

**Appendices**

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**NORTHAMPTON**  
**BOROUGH COUNCIL****CABINET REPORT****Report Title****The Northampton Armed Forces Community Covenant  
Annual Progress Report****AGENDA STATUS PUBLIC****Cabinet Meeting Date:****Key Decision:**

No

**Within Policy:**

Yes

**Policy Document:**

No

**Directorate:**

Customers and Communities

**Accountable Cabinet Member:**

Cllr Anna King

**Ward(s)**

Non-specific

**1. Purpose**

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1.1 This is the fourth annual report to Cabinet advising of progress on the actions arising from the Northampton Armed Forces Community Covenant Action Plan which have been implemented by the council and its public, community, voluntary and private sector partners, in support of the Armed Forces, since the covenant was approved by Cabinet on 13<sup>th</sup> February 2013 and by Full Council on 11<sup>th</sup> March 2013.

1.2 This report also advises Cabinet of proposed future actions to be delivered in support of the Northampton Armed Forces Community Covenant Action Plan.

**2. Recommendations**

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2.1 That Cabinet affirms its continuing support for the Northampton Armed Forces Community Covenant and notes progress to date and proposed future actions.

### **3. Issues and Choices**

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#### **3.1 Report Background**

- 3.1.1 In May 2011 the Secretary of State for Defence published the Armed Forces Covenant. The Covenant is intended to be a moral obligation between the Nation, the Government and the Armed Forces. A key element of it is the Community Covenant which is a voluntary statement of mutual support between a civilian community and its local Armed Forces Community. The aim of the Covenant is to encourage local communities to support the Armed Forces in their area and to promote understanding and awareness amongst the public of the issues that they face.
- 3.1.2 For the purposes of the Armed Forces Covenant, Armed forces personnel means a person who is serving in the regular forces or a person who has served in the regular forces within five years of the date of their application for an allocation of social housing under Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996, and within five years of discharge.
- 3.1.3 It also refers to bereaved spouses and civil partners leaving Services Family Accommodation following the death of their spouse or partner. It also covers serving former members of the Reserve Forces who need to move because of a serious injury, medical condition or disability sustained as a result of their service.
- 3.1.4 The principle behind the Covenant is that the Armed Forces Community should not face disadvantage because of its military service. In some cases, such as the sick, injured or bereaved this means giving consideration to enabling access to public, voluntary or commercial services that civilians do not receive.
- 3.1.5 The Covenant covers issues such as housing, education and welfare support after military service has ended.
- 3.1.6 118 REME is based in Northampton at Clare Street and this has been enhanced over the last two years. The council has strong civic links with C Company and The Royal Anglian Regiment (the successors to the Northamptonshire Regiment).
- 3.1.7 On 3rd October 2012, Cabinet agreed to support the signing of the Armed Forces Covenant. The 3rd October report instructed officers to develop proposals indicating what actions the Council could take to give effect to the principles of the Covenant in Northampton.
- 3.1.8 The Northampton Armed Forces Community Covenant was subsequently approved by Cabinet On 13<sup>th</sup> February 2013 and by Full Council on 11<sup>th</sup> March 2013.
- 3.1.9 On 4<sup>th</sup> March 2013 there was a formal signing ceremony for the Community Covenant when representatives of the Armed Forces, the Council, the

charitable and voluntary sector and the civilian community of Northampton added their signatures to the covenant in recognition of their commitment to the Northampton covenant.

3.1.10 The actions and initiatives arising from the Northampton Armed Forces Community Covenant, which are being implemented by the council and its partners in support of the armed forces in Northampton, have been incorporated into an action plan.

3.1.11 A multi-agency steering group has been established to keep the action plan under regular review, to manage and monitor its delivery and to add new actions as they are identified and agreed.

3.1.12 The action plan includes activities to deliver against the themes in the covenant, which are housing, health and wellbeing, education & training, access to council services and support, benefits and tax, recognition and assistance.

3.1.13 Key actions that have been completed since the action plan was established include:

- Ongoing induction and training process established with frontline staff. At induction and in recruitment process employees will have the relevant skills and experience having received training in selection, equalities and diversity standards.
- Updated links added to support and information available for armed forces and their families on the intranet for staff.
- Updated website for the public developed with support and advice, including links to partners, including; NHS CCG, RBL, SSAFA, Goodwill Solutions etc
- Directory of support services for veterans has been developed and promoted to GP practices, on the GP's Pathfinder system and also hard copies in the surgeries.
- Briefing arranged for GPs in November 15, by Combat Stress. 400 GPs were present. Referral rates are now down to 16 days for referral to being seen by the mental health team.
- Support provided to the County Community Covenant for a funding application to create a County wide post to progress the work and reach of the Covenant. This post would focus on marketing, research, web presence, and would look to strengthen engagement in the county at a local level.
- An area for a memorial garden has been identified in St. Katherine's Park for the Royal British Legion to develop and maintain. The space that has been identified is directly under a CCTV camera, and there is adequate lighting. The RBL have now cleared the growth and tidied up the site. Some of the homeless people who were frequenting the site have helped with the clearance.

