local government.
- 4.8 The Covenant will be expected to support veterans with commitments to assist them to meet their needs including housing, benefits, health, employment opportunities, etc. Other areas the Community Covenant would need to cover are support for families, for the wounded and bereaved; and for reservists.
- 4.9 There is an expectation that other public sector organisations, business and the Voluntary, Community & Faith Sector will also wish to engage in the Covenant and, if approved, these organisations will be able to formally sign up to the pledge.
- 4.10 A Working Group has been established consisting of the Council and its partners to identify actions to meet the covenant including timescales, short medium and long term. They will identify the cost, resources, risk and whether implementation will require a policy change.
- 4.11 It is also proposed that an Armed Forces Forum is established to oversee the implementation of the Community Covenant and Grant Scheme in Sheffield. This would also provide a forum for discussion between representatives of the Armed Forces Community and Service Providers to raise and resolve issues of significant impact or where consistent trends give cause for concern.

- 4.12 Once the Community Covenant pledge is signed the City is able to access a national grant scheme of £30 million. The grant is open to organisations, groups and individuals who can demonstrate that their proposal will strengthen the aims of the covenant. Bids must first be agreed by the local partnership before final decisions are made by the Ministry of Defence. Bids can be for amounts from £100 to £250,000. This is a 4 year grant and we are currently in year 1 of the scheme.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 None at present but, if approved, there may be legal implications to consider as further developments take place with regard to this work.

6.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 None at present but, if approved, there may be financial implications to consider as further developments take place with regard to this work.

7.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken and is attached as **Appendix 3**. Additional equality impact assessments will be undertaken as further developments take place with regard to specific proposals for this work.

8.0 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 8.1 Consideration has been given to not committing to a Community Covenant in Sheffield. However the aims of the Covenant are supported by Full Council and the setting up of a local Covenant and Armed Forces Forum ensures access for the people of Sheffield to the Community Covenant Grant Scheme.

9.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 The Community Covenant ensures that services within the city:
- recognise the contribution made by the Armed Forces Community;
 - remember the sacrifices made by members of the Armed Forces Community;
 - share knowledge, experience and expertise to provide help and advice to members of the Armed Forces Community;
 - encourage the integration from Service life into civilian life.

These aims are supported by Sheffield City Council.

- 9.2 The implementation of a Community Covenant will enable the people of Sheffield to access to the national Community Covenant Grant Scheme.

10.0 RECOMMENDATION

Cabinet is asked to:

- 10.1 Approve and pledge support for a Community Covenant in Sheffield.
- 10.2 Approve the establishment of an Armed Forces Forum to provide oversight of all the activity within Sheffield relating to the Community Covenant.
- 10.3 Approve that a Lead Officer be identified to work with other agencies to take the Community Covenant forward, agreeing an action plan, to arrange and publicise events, and oversee its implementation.