



18 May 2016

Agenda Item: 7

REPORT OF THE LEADER

UPDATE ON FULFILLING OUR COMMITMENT TO THE ARMED FORCES COMMUNITY

Purpose of the Report

- 1) To update members of the Policy Committee on the work of the Armed Forces Member Champion and Community and Voluntary Sector (C&VS) Team in relation to the County Council's commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant.

Information and Advice

- 2) 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 a local level, signed by Nottinghamshire County Council (NCC) on 28th January 2013.

Through this covenant we will seek to work together to:

- Encourage the local community to support the armed forces and its personnel in Nottinghamshire and provide opportunities for them to show that support.
 - Promote awareness and understanding of issues affecting the armed forces community in the wider community.
 - Enable military personnel and their families to access services and facilities within the wider community.
 - Support military personnel and their families re-settling or re-locating to Nottinghamshire, including ensuring that children from armed forces families are not disadvantaged.
 - Promote access to suitable employment and training opportunities for those in transition preparing to leave active service.
- 3) Lord Ashcroft's July 2015 Veterans' Transition Follow-up Report has clearly stated that improvements still need to be made in statutory services across all military personnel and service veterans, to support an effective transition back into civilian life.

Communicating the Covenant

- 4) James Franklin, the Head of the Armed Forces Covenant Team Ministry of Defence (MOD) said that: “The covenant is about doing the right thing for Armed Forces people. So the tone and style of our communications should be human. All our communication should capture the sense of being ‘for people by people’. At heart, despite the complexity of its landscape and unfamiliarity of the word ‘covenant’, the idea behind the Armed Forces Covenant is a simple one. We need to keep this in mind and explain things simply, avoiding at all costs the use of institutional terminology.”

Armed Forces Champion

- 5) Councillor Ian Campbell, a serving reservist with the Royal Air Force (RAF), was appointed as Nottinghamshire County Council’s member champion for Armed Forces at Full Council on 17th September 2015.
- 6) A key strategic priority for the armed forces champion is to ensure that all local authorities in Nottinghamshire have the strongest links possible with the armed forces community and to work together to ensure a coordinated approach in taking active steps to support armed forces personnel, veterans and their families.
- 7) Work being undertaken by the armed forces champion supported by the C&VS and Digital Content Teams seeks ways to develop and strengthen engagement with the armed forces community.

Working with the Armed Forces Community

- 8) The range and scope of activities which members and officers are involved in seek to help drive programmes with communities to deliver local solutions and move towards providing services in a different way.
- 9) The Council has several important roles to play in supporting communities:
 - Understanding the Covenant Pledge – what is it and what does it mean?
 - Raising Awareness of the Covenant pledges
 - Delivering local Covenant pledges
 - How do we work together?
 - Future challenges and opportunities.

Armed Forces Champions Forum

- 10) In order to establish an Armed Forces Champion Forum and gain an insight to what all district and borough councils are doing with regard to the community covenant, Councillor Ian Campbell invited all councillors who are armed forces champions within the county to attend a meeting at County Hall on 4 April 2016.

Inside Government Conference

- 11) Councillor Ian Campbell and a Community Officer attended the inside government conference, 'Fulfilling Obligations to Support Military and Defence Personnel', on Wednesday 2nd March 2016 at Hallam Conference Centre, London. Speakers and presentations with comments of note are included in Appendix 1.

Veterans Information Network Nottinghamshire (VINN)

- 12) Regular meetings are held every 10-12 weeks and supported by a community officer from the C&VS Team in the design and direction of the network. Examples of this are listed in Appendix 2.

Website development

- 13) The Digital Content Team are developing an information page on the County Council's public website. The aim of the page is to provide information to the armed forces community and help service leavers through the transition and resettlement process. It is a low cost way of communication and a useful source of information between the County Council, armed forces charities and veterans. The page will include links to a newsletter (managed by VINN) and leading national organisations including Royal British Legion (RBL), Soldier, Sailors, Airman and Families Association (SSAFA), ABF the Soldiers Charity (ABF), Royal Naval Benevolent Trust (RNBT), Royal Air Force Benevolent Fund (RAFBF) and Veterans UK. Several borough and district councils have expressed a wish to be a part of this project, signposting on their websites to the County Council. The completion date is set for 5th July 2016.

