

**REPORT TO:** Cabinet

**MEETING DATE:** 11 September 2012

**BY:** Executive Director (Support Services)

**SUBJECT:** East Lothian Armed Forces Community Covenant

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## **1 PURPOSE**

- 1.1 To inform Cabinet of the proposal for East Lothian Council to sign the East Lothian Armed Forces Community Covenant.

## **2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 Cabinet approves the proposal for East Lothian Council to sign the East Lothian Armed Forces Community Covenant (Appendix 1).

## **3 BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The Council has been approached by the armed forces to take the lead in producing and signing an Armed Forces Community Covenant.
- 3.2 A Community Covenant is a voluntary statement of mutual support between a civilian community and its local Armed Forces Community. It is intended to complement the Armed Forces Covenant, which outlines the moral obligation between the Nation, the Government and the Armed Forces, at the local level. The aim of the Community Covenant is to encourage local communities to support the Service community in their area and nurture understanding and awareness amongst the public of issues affecting the Armed Forces community. The Armed Forces community includes Serving Personnel from all branches of the armed forces and their families, ex-service personnel (veterans) and their families.
- 3.3 The aims of the Armed Forces Community Covenant are to:
- Encourage local communities to support the Armed Force community in their area

- Nurture public understanding and awareness amongst the public of issues affecting the Armed Forces community
  - Recognise and remember the sacrifices faced by the Armed Forces community
  - Encourage activities which help to integrate the Armed Force 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.
- 3.4 Local authorities and the Armed Forces community are encouraged to work together to establish a Community Covenant for their area. Community Covenants may look different for each area as the nature of support will be determined by need and capacity.
- 3.5 The Community Covenant is supported by the Community Covenant Grant Scheme which has been established to financially support projects at a local level which strengthen ties or the mutual understanding between members of the Armed Forces community and the wider community in which they live. Once the Community Covenant has been signed bids can be submitted for Community Grant Funds. Applications for the funds can be submitted by any part of the community, including voluntary organisations, charities or public bodies. Bids are assessed by a Ministry of Defence and HM Treasury panel but will require endorsement from the leading parties of the Community Covenant.
- 3.6 Several Scottish local authorities or Community Partnerships have already agreed Community Covenants including, Midlothian, West Lothian and Edinburgh. These Community Covenants all follow the same template which has been used as the basis of the draft East Lothian Community Covenant (see Appendix 1).
- 3.7 A meeting involving representatives of the Council, the Armed Forces community, and several Community Planning partners including the Association of Community Councils and Voluntary Action East Lothian met recently to discuss a draft Community Covenant. The meeting agreed:
- To recommend that the Community Covenant should be an East Lothian Community Planning Partnership document
  - The draft Community Covenant should be endorsed and submitted for approval to Community Planning partners including East Lothian Council
  - Partners should be asked to endorse the draft Community Covenant in order to allow a formal signing ceremony to be held as soon as can be arranged, possibly early October

- Following the signing of the Covenant the partners should reconvene to develop an Action Plan that will support the achievement of the objectives outlines in the Covenant.

3.8 The draft Community Covenant has been sent to the Community Partnership Board and to the individual partners who are being asked to endorse and sign the Covenant.

#### **4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 Signing the Armed Forces Community Covenant will complement the national Armed Forces Covenant signed by the UK Government and endorsed and supported by the Scottish Government and will lay the basis for mutual support between the East Lothian civilian community and its local Armed Forces Community.

4.2 The objectives outlined in the Community Covenant are in line with the outcomes and principles of the Single Outcome Agreement.

#### **5 EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

5.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment will be carried out of the Action Plan that is to be developed to support the achievement of the objectives agreed in the Community Covenant.

#### **6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 Financial – there are no direct financial implications associated with signing the Armed Forces Community Covenant. The Council and its partners will be able to apply for grant funding from the Community Covenant Grant Scheme for projects which aim to provide services for and/ or strengthen ties with the armed forces community.

