

COUNCIL

26 APRIL 2012

ARMED SERVICES COVENANT

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Rodney Chambers, Leader
Report from: Neil Davies, Chief Executive
Author: Jane Ringham, Head of Elections & Member Services

Summary

Council is being asked to approve the development of an Armed Services Covenant with the community of Medway, recognising the contribution of the armed services and to note the activities being undertaken with those forces and other partners in Medway by way of a partnership group.

1. Budget and Policy Framework

1.1 The proposal to develop an Armed Services Covenant is a matter for Council.

2. Background

2.1 At the Council meeting on November 2009, the following motion was agreed:

This Council notes that Medway has a proud military heritage and continues to maintain strong links with the Armed Forces and the Reserve Forces many of whom have been called up for active service.

This Council acknowledges Medway's commitment to support the Armed Forces, which has included bestowing the Freedom on HMS Chatham and the Corp of Royal Engineers, and hosting the first National Armed Forces Day in 2009. The Council resolves to continue to support the Armed Forces personnel and their families in recognition of their services to this country.

The Council also acknowledges the support the Government provides to the bereaved families of those who have given their lives in service to this country, which includes the choice of a military or private family funeral or cremation funded by the Ministry of Defence.

That in light of the longstanding relationship between the military and civilian communities in Medway, the Council should enter into a dialogue with the commanding officer at Brompton Barracks. This is to understand what the local authority might better do in order to ensure the welfare of serving and former members of the armed forces and their families living in Medway.

- 2.2 The Government has published a new Tri-Service Armed Forces Covenant which sets out a new relationship between the Government, voluntary and charitable bodies, civil society, local government, and those serving in the armed forces and their families. The Covenant covers a wide range of services and issues, including issues such as healthcare, education and housing. The proposed Covenant for Medway is attached at Appendix A.
- 2.3 In parallel to this, the Government has produced, via the Ministry of Defence, a new Community Covenant Scheme which will encourage public service providers at Local and Unitary Authority level, the private sector and the voluntary and community sectors to volunteer targeted support for their local Armed Forces community. This could take the form of, for example, additional support in accessing local service delivery such as local housing or free access to leisure facilities, discounts in shops and restaurants.
- 2.4 The Government has also launched a Community Covenant Grant. The Ministry of Defence will allocate up to £30million over four years. The general premise of this fund is that it will be to support 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. The Scheme will consider applications from local groups for practical projects which deliver rapid results in support of the Armed Forces Community.
- 2.5 Applications are invited for sums from £100 to £250,000 (although bids for amounts greater than this may also be considered in exceptional circumstances). It is envisaged that many of the requests will be for smaller amounts of funding to support local projects and some examples offered by the Ministry of Defence include:
- one-off activities such as an activity camp involving the Armed Forces and young people;
 - a community outreach project that brings together veterans with their non-Service equivalents to highlight what support is available to them in their local community.
- 2.6 One key factor to note is that bids may only be submitted from areas which have already established a Community Covenant in their area.

3. Current activity

- 3.1 In the same way that the Council, with its partners in both the statutory and community, faith and voluntary sectors, work together to tackle the impacts of the disadvantages and challenges faced by people across Medway, the new Community Covenant offers the chance for partners across Medway to do the same for the Armed Forces.
- 3.2 Nationally, the Ministry of Defence report that officers of the Armed Services and their families face a number of issues:

- The current size of the UK ex-Service community (both veterans and their dependants, including dependent children), is over 10.5 million people, and with a more elderly profile than the general population.
- A minority (6%) of the adult ex-Service community are currently experiencing difficulties and not receiving the help, advice or support they need. This is equivalent to around half a million people with unmet welfare needs.
- In the general population, women are more at risk of mental health problems than men, whereas in the ex-Service community mental health problems afflict men as much as women.
- Unemployment among 25-49 year olds in the ex-Service community is higher than the rate nationally.
- More than half (52%) of the adult ex-Service community have a long-term illness, disability or infirmity, which is higher than in the adult population.
- In the ex-Service community, the unemployment rate among adults of working age is 6%; hardly different from the 5% in the general working age population. However, this hides an unemployment rate among younger members of the ex-Service community (aged 18-49), which is as much as twice that of their peers nationally.
- Whilst they may not necessarily wish to ask for charitable welfare assistance, over half of the adult ex-Service community (around 4.6 million people) have experienced at least one significant personal difficulty in the last year.
- The problems encountered by younger and older members of the ex-Service community differ. Older members are more likely to encounter difficulties with mobility and house and garden maintenance. Younger members are more likely to experience financial, employment or psychological difficulties.
- Members of the ex-Service community aged 65 and over, when compared to their peers in the general population, are:
 - less likely to be 'very happy'
 - less likely to experience complete social isolation
 - in better or equivalent health
 - more likely to experience mental health and hearing problems

Younger ex-Service community

- 3.3 Members of the ex-Service community aged 16 – 64, when compared to their peers in the general population, are:
- more likely to be 'very happy'
 - more likely to experience major health problems
- 3.4 Relative to their peers nationally:
- 16-44 year olds are more prone to mental health problems
 - 16-44 year old veterans have higher prevalence of muscular-skeletal complaints
 - 45-64 year olds are more prone to cardio-vascular or respiratory conditions.
- 3.5 Locally in the area, people already support the services' community by:-
- fundraising
 - taking part in a number of events and celebrations such as Freedom Parades, National Armed Forces day and through particular initiatives such as awarding the Freedom of HMS Chatham and the Royal Engineers.
- 3.6 As an employer the Council supports employees who are members of the Non-Regular Forces by granting them up to two weeks paid leave of absence for employees to attend

summer camp. Similarly, employees who are members of the Reserved Armed Forces are entitled to leave as governed by the Reserves Forces Act 1996.

