

COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL - 18 JUNE 2013

TASK AND FINISH GROUP – ARMED FORCES COMMUNITY COVENANT

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 At the meeting of the Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel on 19 March 2013, it was agreed that a Task and Finish Group be established to examine the practicalities of the Council signing up to the Armed Forces Community Covenant.
- 1.2 This report is a briefing note on the work of the Task and Finish Group.

2. BACKGROUND

- 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 Covenant 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. 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 local community and promote activity which integrates the Service community into civilian life.
- 2.3 The key part of the Covenant is the section which identifies the practical measures of support which the Council can offer to the Armed Forces.

3. THE WORK OF THE TASK AND FINISH GROUP

- 3.1 The membership of the Task and Finish Group was as follows:

Cllr Goff Beck (Chairman)
Cllr Penny Jackman
Cllr Alan O'Sullivan
Cllr Alexander Kilgour
Cllr Steve Clarke

- 3.2 The Group met on 18 April 2013. It was agreed that Heads of Service would be contacted by the Chief Executive to establish which measures could be put forward to include within the Covenant.
- 3.3 The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Communities Cllr Jill Cleary, Cllr Goff Beck and the Chief Executive Dave Yates met with Lt Col (Retired) George Kershaw on the 29 April. Lt Col Kershaw is the Station Staff Officer at Solent Station and has been tasked with extending the coverage of Community Covenants in the south Hampshire area. It was agreed that the Council would be able to sign the Community Covenant

at McMullen Barracks, Marchwood on 9 May (along with the National Park Authority and some Parish Councils.)

3.4 Lt Col Kershaw met with the Task and Finish Group on the 8 May to review the measures which the Council intended to put forward for the Covenant. The measures were agreed and a final version of the Covenant was prepared for signing on the 9th May.

3.5 The Covenant was signed by the Chairman of the Council Cllr Alexis McEvoy on the 9 May. Cllr Jill Cleary and Cllr Goff Beck also attended the signing event. The Covenant is attached at Appendix One.

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4. FUTURE WORK ON THE COVENANT

4.1 The Task and Finish Group has completed its work. However, there will be a need to meet with the Armed Forces on at least an annual basis to ensure that the Covenant is a working document and to keep the measures under review.

4.2 Officers are now working on ensuring the measures from the covenant are in place.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

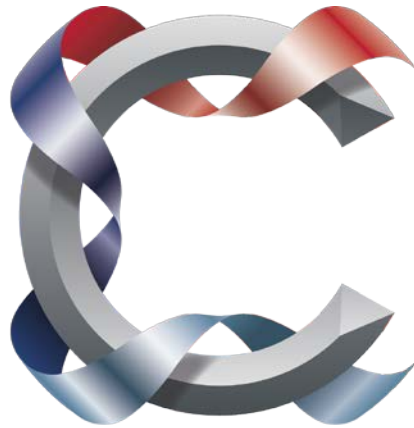
5.1 That members note the contents of this report and the work of the Task and Finish Group.

For further information please contact:

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Background Papers:

None.



Community Covenant

BETWEEN

NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

&

THE CIVILIAN COMMUNITIES WITHIN THE NEW FOREST

AND

THE ARMED FORCES COMMUNITY OF

SOLENT STATION



New Forest
DISTRICT COUNCIL



THE ARMED FORCES COMMUNITY COVENANT FOR SOLENT STATION

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

Signatories

**Signed on behalf of the
New Forest District Council**

**Signed on behalf of the Armed Forces
Community in Solent Station**

Councillor Mrs Alexis McEvoy
Chairman

Lt Col Rob Askew
Commander Solent Station

Mr Dave Yates
Chief Executive

Lt Col (Retd) George Kershaw
Station Staff Officer, Solent Station

Date: May 2013

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 Solent Station, Hampshire

and

New Forest District Council

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 Solent Station, Hampshire 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 Solent Station, Hampshire.

2.3 For New Forest District Council, 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 contribute to and assist their local community whenever possible.

SECTION 3: OBJECTIVES AND GENERAL INTENTIONS

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 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 arrangement and the Armed Forces community are encouraged to do as much as they can to support their local community and promote activity which integrates the Service community into civilian life.

SECTION 4: MEASURES

4.1 Embarking on a Community Covenant for Solent Station, Hampshire represents a formalising and enhancement of the long established relationship that the local area has enjoyed with the Armed Forces. It encompasses the mutual desire and commitment to work together, to strive to take a joint approach to projects that improve the wellbeing of the local community, to promote the Armed Forces as an integral part of civic society that can make a meaningful contribution to the local area.

4.2 There is already in place a Community Covenant between Hampshire County Council & the Armed Forces Community in Hampshire. The parties in this Community Covenant will support, fully, the initiatives cascading from that at County level to this at District level.

4.3 In this Community Covenant, New Forest District Council and its staff will endeavour to support initiatives generated by the local Armed Forces community such as HOME FRONT, which provides a Community Safety Partnership to encourage community engagement in improving the quality of life for residents within Service family areas on or near MOD establishments.

4.4 In this Community Covenant, the Armed Forces community will endeavour to support New Forest District Council whenever possible, such as supporting local community events, and enabling access to MOD facilities in order to promote a better understanding of Armed Forces activity in the local area.

4.5 In this Community Covenant, the Armed Forces community will endeavour to participate in community initiatives occurring in the local area.

4.6 In this Community Covenant, the Armed Forces community will endeavour to participate in environmental schemes which aim to protect the local area.

4.7 In this Community Covenant, New Forest District Council will endeavour to create and maintain a dedicated Armed Forces page on the Council's website to improve access to information for armed forces personnel.

4.8 In this Community Covenant, New Forest District Council will endeavour to provide a single point of contact for Armed Forces personnel in need of advice on their housing options and a single point of contact for Armed Forces personnel needing advice on housing benefit, council tax reduction and Council tax general enquiries.

4.9 In this Community Covenant, New Forest District Council will endeavour to prioritise any works required by Armed Forces personnel under a Disabled Facilities Grant.

4.10 In this Community Covenant, New Forest District Council will endeavour to provide a complimentary Brand New Forest Card for every Armed Forces household in the district.

4.11 In this Community Covenant, New Forest District Council will endeavour to promote any Armed Forces initiatives through Council communication channels.

4.12 In this Community Covenant, New Forest District Council will endeavour to include Armed Forces personnel in our corporate membership scheme for the Council's leisure centres so they can access membership at reduced rates.

4.13 In this Community Covenant, New Forest District Council will endeavour to demonstrate support by flying the Armed Forces Day flag every year and by carrying out fund-raising each year for an Armed Forces charity.

4.14 The impacts of this Community Covenant will be monitored as the relationship is developed. At least on an annual basis (normally one month prior to Armed Forces Day) the signatories (or their representatives) agree to meet to ensure that the spirit of the Community Covenant is being met. They will review any measures that have been taken, in order to ensure not only that the appropriate engagement and assistance is being provided, but also whether any further actions would be helpful.

CONTACT PERSONNEL AND TELEPHONE NUMBERS

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In-Service representative:

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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.