East Midlands Reserve Force and Cadet Association - Nottinghamshire

- 14) The Reserve Force and Cadet Association – Nottinghamshire: hosted by the County Council, meets in the Rufford suite every six months. Serving members of HQ 7 Infantry Brigade & HQ East, and HMS Sherwood regularly attend and update all veteran associations of current military deployments and Ministry of Defence (MOD) developments. Service providers such as the Age UK & RBL partnership give briefings on initiatives such as the veterans befriending service in Nottinghamshire. Local charities like Forces in the Community based in Beeston working with a national charity, Combat Stress, provide insight into how national direction is being translated into local action.

Commemoration event - Battle of the Somme

- 15) 2016 marks the centenary of the Battle of the Somme. The commemoration is being led by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), on behalf of the UK Government in partnership with the Commonwealth War Graves Commission and the Royal British Legion to build a programme of events which reflect the significance of the First World War Somme campaign.
- 16) The Somme was one of the bloodiest battles of the First World War, resulting in over one million casualties. There will be a wide programme of events taking place in the UK and France to mark the centenary period. The DCMS are responsible for managing events information on the Remembering Somme Map.

17) The C&VS Team are working on a two part commemoration event to be held at County Hall on 1st July 2016. Part one will consist of a commemoration service outside County Hall, and the blowing of whistles, symbolic of the order to, 'go over the top'. Part two will be an exhibition and film show in the assembly room. The exhibition, 'Nottinghamshire in the Great War', will tell the story of local life throughout the war years. The film show, 'Fighting for Our Heritage', will screen footage from the battlefield in a unique opportunity to 'go to the flicks and marvel at images from the front'. Both the exhibition and film show have been designed by the Nottinghamshire Heritage Forum and Nottingham University, funded by the County Council's 'Community Commemoration Fund'. The details of the event are on the DCMS Remembering Somme Map.

Work programme 2016 – 2017

18) Working with partners the C&VS Team will support with the design and delivery of a number of initiatives, including:

- Civilian Life 2, a follow on event in the form of a workshop to map services and ensure connectivity throughout the Armed Forces Community and local service providers in Nottinghamshire.
- Notts Help Your Self, promote and provide an opportunity for all service providers and organisations to register with www.nottshelpyourself.org.uk
- Armed Forces Champion forum,
- First World War Centenary, within the government the DCMS is leading on national commemorations. Locally groups and organisations are planning events to commemorate:
 - i) 31 May 2016, Battle of Jutland – The Royal Navy in the Great War
 - ii) 31 July 2017, 3rd Battle Ypres – Passchendaele – Sherwood Foresters
 - iii) 11 November 2018, Armistice Day 100 years – Act of Commemoration
- Community Commemoration Fund round 5: offers financial grants of up to £300 to local communities to help reflect on what the war meant for their local area. Currently at round five.

Future developments

19) Chetwynd Barracks, Chilwell, faces closure under government review. The MOD announcement released on 24th March 2016 stated that Chetwynd barracks would close in 2020. The current strength at Chetwynd barracks is 1,099 military staff and 160 civilian staff. 7 Brigade would move to Kendrew Barracks, Cottesmore, Rutland by 2018.

20) The Royal Navy and Royal Marine Reservist Centre - HMS Sherwood, 350 Royal Engineers and Nottingham Army Cadet Force Headquarters will remain at Chilwell.

21) On 13th June 2013, Rushcliffe Borough Council granted planning permission for the redevelopment of the Stanford Hall estate as the site for the Defence and National Rehabilitation Centre DNRC. The MOD intends to transfer its rehabilitation centre at Headley court to the Stanford Hall facility when it opens in 2018. There are also plans for the centre to treat civilians.

Other Options Considered

22) None – the report provides information for noting.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

23) To inform Members of Policy Committee of work undertaken to support the Armed Forces Community in Nottinghamshire.

Statutory and Policy Implications

24) This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (Public Health only), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults, service users, sustainability and the environment and ways of working 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 note the work undertaken by the Armed Forces Champion and the Community and Voluntary Sector Team.
- 2) That future updates on this area of work are made to the Community Safety Committee.

Councillor Alan Rhodes
Leader of the Council

For any enquiries about this report please contact:
Cathy Harvey
Community and Voluntary Sector Team Manager
T: 0115 977 3415
E: cathy.harvey@nottsc.gov.uk

Constitutional Comments

This report is for noting only and therefore Constitutional Comments are not required

Financial Comments (RWK 04/05/2016)

There are no specific financial implications arising directly from this report.

