

**POLICY & RESOURCES
COMMITTEE**

Agenda Item 57

11 October 2012

Brighton & Hove City Council

Subject:	Brighton & Hove Community Covenant between Brighton & Hove City Council and the Armed Forces Community in Brighton & Hove		
Date of Meeting:	11th October 2012		
Report of:	Head of Policy Performance and Analysis:		
Contact Officer:	Name:	Clair Hopkins	Tel: 29-1343
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Ward(s) affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 Community Covenants are voluntary statements of mutual support between civilian and Armed Forces communities.
- 1.2 They are intended to complement, at a local level, the Armed Forces Covenant, which outlines the moral obligations between the Nation, the Government and the Armed Forces.
- 1.3 There will be a role for the council in partnership with the Community and Voluntary Sector and Business sector in identifying and supporting projects within the aims and objectives of the proposed Brighton and Hove Community Covenant.
- 1.4 At Full Council on 21st July 2011 a Notice of Motion was carried supporting the development of a Brighton & Hove Armed Forces Community Covenant.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS: That the Committee:-

- 2.1 Approve the Brighton & Hove Community Covenant attached as Appendix 1.
- 2.2 Approve the establishment of a Military Civil Partnership Board to support the Brighton and Hove Armed Forces Community.
- 2.3 Approve the re-launch of the Brighton & Hove Heroes Welcome campaign to show support to British Armed Forces personnel in the city.

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:

- 3.1 Locally in the City people already support the services community by:-
 - Fundraising
 - Taking part in military events and celebrations -
 - Hero's welcome campaign
 - Armed Forces Day celebrations (annually)
 - Freedom Parade
 - Awarding the freedom of the City to Veterans

3.2 The Council already provides the following services to the Armed Forces Community:-

- The **Housing Benefits Team** provides a liaison service for Armed Service men and women in conjunction with the Royal British Legion.
- There is a National Disregard for War pensions and War widow pensions from £10.00 onwards which affects the amount of Housing Benefit that can be awarded. Currently the council is one of only 5 councils in the country that disregard, any full war pension and war widow pensions received when assessing housing benefits claims.

3.3 As an employer the council has publicly supported SaBRE since May 2008, an organisation which supports Reservists. The council is listed on their website as a supporting employer and supports employees who are members of the Territorial Army by granting them one week paid leave, in addition to their other leave entitlement, to attend reserve forces annual training camps. Any additional commitments would be covered by annual or unpaid leave and, as far as possible; we would facilitate the release of reservists for mobilisation.

3.4 **Current Issues:**

3.4.1 The awaited results of the Military Veteran's Health Needs Assessment carried out by NHS Sussex have now been received. This report was presented at the Sussex Armed Forces Network meeting on 8th May 2012 at which Members of the council's Communities & Equality Team were present.

3.4.2 Although there is limited recording of veteran status within services, there are an estimated 130,000 military veterans in Sussex, of which 17,360 are recorded for Brighton & Hove (*national prevalence assumptions have been applied to local population figures*). The Royal British Legion (RBL) has estimated that given the lack of a "regular" military presence in Sussex it is likely that the proportion of reservists to regulars is higher locally.

3.4.3 The Military Veteran's Health Needs Assessment Report makes seven recommendations which will be added to the Sussex Armed Forces Network Workplan 2012/13. There are several recommendations which the council can jointly feed into, as a starting point for the Community Covenant:-

- Improving data collection – e.g. employees, tenants, social care services etc. (regulars, veterans, reservists).
- Support for reservists through employer policies – Public sector employers should show leadership and ensure they are exemplar reservist employers, considering not just those who have left the service, but notably for veterans who may have delayed reactions post-mobilisation.
- Wider community needs – Housing and Adapted Housing Needs – a number of disadvantages have been identified in relation to accessing housing support or housing adaptations – due to proving a 'local connection' in order to be accepted onto a local housing waiting list, or receive homelessness relief and establishing a credit history to access financial products including mortgages.

