

Executive

Armed Forces Community Covenant

4 July 2011

Report of the Chief Executive and the Corporate Strategy and Performance Manager

PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report provides an update on the Oxfordshire Armed Forces Community Covenant and Cherwell District Council's response to it.

This report is public

Recommendations

The Executive is recommended:

- 1) To note the importance of the Armed Forces Community Covenant and request that officers work across all Council services to ensure there are clear plans in place to deliver the aspirations of the Covenant.

Executive Summary

Introduction

- 1.1 Oxfordshire is amongst the first counties to launch the Armed Forces Community Covenant, and on 20 June, Cherwell's Chairman, Councillor Hallchurch MBE joined the County's other District Council Chairmen, and County Council leader Cllr Keith Mitchell CBE, in signing it.
- 1.2 The Armed Forces Community Covenant reinforces the bond between the local community and the armed services. It reflects the national covenant between the military and the nation and gives local expression to how the public, private and voluntary sectors can support the men and women of our armed focuses along with their families and children. This includes current service personnel, reservists and veterans.
- 1.3 The high level covenant is attached at Appendix 1. This encapsulates the commitment and aspirations behind the covenant and acts as a county wide framework for plans and actions at a local level.

- 1.4 The County Council will be coordinating the covenant and in the coming weeks asking for pledges and actions from those who have signed up to it, including district councils and the voluntary/community sector.

Proposals

- 1.5 Cherwell District Council has signed up to the county wide covenant and therefore does not need to draft an additional local version. However it is important that the Council takes steps to ensure the commitments outlined in the county wide covenant are met. To this end the Council will:
- Ensure that we continue to build strong links with armed forces representatives and work with regional and local bodies to develop these relationships.
 - Ensure services support current and ex armed services personnel by considering their needs through service planning, community development and engagement work.
 - Participate in the cross county partnership to ensure the covenant is developed, implemented and makes a difference to the armed forces community in the district and across Oxfordshire.
 - Ensure Councillors, employees and partners are aware of the covenant its importance and implications for the Cherwell District.

Conclusion

- 1.6 The Armed Forces Community Covenant is an important commitment on the part of the District Council to support armed services personnel, their families, children, reservists and veterans. The Council views the local military as an important part of the community and part of the tradition within the District and will continue to work in local partnerships and across the County to ensure the commitments outlined in the covenant are met.

Background Information

2.1 An overview of the Armed Forces Community Covenant

The 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 the local level. The aim of the Community Covenant is to encourage local communities to support the Service community in their area and nurture understanding and awareness amongst the public of issues affecting the Armed Forces community.

The Community Covenant complements the national Armed Forces Covenant but enables service providers to go beyond the national commitments. It allows for measures to be put in place at a local level to support the Armed Forces. The Community Covenant encourages local communities to develop a relationship with the Service community in their area; this enables support to be tailored according to need.

2.2 Policy Context

Nationally the Community Covenant is a new initiative and Oxfordshire has been recognised as a front runner in signing up to a county wide document, other leading authorities are Hampshire, Portsmouth and North Yorkshire. The launch on 20th June included a video address from the Prime minister recognising the already strong local connections and important role that the armed services play in the community life of Oxfordshire.

The national aspiration is that the community covenants reflect the local community and are shaped by local partners to ensure that community needs are met. To this end the covenant is flexible and will be further developed in the coming months.

2.3 Future Funding Opportunities

The Defence Secretary has announced that £30M of central Government funding has been allocated over the next four years to support the Community Covenant. The details of the grant scheme have not yet been published. However it is likely that the scheme's aims will be defined in terms of supporting 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.

Cherwell District Council will work with cross county partners on any projects bids as they are developed.

Key Issues for Consideration/Reasons for Decision and Options

- 3.1 The report highlights the importance of the Armed Forces Community Covenant for Cherwell and outlines the steps the Council will take to ensure that its commitments and aspirations are embedded in its work and its partnerships.

The following options have been identified. The approach in the recommendations is believed to be the best way forward

Option One	To approve the recommendations above
Option Two	To amend or reject the recommendations above.
Consultations	Not Applicable

Implications

Financial: None arising from this report. Future financial impacts will be considered as the policy and approach develops.

Comments checked by Karen Curtain, Head of Finance ,
01295 221559

Legal: None
Comments checked by Nigel Bell, Principal Solicitor, 01295 221687

Risk Management: Failure to adhere to the Community Covenant will result in reputational damage to the Council. Failure to deliver effective services to armed forces personnel will result in poor performance and negative outcomes for the affected community.

The author of this report is responsible for the performance and risk management framework, Claire Taylor, Corporate Strategy and Performance Manager, 01295 221563.