4. Proposed activities

4.1 In working towards the development of the Community Covenant and other support activities in Medway, the Director of Regeneration, Community and Culture has been liaising with the Royal Engineers to establish a steering group to work with the Armed Forces community, statutory providers and the charitable and voluntary sectors in Medway in order to identify, develop and support projects which meet the aims of the Covenant. The group may apply for funding from the Community Covenant Grant scheme.

4.2 A number of organisations have been identified who support and work with the Armed services community in Medway and many have already confirmed that they would wish to formalise that support by signing the Covenant. The list below shows those who have currently been invited to sign the Covenant:

Kent and Medway Police
Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue
NHS Kent and Medway
ABF The Soldiers' Charity and Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association (SSAFA)
Mid-Kent College
Armed Forces Care Agencies
South East Coast Ambulance Service, NHS Trust
MPs for Gillingham & Rainham, Rochester & Strood and Chatham and Aylesford
Her Majesty's Lord Lieutenant of Kent and the High Sheriff of Kent
Commandant RSME , Naval Regional Office and Rochester TA Centre
The Lord Bishop of Rochester and the Dean of Rochester Cathedral
Royal British Legion, Rochester & Strood and Gillingham
Chatham Historic Dockyard
Cadet Groups – Royal Marines, Sea Cadets, Army Cadet Force, Air Training Corps
Royal Engineers Association (Medway), Royal Marine Association, Royal Naval Association, Royal Naval Benevolent Fund, Royal Air Forces Association
Local businesses, transport providers, housing associations and media

4.3 If other organisations express an interest in signing the Covenant, it is proposed that they be allowed to do so; the Covenant will be a “living” document which can be updated as matters progress.

4.4 To formally acknowledge and raise awareness about the Covenant a small, low key signing ceremony will be organised later in the year to which all signatories will be invited.

5. Financial and legal implications

5.1 Any costs involved in the development and supporting of the Community Covenant scheme will be met from existing resources or by accessing the grant funding highlighted in section 2.4.

5.2 The power to take the measures recommended in paragraph 2 above derives from the Council's power under Part 1 of the Local Government Act 2000 to do anything it considers likely to improve or promote the social or economic wellbeing of its area. The power may be exercised for the benefit of all or any persons resident in the council's area. Additionally, exercise of the power must be consistent with the Sustainable Community Strategy for Medway. In this instance, two priorities identified by the Strategy (good health, well being and care and valuing one another, play an active part and have pride in the community) render the exercise of the council's well-being powers relevant in relation to the Medway Armed Forces Community Covenant. This power is likely to be repealed in England shortly, but the Council also has powers under the general power of competence in s1 of the Localism Act 2011 which have already been brought into force and which would empower the Council to take the measures recommended in paragraph 2 above

6. Risk management

6.1 There is a clear opportunity for additional funding as detailed in the body of the report.

6.2 There is a risk that public perception of the Council's commitment to the Armed Services in Medway will be harmed if Medway is not seen to be developing an Armed Services Covenant.

7. Recommendations

7.1 The Council is asked to approve that Medway co-ordinates the development of an Armed Services Covenant and encourages as many organisations as possible to sign that document to show their support for the Armed Services community in Medway.

7.2 The Council is asked to note that a community partnership is being developed between Medway Council and the Royal Engineers with a view to developing a programme of activity and enable publicity of existing initiatives as well as the development of new plans as appropriate.

Lead officer contact

Jane Ringham, Head of Elections & Member Services, ext 2864,
jane.ringham@medway.gov.uk

Background papers

Description of Background Papers	Contact details
The Armed Forces Covenant: Today and Tomorrow, Ministry of Defence The Armed Services Covenant, Ministry of Defence	Jane Ringham, ext 2864, 3 rd Floor Gun Wharf



Community Covenant

between

**MEDWAY COUNCIL, REPRESENTATIVES OF THE
CHARITABLE, VOLUNTARY AND BUSINESS SECTORS,
AND THE CIVILIAN COMMUNITY IN MEDWAY**

and

THE ARMED FORCES COMMUNITY IN MEDWAY

xx xxx 2012

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

THE ARMED FORCES COMMUNITY COVENANT FOR MEDWAY

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

Signatories

Signed on behalf of Medway Council	Signed on behalf of the Medway Military Community
Councillor R Chambers OBE The Leader Medway Council	Brigadier SP Hodder late RE Commandant The Royal School of Military Engineering
Neil Davies Chief Executive Medway Council	Lieutenant Colonel GV Baker RE Commanding Officer 1 RSME Regiment & Commander Chatham Station
	Capt T Boorman Officer Commanding 221 Field Squadron (EOD) (V)
	Major B Dwyer Officer Commanding C Company 3 rd Battalion The Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment (V)

