

FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Date of Meeting	Tuesday, 29 th January 2019
Report Subject	Armed Forces Covenant Annual Report April 2017 - December 2018
Report Author	Chief Executive

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is the second Annual Report of Flintshire County Council's Armed Forces Covenant.

The Armed Forces Covenant is a promise from the nation that those who serve or have served in the armed forces, and their families, are treated fairly. The Covenant is a national responsibility involving government, businesses, local authorities, charities and the public, encouraging local communities to support the Armed Forces in their area and to promote understanding and awareness.

The Council is committed to supporting the Armed Forces community by working with a range of partners who have signed our Covenant, including Flintshire Local Voluntary Council and the Royal British Legion. The purpose of the Flintshire Covenant is to encourage support for the Armed Forces community who work and/or live in Flintshire and to recognise and remember the sacrifices made by members of this Armed Forces community.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	Note the positive progress made in meeting the Armed Forces Covenant and support the commitments for further improvement.
2	Endorse the Armed Forces Covenant Annual Report prior to publication on the Council's website.

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	PROGRESS MADE SUPPORTING THE ARMED FORCES COVENANT
1.01	<p>The Armed Forces Covenant aims to recognise the sacrifices made by the Armed Forces community within the County and help provide support for them and their families ensuring they do not face disadvantage because of military service. The Armed Forces community includes in-Service and ex-Service personnel, families and widow(er)s. The Covenant is a two-way arrangement and the Armed Forces community is encouraged to do as much as they can to support their civilian community.</p> <p>The Council proudly hosted the North Wales Armed Forces Day in June 2013 and signed the Covenant in July 2013.</p>
1.02	<p>The Covenant covers issues affecting the Armed Forces community such as housing, education and welfare support after military service has ended and also supporting current service members and their families.</p>
1.03	<p>A multi-agency steering group has been established with members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flintshire County Council employees who are veterans • Representatives of key Council services, including Benefits, Education, Housing, Social Services • Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and their families Association (SSAFA) • Royal British Legion (RBL) • A representative of the Armed Forces • Flintshire Local Voluntary Council. <p>Councillor Andrew Dunbobbin is the Council's Armed Forces Champion and is the chair of this group.</p>
1.04	<p>The Steering Group agreed an action plan in 2016 to progress its work. Over three quarters of the action plan has been completed. Key achievements are set out in the Annual report and include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • receiving the Silver award from the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme for the Council's Veteran friendly employment policies and practices; • demonstrating commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant by promoting Reserves Day and Armed Forces Day; • the second year of the Welsh Government grant-funded two Regional Armed Forces Liaison Officers (one appointed to North West Wales and the second post to cover North East Wales). These posts have created additional capacity in councils across North Wales accelerating progress in meeting the commitments of the Covenant and supporting grant aided local projects (refer to section 1.05); • the Regional Armed Forces Liaison Officers have delivered training to the Mental Health team in Social Services to raise awareness of the needs of veterans, enabling them to provide more effective

	<p>services; and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • veterans and armed forces personnel in possession of an MOD Defence Privilege Card continue to take advantage of the Welsh Government's free swimming initiative.
1.05	<p>As part of the World War One celebrations, Southdown Community School in Buckley researched a local hero, Frederick Birks, who was awarded the Victoria Cross for his gallantry in World War One. The school's work was recognised in a recent Estyn report, which stated:</p> <p><i>“When studying a local war hero pupils were encouraged to use their own opinions to shape their history lessons. As the project grew it influenced the class in a new direction. Pupils gained a sense of personal achievement by knowing that their ideas contributed to changes in what they studied. Pupils were given an open approach to class planning, which enabled them to produce their own play on their research findings.”</i></p>
1.06	<p>The Council was successful in submitting and being awarded a grant to commemorate the centenary of the end of World War One. The commemorations included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the dedication of commemorative stones for two people from Flintshire who were awarded the Victoria Cross (V.C.) for their gallantry during the War- Frederick Birks V.C. from Buckley and Harry Weale V.C. from Shotton; • a “Thank You” project involving local primary schools to remember the names of soldiers who had lost their lives during battle and whose names are missing from the Connah's Quay Shotton Memorial; and • “Battles Over” initiative on 11th November which involved lighting beacons across Flintshire to pay tribute to those who lost their lives or were injured.
1.07	<p>A grant has also been awarded for a project “Planes over Talacre” to remember the relationship between the Royal Air Force and the people of Talacre during World War Two. This project will involve the reconstruction of a “pill box” as the existing pill boxes on Talacre beach are being eroded by the sea. Pill boxes are small, concrete forts and formed one of the defences to prevent German invasion.</p> <p>The project will culminate in an open day in July 2019.</p>
1.08	<p>The Annual Report also identifies issues to be addressed during 2019:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council services to start capturing the profile of their customers who are members of the Armed Forces community. This will enable services to better understand the make-up of the Armed Forces community in Flintshire and their needs; • schools to start capturing whether any pupils/students are children of serving members of the Armed Forces or veterans; • training and awareness programme targeted at public facing services, delivered by the Regional Armed Forces Liaison Officers; • restructure of the local Armed Forces Steering Group to reflect the

	<p>functions of the recently restructured Regional group which has been divided into separate Strategic and Delivery Groups; and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> publish an annual newsletter to keep the Armed Forces community up to date with our progress.
1.09	The two Regional Armed Forces Liaison Officers have recently completed a mapping exercise of the Armed Forces community in North Wales and their needs. The following 12 months will focus on addressing the gaps identified in this report either locally or on a regional basis.

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	<p>There are no financial resource implications arising directly from this report. Covenant Funds are available from the MoD which will continue to be pursued to support projects and activities across Flintshire to support the Covenant.</p> <p>Employees in public facing services will complete basic awareness training to develop a better understanding of the needs of the Armed Forces community.</p>

3.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
3.01	The Armed Forces Steering Group has been involved in the activities and improvements identified in the Annual Report.

4.00	RISK MANAGEMENT
4.01	Adhering to the commitments of the Covenant ensures that Armed Forces, their families and veterans are treated fairly when accessing Council services.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	Appendix 1: Armed Forces Covenant Annual Report April 2017- December 2018

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	<p>Armed Forces Covenant</p> <p>Contact Officer: Fiona Mocko, Strategic Policy Advisor Telephone: 01352 702122 E-mail: Fiona.mocko@flintshire.gov.uk</p>

7.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
7.01	<p>Armed Forces Community: includes in-service and ex-service personnel, their families and widow(er)s.</p> <p>Armed Forces Covenant: the Armed Forces Covenant is a promise of mutual support between a civilian community and its local armed forces community.</p> <p>Armed Forces Liaison Officer: a full time officer funded by the Armed Forces Grant to support local authorities deliver the commitments set out in the Armed Forces Covenant.</p>