

<b>Subject:</b>	Rossendale - Armed Forces Community Covenant	<b>Status:</b>	For Publication
<b>Report to:</b>	Cabinet	<b>Date:</b>	15 <sup>th</sup> February 2012
<b>Report of:</b>	Director of Communities and Customers	<b>Portfolio Holder:</b>	Leader of the Council
<b>Key Decision:</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Forward Plan <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>General Exception</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Special Urgency</b> <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Community Impact Assessment:</b>	Required: No	<b>Attached:</b>	No
<b>Biodiversity Impact Assessment</b>	Required: No	<b>Attached:</b>	No
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<b>1.</b>	<b>RECOMMENDATION(S)</b>
1.1	That Cabinet agrees to the signing of a Rossendale Armed Forces Community Covenant to be agreed by stakeholders from across all sectors.
1.2	That Cabinet agree to appoint a Councillor as the Council's Armed Forces Champion.
1.3	That Cabinet notes the proactive work already undertaken by Rossendale Enterprise Anchor Ltd (REAL) and it looks forward to working with them on the ongoing developing the Community Covenant.

## 2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 2.1 The purpose of the report is for Cabinet to consider the development of an 'Armed Forces Community Covenant' between Rossendale Borough Council, representatives from the charitable and voluntary sector, representatives from the wider public and private sector, the population of Rossendale and the armed forces community of Rossendale.

## 3. CORPORATE PRIORITIES

- 3.1 The matters discussed in this report impact directly on the following corporate priorities:-

**A clean and green Rossendale** – creating a better environment for all.

**A healthy and successful Rossendale** – supporting vibrant communities and a strong economy.

**Responsive and Value for Money local services** –responding to and meeting the different needs of customers and improving the cost effectiveness of services.

## 4. RISK ASSESSMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Community Covenants are not entered into lightly. The signing of a covenant 'sets the tone' for the development of both national and local policy and may result in a need to redirect or implement policies that have a resource impact on a given organisation.

## 5. BACKGROUND AND OPTIONS

- 5.1 On 16 May 2011, the government published the 'Armed Forces Covenant' which outlined the moral obligation between the Nation, the Government and the Armed Forces and aims to improve support to the Armed Forces Community - which includes serving personnel, their families and veterans.
- 5.2 To complement this Covenant the Ministry of Defence, in August 2011, launched a parallel 'Community Covenant', which reciprocates the relationship between the nation and the armed forces by building a code of understanding and support between the armed forces and the communities in which they are based.
- 5.3 The community covenant 'sets the tone' for both national and local policy and an aspiration that the armed forces community should face no disadvantage compared to other citizens in the provision of public and commercial services and that the government and authorities will consider positive measures to enable equality of outcome with other citizens, as well as consider special treatment for the injured and bereaved, as proper return for their sacrifice.
- 5.4 The full covenant can be viewed on the Ministry of Defence website at [www.mod.uk/covenant](http://www.mod.uk/covenant)
- 5.5 **Community Covenant**
- 5.6 Both Rossendale Council and Rossendale Enterprise Anchor Ltd (REAL) have been in discussions with Veterans in Action (VIA) and members of The Armed Forces with regards to developing a Community Covenant in Rossendale.
- 5.7 A Community Covenant is intended to complement, at local level, the Armed Forces Covenant. It is a voluntary statement of mutual support between a civilian community and its local Armed Forces Community.
- 5.8 A Community Covenant is signed by various members of the local community including representatives of the Armed Forces and Local Authority. It may also be signed by charities, volunteer groups and other parties keen to support the principles of the Community Covenant.
- 5.9 According to work undertaken by Cheshire PCT, there are approximately 29,000 veterans living in East Lancashire. Reliable figures for Rossendale are not currently available but what we do know is that in the current economic climate with limited employment opportunities employment within the military is a very real and attractive option for people of Rossendale.
- 5.10 Research indicates higher incidence of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder for those leaving the military services than the general population, higher levels of homelessness and a higher presence within the prison population.

5.11 The aims of a Community Covenant are to:

- encourage local communities to support the Armed Forces Community in their areas;
- 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;
- encourage activities which help to integrate the Armed Forces Community into local life;
- 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.

5.12 Community Covenants have been developed in a number of local authority areas. The principle aims of the Covenants are very similar but the interpretation of the implementation of the covenant varies slightly across Councils.