- Homelessness – although the number of homeless veterans has declined, specific groups at greater risk of homelessness have been identified:
 - Homeless veterans are far more likely to be from the Army, reflecting a greater intake from disadvantaged communities,
 - Young leavers who have served less than 4 years, and/or are compulsory leavers have been also identified at greater risk
- Mental Health conditions in particular depression, anxiety, alcohol and drug misuse, suicide

4. Proposals for a Brighton & Hove Community Covenant

- 4.1 The production of a Brighton & Hove Community Covenant will provide us with the opportunity to publicise the existing provision and undertake meaningful engagement with the Armed Forces Community. This would include those currently serving in the Armed Forces and their families, Reservists, Veterans and Cadets in the city.
- 4.2 To encourage all parties within the community to offer support to the local Armed Forces Community and make it easier for service personnel, and their families, and veterans to access help and support available within the city from the MoD, the council and other statutory providers and the Community & Voluntary Sector. All these organisations already work closely together in partnership at a local level.
- 4.3 The scheme is intended to be a two way arrangement and members of the Brighton & Hove Armed Forces community are encouraged to support Brighton & Hove civilian communities and promote activity which will integrate the service community into civilian life.
- 4.4 The council will need to establish a Civil Military Partnership Board to better facilitate support to the Brighton & Hove Armed Forces Community. This partnership board will work closely with the Armed Forces Community, statutory providers and the Community & Voluntary Sector in Brighton & Hove to identify, develop and support projects to deliver the Armed Forces Covenant's aims and objectives.
- 4.5 Councillor Rob Jarrett, as chair Adult Social Care Committee, will chair the partnership board and a representative from each of the other political groups will be invited to join. Senior officers at the council from Housing, Health, Democratic Services, Supported Employment team (for re-training and employment) and Visit Brighton will also be involved to support the work of the covenant. It is also intended to involve the Community and Voluntary sector and Business Sector to identify and support projects.
- 4.6 A community covenant grant scheme has been set up to fund local projects which strengthen the ties between members of the Armed Forces Communities and the wider community in which they live by promoting greater understanding between the military and civilian populations. Once the Civil Military Partnership Board is convened and the Community Covenant in place, a bid to fund projects to meet the Civil Military Partnership Board (CMPB) actions identified by the Civil Military Partnership Board can be submitted.

- 4.7 Re-launch of the Brighton & Hove Heroes Welcome campaign which encourages local businesses to show support for British armed forces personnel.

5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION

- 5.1 The council will be engaging with the community and business sector to get them involved and sitting on the Partnership Board.

6. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 6.1 Funding will be sought from the Armed Forces to cover the covenant and other associated activities. Costs associated with the development of the covenant and associated activities to date have been met from within current budgets.

Finance Officer Consulted: Anne Silley

Date: 17/09/12

Legal Implications:

- 6.2 Unless the proposed Civil Military Partnership Board is constituted as a committee or sub-committee of the council, it will have no authority to make decisions or approve any expenditure on behalf of the council. It will exist purely in an advisory capacity. As an advisory body, its terms of reference must state the council committee or sub-committee to which it will make recommendations.

Lawyer Consulted: Oliver Dixon

Date: 21/09/12

Equalities Implications:

- 6.3 Actions to promote equalities issues are prioritised in the vision & criteria for the Brighton & Hove Community Covenant as outlined above and in the report.

Sustainability Implications:

- 6.4 There are no direct implications rising from this report.

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 6.5 Actions to address crime & disorder issues will be considered as the Brighton & Hove Community Covenant is developed.

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 6.6 Promotion of opportunity is prioritised in the vision & criteria for the Brighton & Hove Community Covenant outlined as above. Mechanisms for the appropriate management of associated risk underpin outlined process.

Public Health Implications:

- 6.7 Actions to address Public Health issues will be considered as the Brighton & Hove Community Covenant is developed.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

6.8 Recommendations made support a number of council priorities as outlined.
For example:

- Our Corporate Plan 2011-15
- Creating a City of Opportunities: a sustainable community strategy for Brighton & Hove

7. EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):

7.1 No other options have been considered this is a voluntary Covenant to be signed up to by public bodies, local businesses and voluntary organisations, in conjunction with the Armed Forces.

8. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 Reasons for recommendations are documented throughout the process for developing the Brighton & Hove Community Covenant and are outlined in this report & supported by the attached appendices.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. Draft of Brighton & Hove City Council Community Covenant

Documents in Members' Rooms

1. na

Background Documents

1. na

