

BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

From: Strategic Director (People)	Report Number: M76
To: Strategy Committee	Date of meeting: 13 September 2012

COMMUNITY COVENANT WITH THE ARMED FORCES

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To inform Strategy Committee of Suffolk County Council's intention to enter into a Community Covenant with the Armed Forces in Suffolk on behalf of the County, and their proposal to do so with representatives of the County's District and Borough Councils, the Charitable and Voluntary Sectors and the civilian community of Suffolk.
- 1.2 The Community Covenant would be in the form of a pledge signed by respective Council leaders and other agencies to work and act together to honour the Armed Forces Community in Suffolk in line with the Armed Forces Covenant drawn up at national level.
- 1.3 The Covenant is a voluntary statement of mutual support between the civilian community and its local Armed Forces community. Approval is sought for the chairman of Strategy of Babergh District Council to sign the Community Covenant on behalf of Babergh District Council.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the principle of entering into the Community Covenant at Appendix A be endorsed and that the Chairman of Strategy Babergh District Council be approved to sign the Covenant on behalf of the Council (scheduled to take place at a signing ceremony at Endeavour House on 11 October 2012.)
- 2.2 That the entering into of a Task Force to develop a Suffolk Armed Forces Community Covenant Action Plan be endorsed (membership of which should be decided at a planning meeting on 4 September).
- 2.3 That representatives of the Council to attend the Covenant signing ceremony together with any relevant guests they may wish to invite be agreed (subject to numbers to be agreed at a planning meeting on 4 September).
- 2.4 That the Strategic Director People, in consultation with the Chairman of Strategy Committee be given delegated authority to work with Suffolk County Council, Suffolk's Armed Forces and other agencies to deliver the principles of the Covenant at Appendix A.

The Committee is asked to make recommendations to Full Council on the above matters.

3. Financial Implications

- 3.1 There would be no immediate financial implications in signing the pledge itself, nor in working in partnership with the agencies involved to deliver the principles of the covenant. The work would be entirely consistent with the Council's strategic aims and in harmony with the Community Engagement work presently taking place. Any future financial implications resulting from the work developing the Covenant would be brought to the Committee's attention in future reports.

4. Risk Management

- 4.1 This report is not directly linked to any of the Council's Corporate Risks but there could be reputational damage if the Council chose not to join in signing the Community Covenant.

5. Consultations

- 5.1 Consultations have taken place with Suffolk County Council, members of the local Armed Forces Community, representatives of the charitable and voluntary sectors and Armed Forces charities. These consultations would continue during the partnership working to deliver the principles of the Covenant.

6. Equality Analysis

- 6.1 There are no equality issues with this report and none are anticipated if the Committee is minded to proceed with the recommendations.

7. Shared Service / Partnership Implications

- 7.1 None for the time being, but these will be brought before the Committee should they arise.

8. Key Information

- 8.1 At a recent SCEG meeting the Group was advised that the leader of Suffolk County Council had been approached by the Royal Anglia Regiment commanding officer about signing a Community Covenant with the Armed Forces in Suffolk. This was agreed, and it is understood that all the leaders of Suffolk's councils have also in principle expressed an interest in signing such a pledge. A formal signing will take place at a public ceremony at Endeavour House on 11 October. Members, Officials, representatives of the Armed Forces and representatives of the charitable and voluntary sectors and invited guests of the Council would be in attendance. The total number at the signing would be in the order of 250 – 300, but the allocation of places has not been made.
- 8.2 The Covenant is a high level document that 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, statutory providers and the charitable and voluntary sector within Suffolk; for example access to housing, education, social services and so forth. The document indicates that it would be signed by representatives of the County Council, County District Councils, Ipswich Borough Council and charitable, voluntary and commercial sectors.

- 8.3 The scheme is intended to be a two-way partnership 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 the wider fabric of civilian life. Signing the Covenant would set up a Task Force to develop an action plan to determine exactly what it is that the County and the districts will do. (e.g in the Council's case, this might focus on housing matters, assistance with accessing benefits and local health and well-being issues. The Joint Housing Board is already looking at the current housing allocations policy to take into consideration the latest statutory provision for Service personnel seeking social housing on relocation and retirement from the military.)
- 8.4 Alongside Armed Forces Community Covenants, the Ministry of Defence is running a Community Covenant Grant Scheme. This offers financial support to local projects designed to deliver improved outcomes for both the Armed Forces Community and local communities. Funding will only be considered for projects that have the backing of their local Civil Military Partnership.
- 8.5 The Covenant also provides for:
- 8.5.1 Appointing a Commissioner for the Armed Forces in Suffolk.
- 8.5.2 Appointing a countywide Civil Military Partnership Board, which, under the chairmanship of the Commissioner, will develop, prioritise and enact the measures within the agreed Action Plan.
- 8.5.3 Where required, co-ordinating existing activity under the auspices of the Community Covenant.
- 8.5.4 As part of a collaborative countywide approach, encouraging and strengthening existing activity between Suffolk's Armed Forces Community and their local authorities, highlighting the Community Covenant Grant Scheme and promoting the submission of applications in support of local projects.
- 8.6 Once developed, the Covenant Action Plan would need to set out how it is proposed that the objectives within the Covenant will be fulfilled.
- 8.7 The Monitoring Officer has reviewed the draft Covenant and notes that there is nothing within it as currently drafted that causes her concern, but that we will need to be clear on what is expected of Babergh District Council in relation to the measures bullet pointed in 4.1 of the draft. If there is doubt whether signatories can actually deliver on these points then it may be prudent for a minor amendment to reflect that they are objectives rather than measures. The Task Force would need to consider this point.