Signed on behalf of other participating organisations

<p>Dr Peter Green Chairman Medway Commissioning Group and Medical Co-Director NHS Kent and Medway</p>	<p>Dr Harbinder Sangha Medical Officer Army Primary Health Care Service Chatham</p>
<p>Dr Gray Smith-Laing MB FRCP Medical Director Medway Maritime Hospital</p>	<p>Mrs Sheila Potipher, Chairman, the Board of Governors, MidKent College</p>
<p>Colonel (Retd) P Cook DL Chairman Kent ABF The Soldiers' Charity</p>	<p>Chief Superintendent Neil Jerome Area Commander North and Medway Division Kent Police</p>
<p>Geoff Simpson CBE AFC Kent County Manager The Royal British Legion</p>	<p>Mrs Anne Vosper, Honorary Secretary, Medway Division, SSAFA</p>
<p>Dean of Rochester Cathedral</p>	<p>Kent Messenger</p>
<p>Mrs Patricia Hewett Head of Housing MHS Homes</p>	<p>Countryside Properties</p>
<p>Berkeley Homes</p>	<p>Orbit Housing</p>

Community Service Volunteers	Chamber of Commerce
Peel Ports	Arriva Buses
S.E Trains	Rochester Prison
Medway Citizens Advice Bureau	

SECTION 1 – PARTICIPANTS

- 1.1 This Medway Armed Forces Community Covenant is made between:
 - 1.1.1. Serving and former members of the Armed Forces and their families working and residing in Medway, and
 - 1.1.2. Medway Council, and
 - 1.1.3. Other participating groups within Medway.

SECTION 2 – PRINCIPLES OF THE ARMED FORCES COMMUNITY COVENANT

- 2.1 This Armed Forces Community Covenant is a voluntary statement of mutual support between the Medway civilian community and the Armed Forces Community in Medway. It is intended to complement the Armed Forces Covenant (Annex A), which outlines the moral obligation between the Nation, the Government and the Armed Forces at the local level. The core principle of the Armed Forces Covenant is that members of the Armed Forces Community should:
 - 2.1.1. Not suffer disadvantage compared to other citizens as a result of their service;
 - 2.1.2. Receive equality of outcomes; and
 - 2.1.3. Receive special treatment where appropriate.
- 2.2 The purpose of this Community Covenant is to encourage support for the Armed Forces Community working and residing in Medway and to recognise and to remember the sacrifices made by members of this Armed Forces Community, particularly those who have given the most. This includes Service personnel and Service veterans, their families and their widow(er)s in Medway.

- 2.3 For Medway Council, this Community Covenant presents an opportunity to bring its knowledge, experience and expertise to bear in the provision of support, help and advice to members of the Medway Armed Forces Community. It also presents an opportunity to build upon existing good work on other initiatives such as the Welfare Pathway¹.
- 2.4 For the Medway Armed Forces Community, this Community Covenant encourages the integration of Service life with civilian life and encourages members of the Medway Armed Forces Community to help their local community.

SECTION 3 – AIMS AND GENERAL INTENTIONS

- 3.1 This Community Covenant complements 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 to 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 and at local level.
- 3.3 The scheme is intended to be a two-way arrangement and members of the Medway Armed Forces Community are encouraged to do as much as they can to support the Medway civilian community and to promote activity which integrates the Service community into civilian life.

¹ The Welfare Pathway brings together services to support veterans and uses existing Gateways as the access point.

SECTION 4 - MEASURES

- 4.1 Medway Council will establish a Community Covenant Steering Group in order to better facilitate the provision of support to the Medway Armed Forces Community. This Community Covenant Steering Group will work closely with the Armed Forces Community, statutory providers and the Charitable and Voluntary Sector in Medway in order to identify, develop and support projects which meet the aims of the Armed Forces Covenant. Medway Council will also seek opportunities to involve the local business community in joint projects and activities.
- 4.2 Medway Council will oversee the long-term planning and decision making in the support services provided by the Council to the Armed Forces in Medway. Medway Council will also co-ordinate and deliver joint Council/Military Community projects as identified and agreed by the Community Covenant Steering Group.
- 4.3 The Community Covenant Steering Group will measure success and will report half-yearly to the Medway Council and to the Ministry of Defence.
- 4.4 Signatories to this Medway Community Covenant will work together with the Armed Forces Community in Medway and with other individuals and organisations in Medway to further the aims of the Armed Forces Covenant. The contact details of relevant organisations and agencies are at Annex B.

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.

CONTACT DETAILS**MEDWAY COUNCIL**

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NHS KENT AND MEDWAY

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Kent Messenger

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Berkeley Homes

Community Service Volunteers

Chamber of Commerce

Arriva Buses

Peel Ports

Rochester Prison

S.E Trains

Medway Citizens Advice Bureau