



20 March 2019

Agenda Item: 7

REPORT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

ARMED FORCES COVENANT: STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is twofold:
 - To seek Committee approval for the Armed Forces Covenant Strategy and Action plan, Appendix A to this report.
 - To seek Committee approval to apply for and register the County Councils application to seek the Employers Recognition Scheme (ERS) Gold Award.

Information

2. The Armed Forces Strategy sets out the vision and principles which the Council seeks to support. By delivering the plan underpinning this over a period of time, the Council will wherever possible, work to enhance the welfare and wellbeing of the Armed Forces Community for Nottinghamshire.
3. This strategy allows for special consideration in some cases to the Armed Forces Community of Serving Personnel. There are five cross-cutting factors that provide a backdrop to the overall co-ordination of service provision as well as six identified themes. These will form the basis of an action plan to be taken forward into the years ahead.
4. To support the delivery of this work 0.4 FTE Programme Officer resource in the Communities Team, Trading Standards & Communities Service has been allocated.
5. The Chairman of the County Council, Councillor Mrs Susan Saddington signed the Armed Forces Covenant at Southwell Minster on Thursday 6 November 2018. The Armed Forces Covenant, which was enshrined in law in the Armed Forces Act (2011), has at its core the principles that service personnel, veterans, and their families are not disadvantaged by their service and that special provision is made for those who have sacrificed the most, including the injured and bereaved.
6. The Armed Forces Community includes all people who are or have been regulars, reservists or cadets and cadet force adult volunteers and their partners and immediate families. The establishment of clearer, consistent principles and aims across Nottinghamshire will help ensure that those within the armed forces community experience a consistent approach with that of other citizens.
7. The Ministry of Defence Employer Recognition Scheme encourages employers to support the defence of the country and inspire others to do the same. The Scheme encompasses Bronze,

Silver and Gold awards for employers that pledge, demonstrate or advocate support for the Armed Forces community, and align their values and support with the Armed Forces Covenant.

8. Nottinghamshire County Council was awarded Silver in 2017. Each award lasts for three years. It is therefore proposed that Nottinghamshire County Council begin the process to achieve the ERS Gold Award.

Employer Recognition Scheme Gold Award

9. Gold Award applicants must meet the following criteria:

- Organisations must have signed the **Armed Forces Covenant**.
- Employers must have an existing relationship with their National Account Manager/REED/appropriate defence representative.
- The employer must have already stated their intent to be supportive by using the ERS website to register at the Bronze level.
- The employer must proactively demonstrate their forces-friendly credentials as part of their recruiting and selection processes. Where possible, they should be engaged with Career Transition Partnership (CTP) in the recruitment of service leavers.
- Employers must employ at least one individual from the armed forces community category that the nomination covers for example, an employer nominated for support to the Reserves must employ at least one Reservist.
- The employer must actively ensure that their workforce is aware of their positive policies towards defence people issues. For example, an employer nominated for support to the Reserves must have an internally publicised and positive HR policy on Reserves.
- The employer must be an exemplar within their market sector, advocating support to Defence People issues to partner organisations, suppliers and customers with tangible positive results.
- Within the context of Reserves the employer must have demonstrated support to mobilisations or have a framework in place. They must provide at least 10 days' additional leave for training, fully paid, to the Reservist employee.
- The employer must not have been the subject of any negative PR or media activity.

10. Employers can sign themselves up for each award and nominations will be validated to determine the level of defence personnel employment with the organisation and that the employer signed up to the Armed Forces Covenant.

Other Options Considered

11. None.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

12. That the County Council communicates its intention to support its armed forces community and honour its pledges within the Armed Forces Covenant Armed Forces Act 2011. The Council will benefit by having clear guidance when working with reservists, and a considered process when recruiting a service leaver or veteran. This will provide a framework which helps to manage and continuously improves its processes and reputation by being presented with a Gold Award.

Statutory and Policy Implications

13. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1) To approve the Armed Forces Covenant Strategy and Action plan reference Appendix A;
- 2) To approve the County Councils application to seek the Employers Recognition Scheme (ERS) Gold Award.

Cllr Mrs Kay Cutts MBE
Leader of the Council

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Constitutional Comments [SLB 25/02/2019]

14. Policy Committee is the appropriate body to consider the content of this report.

Financial Comments [RWK 21/02/2019]

15. There are no specific financial implications arising directly from the report.

HR Comment [GME 25/02/2019]

16. The Council currently employs 4 reservists and provides paid time off for them to attend training camps and other associated activities relating to their service commitments such as Combat Stress events. We have also undertaken work with the Career Transition Partnership to open up our employment opportunities to people leaving the Armed Forces and have attended two dedicated careers events at Newark Showground to invite applications from personnel leaving the services and to demonstrate the range of employment opportunities the Council can offer. For candidates who may have become disabled in the course of their service careers, we offer guaranteed interviews to those meeting the person specification for any advertised role.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

- 'None'

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

- All