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

Appendix 1 - Inside Government Conference

Speakers and presentations:

- James Franklin, Head of the Armed Forces Covenant Team, MOD, 'Successfully delivering the armed forces covenant'.
- Michael King, Chief Executive, Local Government Ombudsman, 'Ensuring Local Government Commitment to the armed forces covenant'.
- Dave Rutter, Head, Armed Forces and Veterans Health, 'Meeting the needs of the armed forces community'.
- Mark Hopson, Veteran Support, Doncaster – Case study, 'Health pathway in Doncaster'.
- Ed Tytherleigh, Chief Executive, Stoll Housing Association, 'Meeting the Housing needs of Veterans in the UK'.
- Dr Marie –Louise Sharp, research and Healthcare policy adviser, The Royal British Legion, 'Giving the Armed Forces Families the Specialised Support they need in the Voluntary Sector'.

Comments of note:

- James Franklin: Councils are encouraged to share best practice and good ideas – it is not a competition. The covenant is about consistent delivery around the country. The challenges are: capturing the key issues affecting the armed forces community, evidence gathering, and ownership and holding each other to account.
- Covenant Fund Priorities for 2016 -2017.
 - Veterans Gateway
 - Families in Stress
 - Improving local covenant delivery (for local authorities – working in clusters)
 - Community Integration / delivery of local services

Further information can be found by following the below URL link.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covenant-fund-guidance-on-how-to-apply>

The deadline for applications to the Veterans' Gateway is 1 July 2016.

The deadline for applications to Families in Stress and the Community Integration/Delivery of Local Services is 22 June 2016.

- Michael King: The covenant is fertile territory for the Local Government Ombudsman. Councils need to translate commitment into practice – not an easy task. LGO will work with councils to make improvements.

- Dave Rutter: NHS CCG – 1 April 2016 assume responsibility for veterans' health
- Mark Hopson: If we have an understanding of the military culture we can break down barriers and affect engagement. If we create networks and communicate we can share best practice.
- Ed Tytherleigh: Very few services record veterans, we are encouraged to, 'Ask the question'. The housing sector needs to focus more on prevention and promoting independence.
- Dr Marie-Louise Sharp, Adventure breaks for military children – RBL offer week-long adventure breaks to children (12-17) of men and women who are currently serving, or have served in the armed forces. This is provided in partnership with Xplore the World – Nottinghamshire, Gloucestershire and Suffolk.

Appendix 2 - Veterans Information Network Nottinghamshire

Terms of Reference

Veteran's Information Network Nottinghamshire works to enhance, wherever possible, the welfare and wellbeing of the Armed Forces and the Veteran community in Nottinghamshire, which consists of all people who are or have been regulars, reservists or cadets and their immediate families. It achieves this aim through the sharing of information and knowledge, and by being as accessible to as many individuals and groups as possible.

Objectives

- Acting as a point of contact on behalf of local government and other agencies in Nottinghamshire for all matters relating to veterans' policy. In doing so, Veterans Information Network Nottinghamshire contributes to the Nottinghamshire County, District and Borough Councils' commitment to the Armed Forces Community Covenant.
- Working closely with our member organisations to get a collective and unified approach by all those who work on behalf of Veterans in Nottinghamshire. This involves encouraging and facilitating co-operation and co-ordination between our members in order to maximise effect and minimise duplication.
- We also engage with the MOD, other government departments, local government, the Confederation of Service Charities and other agencies in and around Nottinghamshire on all matters relating to Veterans' policy.

Membership

- Members who represent statutory or local and national representative organisations who will work in partnership for the care and comfort and rehabilitation of all veterans, their dependants and communities in Nottinghamshire.
- Membership is open to any group which is a registered company and/or has charitable status registered with the Charity Commission and works with veterans, their dependants and communities.

Civilian Life

The most recent and notable success of VINN was to bring together 25 local and national organisations and one hundred and fifty delegates to County Hall on 12th November 2015 and hold an armed forces themed conference titled 'Civilian Life'. It was a free event hosted by the County Council that sought to bring together solutions to many of the problems that come with life after the forces. Members of VINN are discussing a follow up event that will capture all the good will from the Civilian Life event. The aim is to further strengthen the ever growing links and partnership work in Nottinghamshire and the care packages available to the armed forces community.