6.2 Personnel - none

6.3 Other – none

#### **7 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

7.1 Appendix 1: Draft East Lothian Armed Forces Community Covenant

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## APPENDIX 1:

# **THE EAST LOTHIAN ARMED FORCES COMMUNITY COVENANT Between East Lothian Council, NHS Lothian, Armed Forces Charities, Job Centre Plus, Local Communities, The Business and Commercial Sector, the Enterprising Third Sector and The Armed Forces Community in East Lothian**

We, the undersigned, agreed to take all reasonable measures to honour this Armed Forces Community Covenant:

*{List of signatories to be added}*

## **SECTION 1: PARTICIPANTS**

1.1 This Armed Forces Community Covenant is made between:

The serving and former members of the Armed Forces and their families working and residing in EAST LOTHIAN

And

East Lothian Community Planning Partnership constituent partners

And

Other members of the civilian community

## **SECTION 2: PRINCIPLES OF THE ARMED FORCES COMMUNITY COVENANT**

2.1 The Armed Forces Community Covenant is a voluntary statement of mutual support between a civilian community and its local Armed Forces Community. It is intended to complement the Armed Forces Covenant (see addendum), which outlines the moral obligation between the Nation, the Government and the Armed Forces, at the local level.

2.2 The purpose of this Community Covenant is to encourage support for the Armed Forces Community working and residing in East Lothian and to recognise and remember the sacrifices made by members of this Armed Forces Community, particularly those who have given the most. This includes serving and ex-Service personnel and their families in East Lothian.

2.3 For East Lothian Community Planning Partnership and its constituent partner organisations, the Community Covenant presents an opportunity to bring their knowledge, experience and expertise to bear on the provision of help and advice to members of the Armed Forces Community. It also presents an opportunity to build upon existing good work on other initiatives such as the Welfare Pathway.

2.4 For the Armed Forces community, the Community Covenant encourages the integration of Service life into civilian life and encourages members of the Armed Forces community to help their local community. Also it encourages formed units to support activity and provide suitable representation within their local communities, within their capabilities and availability.

### **SECTION 3: OBJECTIVES AND GENERAL INTENTIONS**

#### **Aims of the Community Covenant**

3.1 The Armed Forces Community Covenant complements the principles of the Armed Forces Covenant which defines the enduring, general principles that should govern the relationship between the Nation, the Government and the Armed Forces community.

3.2 It aims to ensure that Service personnel, their families and ex-Service personnel are not, in any way, disadvantaged in the provision of the usual entitlements and support from statutory services due to the transient nature of their military employment.

3.3 It aims to encourage all parties within a community to offer support to the local Armed Forces community and make it easier for Service personnel, families and veterans to access the help and support available from the MOD, from statutory providers and from the Enterprising Third Sector within their community. The Covenant aims to strengthen the links and partnership working between these organisations at the local level.

3.4 The scheme is intended to be a two-way arrangement and the Armed Forces community are encouraged to do as much as they can to support their community and promote activity which integrates the Service community into civilian life, providing visibility and understanding of the military within the local community.

### **SECTION 4: OUTCOMES**

4.1 As part of this Covenant all parties are encouraged to work together to deliver six key objectives in support of Service personnel, their families and ex-Service personnel in East Lothian.

4.2 Agreed measures in support of these objectives will be detailed in the Community Covenant Action Plan and reviewed quarterly by the Community Covenant signatories.

**Objective 1: Children, Young People and their Families**

Work in partnership to build and develop further work, services and relationships to improve outcomes for children and young people of serving families / veterans in the communities of East Lothian.

**Objective 2: Health and Wellbeing**

Work in partnership to build and further develop work, services and relationships focused on health and wellbeing, including access to health services, focus on mental health and wellbeing and building a sense of belonging for families locally.

**Objective 3: Housing**

Develop clear direction and guidance within the Local Authority and the Armed Forces as to what levels of service provision can be expected and what is required of the military community to enable them.

**Objective 4: Community Partnerships – working together**

Create opportunities for Armed Forces representatives to become part of the Community Planning Partnership structures and to help them to contribute to their local communities.

**Objective 5: Support to Veterans and their Families**

Consider and support the needs of Service personnel during and after their transition to becoming a veteran.

**Objective 6: Employability**

Identify measures to support ex and transiting Service personnel and their families to achieve positive employability destinations and outcomes.

# **THE ARMED FORCES COVENANT**

An Enduring Covenant Between

The People of the United Kingdom

Her 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.