5.13 For example Midlothian's Community Covenant attached at [Appendix 1](#) sets out the broad outcomes partners will sign up to. They have also developed action plans to support the delivery of agreed priorities where appropriate to in-service and ex-service personnel and their families. These include:

- Children, Young People and their Families
- Health and Wellbeing
- Housing
- Employability

5.14 They are also undertaking the development of a communication strategy in order to ensure that key services are effectively signposted to members of the Armed Forces Community.

5.15 In contrast Hampshire County Council has signed their own individual Community Covenant attached at [Appendix 2](#). In this they outline broad principles about how they will work with the armed forces. To co-ordinate this they have established a 'tri-service' Civilian Military Partnership Board to direct implementation of support to the Armed Forces across Hampshire.

5.16 Rossendale Enterprise Anchor Ltd have started to draft such a covenant, and have outlined a number of pledges:

- To continue to work with Veterans In Action (VIA) charity and partners, including Poppy Factory, in the development of an outreach service for veterans and their families in Rossendale;
- To work with key Partners to establish a (VIA) Drop in Centre, which includes securing a building which promotes multiagency and multi sector services for veterans and their families. This Centre will be the first for VIA and a focus for the outdoor activity therapy programme – the ALIVE programme which will benefit from the wide range of outdoor activities on the doorstep, including

walking, biking, skiing and horse riding. This will be the first national charity to have a base in Rossendale;

- To continue to work with VIA and partners to identify what additional resources, including funding, are needed to build on the assets of the veteran and wider community, to develop a joint community bid for a Rossendale share of the £30m set aside over the next 3 years under the terms of the community covenant grant scheme.

5.17 They have also been working with Lancashire County Council exploring the potential for securing a Community Asset Transfer of 166 Bacup Road (Rossendale Restart Building) for use as the National Headquarters of Veterans in Action and a 'one-stop-shop' drop-in centre for veterans and their families. In the meantime, drop in sessions have been established in the REAL office in Bacup on Wednesdays and Haslingden Community Link on Mondays.

#### 5.18 **Community Covenant Grant Scheme**

5.19 The aim of the Community Covenant Grant Scheme is to deliver financial support to 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.

5.20 Bids may only be submitted from areas which have already established a Community Covenant for their area, and applications are invited for sums from £100 to £250,000 (and more in exceptional circumstances).

5.21 Some examples of projects could include:

- One-off activities such as activity camps;
- Children's playgrounds;
- Exhibitions;
- Community outreach;
- Projects to improve health, welfare and financial literacy; and
- Projects that increase the integration of service personnel and the wider community.

5.22 It should be noted that it is stated that any application "...is more likely to be successful if the non-Service element of the partnership also commits to incurring expenditure." Neighbourhood Forum grants could potentially be a source of match funding for any local projects.

5.23 In addition there is potential to work with REAL for creative interpretation of expenditure, e.g. RBC could support a work placement for an out of work veteran and may be able to attract up to one year salary paid by Poppy Factory. Other options could also be explored, but would need to be within existing capacity. Clearly there are opportunities for raising the profile of Rossendale alongside any projects.

#### 5.24 **Armed Forces Champion**

- 5.25 A Community Covenant would be further strengthened by the appointment of an Armed Forces Champion. It is envisaged that this would be a Locally Elected Borough Councillor.

**COMMENTS FROM STATUTORY OFFICERS:**

**7. SECTION 151 OFFICER**

- 7.1 Given the potential sources of grant income mentioned above no additional costs have been identified for the Council in the draft 2012/13 budgets. However, section 5.22 alludes to the potential for Neighbourhood Forum grants to be considered as a source of funds to cover any matched funding requirements.

**8. MONITORING OFFICER**

- 8.1 Any legal implications have been commented on in the report.

**9. HEAD OF PEOPLE AND POLICY (ON BEHALF OF THE HEAD OF PAID SERVICE)**

- 9.1 No Human Resources implications arising from the report.

**10. CONSULTATION CARRIED OUT**

- 10.1 Veterans in Action (VIA), Rossendale Enterprise Anchor Ltd (REAL).

**11. CONCLUSION**

- 11.1 The principles of the Armed Forces Community Covenant are in line with the Council's core principles of partnership working and in the context of how we develop our own corporate plan and partnership plans like the Neighbourhood Forum Action Plans.
- 11.2 Putting customers first and meeting the emerging needs of our communities is at the heart of Rossendale Council's Vision and the Covenant is a mechanism to assist in meeting the needs of armed forces personnel, their families and veterans wherever practicable and feasible.