

REPORT OF **Public Health and Housing Manager**

To: **Full Council**

Subject: **Armed Forces Covenant**

Date: **April 11th 2022**

Reference:

PURPOSE OF REPORT:

1. To approve our recommitment to the Armed Forces Covenant and signing of the same.
2. To approve development this commitment through a range of actions proposed within this report.

1. INTRODUCTION

The United Kingdom's Armed Forces Covenant is the country's commitment to its armed forces. It's a pledge that those who serve, or who have served, in the armed forces, and their families, should be treated with fairness and respect in the communities, economy and society they serve. It is backed by an annual allocation of funding of £10 million from central Government, as well as by additional funding for specific projects arising from the UK's covenant. In addition, the Armed Forces Act 2011 requires the Secretary of State for Defence to prepare and present to Parliament an annual report on progress in delivering the covenant's commitments.

Torridge District Council are past signatories to the Covenant and have already established measures to support our armed forces personnel and their families. However, we are seeking to refresh this commitment and expand the response and support available within Torridge in line with current guidance.

The adoption of the Covenant is recognised in TDC's Strategic Plan for 2020-2023.

2. CURRENT SUPPORT TO SERVICE PERSONNEL AND THEIR FAMILIES

Due to our previous commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant, we already have in place/ carry out the following:

- Recognition of Armed Forces events and days. Torridge councillors and staff honour and mark a number of occasions throughout the year including Remembrance Sunday and Armed Forces Day, including a flag raising ceremonies at Riverbank House.
- We currently offer multiple housing support measures to former armed forces personnel as detailed here - <https://www.torridge.gov.uk/article/17673/Former-Armed-Forces>
- We support former armed forces personnel by disregarding War Disability Pensions and War Widows Pensions when calculating income for Council Tax reduction [Council Tax Support | Torridge District Council](#)
- We provide paid leave for training duties for staff in the reserved forces.



- We have appointed a Lead Member for the Armed forces (Cllr Clarke) and an officer point of contact at TDC (Jan Williams).
- We are part of a Devon Districts AFC champions group hosted by Devon County Council who regularly meet to update on armed forces issues and share best practice.

2. FUTURE DEVELOPMENT AND PROPOSALS

[Guidance to local authorities on delivering the Covenant](#) sets out measures that can be taken to develop and embed the Covenant in their areas. A number of measures are proposed:

- Seek accreditation with the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS) - this encourages employers to support defence by promoting being armed forces-friendly open and to employing reservists, armed forces veterans, cadet instructors and military spouses/partners and promote others to do the same. The scheme is only available to organisations that are signatories to the AFC.
- Development of a web page to support the delivery of the Covenant with key information and links for members of the armed forces community.
- Development of an Action plan to promote the commitment to the Covenant and set direction for its progress.
- We have had initial discussions with North Devon District Council around the setting up of a Northern Devon AFC stakeholder forum to include local military liaison, the voluntary sector and local business groups to promote and develop the Covenant and its aims across Northern Devon.
- Seek to promote the Covenant with Town and Parish Councils across Torridge

A copy of the proposed draft Covenant for TDC is appended to this report.

3. IMPLICATIONS

Legal Implications

Participation in the scheme is currently voluntary.

Financial Implications

None, other than commitment of staff time. Covenant grant funding is available for supporting specific projects <https://www.armedforcescovenant.gov.uk/get-involved/can-i-get-covenant-funding/>

Human Resources Implications

It is proposed that this be met within existing resources.

Sustainability/Biodiversity Implications

None



Equality/Diversity

None

Risk Management

None

Compliance with Policies and Strategies

None – although the development of support within council services will need to be taken forward through existing policies.

Data Protection (GDPR) Implications

None

Climate Change

None

Ward Member and Lead Member Views

Cllr Clarke is supportive of this measure and will be supporting the development of the local forum.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The Armed Forces Covenant seeks to engage organisations and communities in support of the Armed Forces. In doing so it recognises the value Serving Personnel, both Regular and Reservists, Veterans and military families contribute to our business and our country.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the Armed Forces Covenant be signed.
2. That the proposals given in this report in developing the Covenant within Torridge District and wider Northern Devon areas be noted and approved.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Consultations: Lead Member for Housing (and Armed Forces Lead)

Contact Officer: Jan Williams Public Health and Housing Manager

Background Papers: [Armed Forces Covenant Local Authority Guide](#)