- 'No Second Night Out' - Introduce new initiatives to tackle rough sleeping amongst ex-Armed Forces personnel.
- Adaptations and disabled facilities grants provided to disabled war veterans.
- A programme is in place to identify and make appearance improvements to War graves across the town.
- £1,000 of funding was obtained to support the delivery of Armed Forces Day 2016

#### 3.1.14 Armed forces events that have taken place in the last 12 months include:

- Remembrance Sunday church service and parade, 8<sup>th</sup> November 2015.
- HMS Laforey Parade, 3<sup>rd</sup> April.
- Mobbs Memorial Match at the Saints, 13<sup>th</sup> April.
- The annual ANZAC Day ceremony at Towcester Cemetery, April 2017. Organised by the Western Front Association and attended by the Mayor.
- Armed Forces Day, 25<sup>th</sup> June in the Market Square, with a Parade around the town center, which included serving troops, veterans and cadets. There were marching bands, a Rock Choir, stalls and various activities on the day.
- An Evening of Commemoration marking the Battle of the Somme and the involvement of the Northamptonshire Regiment and Northampton people with readings, exhibitions and performance was held at the Abington Park Museum, 30<sup>th</sup> June.
- Laying up the regimental colour of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, The Royal Anglian Regiment on Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> July 2016.

#### 3.1.15 Forthcoming armed forces events include:

- Observe the silence on the 11th November 2016 at 11am at the Memorial
- Remembrance Sunday Service 13<sup>th</sup> November 2016
- 2017 will be the 50th Anniversary of 118 REME coming to Northampton and an event will be organised to mark this.
- The annual ANZAC Day ceremony at Towcester Cemetery, April 2017.
- Armed Forces Day, Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> June 2017.
- 31st July 2017 will be the 100th anniversary of the death of Edgar Mobbs DSO and this will be marked in an appropriate manner.
- WW1 Towcester Road Remembrance Service

### **3.2 Choices (Options)**

- 3.2.1 On 13th February 2013, Cabinet approved the Northampton Armed Forces Community Covenant and its associated action plan. Cabinet can choose whether it wishes to continue support the covenant.
- 3.2.2 Cabinet can choose which actions and initiatives it wishes to see implemented in the coming year.

## **4. Implications (including financial implications)**

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### **4.1 Policy**

- 4.1.1 The Northampton Armed Forces Covenant sets out the council's policy on support and assistance to the Armed Forces in Northampton.

### **4.2 Resources and Risk**

- 4.2.1 Resource implications arising from proposed actions and initiatives will be met from within existing budgets or from monies secured from external funding applications.
- 4.2.2 A national grant scheme has been established which enables local projects to bid for funding as part of local Community Covenant arrangements. Bids for funding need to be considered by local signatories to a Community Covenant, before then being submitted to the Ministry Of Defence for consideration by their Community Covenant Grant Panel.
- 4.2.3 The stated aim of the Community Covenant Grant Scheme is to 'financially support projects, at the local level, which strengthen the ties or the mutual understanding between members of the Armed Forces Community and the wider community in which they live'.
- 4.2.5 Consideration will continue to be given to how the national grant scheme can be used to advance the Northampton Armed Forces Covenant.

### **4.3 Legal**

- 4.3.1 There are no legal implications directly arising from this report. Legal and professional advice has been sought in relation to specific actions to ensure what is proposed is in accordance with relevant statutory provisions and council policy.

### **4.4 Equality**

- 4.4.1 The Northampton Armed Forces Covenant makes a positive contribution to the equalities agenda in Northampton for the Armed Forces. All proposed actions and initiatives have been appropriately screened to achieve maximum positive impact for the Armed Forces community and to ensure there are no unintended negative consequences.

#### **4.5 Consultees (Internal and External)**

- 4.5.1 The military and their key community representatives, SSAFA and the Royal British Legion, were consulted on the Northampton Armed Forces Community Covenant. The council's key public, community, voluntary and private sector partners have also been consulted.

#### **4.6 How the Report Delivers Priority Outcomes**

- 4.6.1 This report is consistent with the broad aims of the council's Corporate Plan and has the potential to contribute to a wide range of the Council's priority outcomes.

### **Background Papers**

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The Armed Forces Covenant – MOD May 2011

Report to Cabinet, 13/2/13 – Northampton Armed Forces Community Covenant

Report to Full Council, 11/3/13 – Northampton Armed Forces Community Covenant

Julie Seddon, Director of Customers and Communities