Equalities Signing up to the Armed Forces Community Covenant supports the Council's corporate equality action plan and priorities within the Sustainable Community Strategy for Cherwell.

Comments checked by Caroline French, Partnership and Equalities Officer, 01295 221586

Wards Affected

All

Corporate Plan Themes

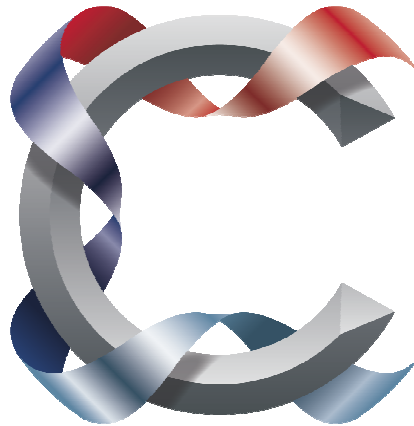
The Armed Forces Community Covenant covers all of the Corporate Plan themes

Executive Lead Member

Councillor Barry Wood
Leader of the Council, Executive Lead for Partnerships

Document Information

Appendix No	Title
Appendix 1	The Oxfordshire Armed Forces Community Covenant
Background Papers	
More details regarding the covenant can be found at www.mod.uk/covenant	
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Community Covenant

AN ARMED FORCES COMMUNITY COVENANT

BETWEEN

Oxfordshire County Council, the District Councils of Oxfordshire,
representatives of the Armed Forces Charities and the Business
Community of Oxfordshire.

AND

The Armed Forces Community in Oxfordshire

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

Signatories

Cllr Keith R Mitchell CBE
Leader
Signed on behalf of Oxfordshire
County Council

Joanna Simons CBE
Chief Executive
Signed on behalf of Oxfordshire
County Council

Commodore Timothy Hennessey DL
BSc MA
Signed on behalf of the Royal Navy

Brigadier Neil Baverstock OBE MA
Signed on behalf of the Army

Group Captain Dominic Stamp MA
Signed on behalf of the Royal Air
Force

Cllr Bob Price
Leader
Signed on behalf of:
Oxford City Council

Cllr Timothy Hallchurch MBE
Chairman
Signed on behalf of:
Cherwell District Council

Cllr Felix Bloomfield,
Chairman
Signed on behalf of:
South Oxfordshire District Council

Cllr Alison Thomson
Chairman
Signed on behalf of:
Vale of White Horse District Council

Cllr Derek Cotterill
Chairman
Signed on behalf of:
West Oxfordshire District Council

Dr Martin Dare-Edwards
Chairman, Oxfordshire Local
Enterprise Partnership
Signed on behalf of:
The Business Community

Rt Revd Colin Fletcher OBE
Bishop of Dorchester

Brigadier Michael (M J F) Stephens
MA CEng MICE
Chairman, SSAFA Forces Help
Oxfordshire
Signed on behalf of:
The Armed Forces Charities

Michael Henderson
Oxfordshire County Chairman, Royal
British Legion
Signed on behalf of the Armed
Forces Charities

Signed on 20th June 2011

SECTION 1: PARTICIPANTS

This Armed Forces Community Covenant is made between:

The serving and former members of the Armed Forces and their families working and residing in Oxfordshire

And

Oxfordshire County Council

And

District Councils of Oxfordshire

And

The Armed Forces Charities

And

The Business Community

SECTION 2: PRINCIPLES OF THE ARMED FORCES COMMUNITY COVENANT

2.1 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 the local level.

2.2 The purpose of this Community Covenant is to encourage support for the Armed Forces Community working and residing in Oxfordshire and to recognise and remember the sacrifices made by members of this Armed Forces Community, particularly those who have given the most. This includes in-Service and ex-Service personnel their families and widow(er)s in Oxfordshire.

2.3 For Oxfordshire County Council and partner organisations, the Community Covenant presents an opportunity to bring their knowledge, experience and expertise to bear on the provision of help and advice to members of the Armed Forces Community. It also presents an opportunity to build upon existing good work on other initiatives such as the Welfare Pathway.

2.4 For the Armed Forces community, the Community Covenant encourages the integration of Service life into civilian life and encourages members of the Armed Forces community to help their local community.

SECTION 3: OBJECTIVES AND GENERAL INTENTIONS

Aims of the Community Covenant

3.1 The Armed Forces Community Covenant complements the principles of 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 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 at local level.

3.3 The scheme is intended to be a two-way arrangement and the Armed Forces community are encouraged to do as much as they can to support their community and promote activity which integrates the Service community into civilian life.

CONTACT PERSONNEL AND TELEPHONE NUMBERS

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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.