9. Appendices

Title	Location
(a) Draft Community Covenant – an Armed Forces Community Covenant	Attached

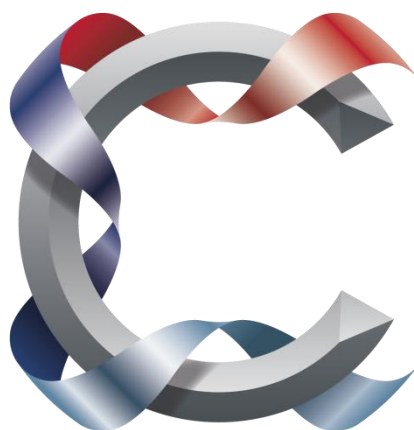
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Community Covenant

AN ARMED FORCES COMMUNITY COVENANT

BETWEEN

THE COUNTY OF SUFFOLK, REPRESENTATIVES OF THE CHARITABLE
AND VOLUNTARY SECTORS,
THE CIVILIAN COMMUNITY OF SUFFOLK

AND

THE ARMED FORCES COMMUNITY IN SUFFOLK

**We, the undersigned, agree to work and act together to
honour the Armed Forces Community Covenant.**

Thursday 11th October 2012

Signatories

Signed:

Name:

Position Held:

**On behalf of the Armed Forces
Community in Suffolk**

Signed:

Name:

Position Held:

**On behalf of Ipswich Borough
Council**

Signed:

Name:

Position Held:

**On behalf of St. Edmundsbury
Borough Council**

Signed:

Name:

Position Held:

**On behalf of Waveney District
Council**

Signed:

Name:

Position Held:

On behalf of Babergh District Council

Signed:

Name:

Position Held:

On behalf of the Armed Forces Charities

Signed:

Name:

Position Held:

On behalf of the Primary Care Trust/NHS Bodies

SECTION 1: PARTICIPANTS

1.1 This Armed Forces Community Covenant is made between:

The Armed Forces Community (Royal Navy, Army and Royal Air Force serving (Regular and Reserve) personnel), veterans, and their families working and living in Suffolk.

And

Signed:

Name:

Position Held:

On behalf of Suffolk County Council

Signed:

Name:

Position Held:

**On behalf of Mid-Suffolk District
Council**

Signed:

Name:

Position Held:

**On behalf of Suffolk Coastal
District Council**

Signed:

Name:

Position Held:

**On behalf of Forest Heath District
Council**

Signed:

Name:

Position Held:

On behalf of the Voluntary Sector

Signed:

Name:

Position Held:

**On behalf of the Business and
Commercial Sector**

The County of Suffolk, comprising Suffolk County Council, Ipswich Borough Council, Mid-Suffolk District Council, St. Edmundsbury Borough Council, Suffolk Coastal District Council, Waveney District Council, Forest Heath District Council, and Babergh District Council.

And

The Charitable and Voluntary Sector.

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, 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 Suffolk and to recognise and remember the sacrifices made by members of this Armed Forces Community, particularly those who have given the most. This includes in-Service and ex-Service personnel their families and widow(er)s in Suffolk.
- 2.3 For Suffolk County Council and 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 such as the already strong ties between some of our military bases and their local authorities.
- 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.

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, published by the Government in May 2011, 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 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 Charitable and Voluntary Sector. These organisations already work together in partnership at local level.
- 3.3 The scheme is intended to be a two-way partnership 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 the wider fabric of civilian life.
- 3.4 Suffolk will work in partnership with the Armed Forces Community in the following areas:

- Encouraging local communities to support the Armed Forces Community in their local areas and vice versa.
- Raising public understanding and awareness of issues affecting the Armed Forces Community.
- Recognising and remembering the sacrifices faced by the Armed Forces Community.
- Encouraging activities that help to integrate the Armed Forces Community into local life.
- Encouraging the Armed Forces Community to help and support the wider community, whether through participation in events and joint projects, or other forms of engagement.

SECTION 4: Measures

4.1 Noting the importance of this valuable relationship, Suffolk will work in partnership with its Armed Forces Community, Service Charities and other agencies to deliver the principles of the Covenant by:

- Appointing a Task Force to develop a Suffolk Armed Forces Community Covenant Action Plan.
- Appointing a Commissioner for the Armed Forces in Suffolk.
- Appointing a countywide Civil Military Partnership Board, which, under the chairmanship of the Commissioner, will develop, prioritise and enact the measures within the agreed Action Plan.
- Where required, co-ordinating existing activity under the auspices of the Community Covenant.
- As part of a collaborative countywide approach, encouraging and strengthening existing activity between Suffolk's Armed Forces Community and their local authorities, highlighting the Community Covenant Grant Scheme and promoting the submission of applications in support of local projects.

CONTACT PERSONNEL AND TELEPHONE NUMBERS

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Suffolk County Council

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Title:

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Fax:

Address:

Charities

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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.