

Corporate Policy and Strategy Committee

10am, Tuesday, 26 February 2019

Veterans' Champion: Armed Forces Covenant Policy Development

Item number	7.5
Report number	
Executive/routine	
Wards	City Wide
Council Commitments	2,3,6,7,10,12,16,31,37,39,40,41,47 and 51

Executive Summary

This report has been prepared jointly through the Office of Lord Provost, Strategy and Communications, and the Executive Director of Resources.

It sets out key policy developments flowing from the Armed Forces Covenant and the Lord Provost's role as Veterans' Champion for the city.

Against this background, it is proposed that the Council signs the Covenant for Business to strengthen the Covenant pledge already entered into by the Edinburgh Partnership.

This is recommended as a precursor to the Council's proposed submission on the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme Gold Standard by the closing date of 27 March 2019. The Council already holds the Silver Award and it would be of significant benefit to raise this to Gold Standard.

In consideration of the new UK "Strategy for our Veterans" which is underpinned by the Armed Forces Covenant, it is also proposed to establish a Lord Provost's Commission. This body of key partners would review the current pattern of provision and need, and set out the future policy direction for the delivery of public services to veterans.

Veterans' Champion: Armed Forces Covenant Policy Development

1. Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee:

- 1.1 agrees that the Council signs the Armed Forces Covenant for Business before 27 March 2019;
- 1.2 agrees that the Council applies for the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme Gold Standard by 27 March 2019; and
- 1.3 supports the establishment of a Lord Provost's Commission on The Strategy for Our Veterans in Edinburgh.

2. Background

- 2.1 The principles of the Covenant were set out in the Armed Forces Act 2011 which established clear obligations to members of the Armed Forces and their families.
- 2.2 In 2012 the Edinburgh Partnership signed the Armed Forces Community Covenant together with Veterans Scotland and Jobcentre Plus, enabling projects in Edinburgh to apply for Community Covenant funding.
- 2.3 The Lord Provost as Veterans' Champion now proposes that the Council and its partners strengthen the commitment to the city's veterans by signing the Covenant for Business.
- 2.4 The signing of the Covenant for Business will provide a highly appropriate backdrop for a submission to the Gold Employer Recognition Scheme, with a submission deadline of 27 March 2019.
- 2.5 An effective response to the government's consultation on The Strategy for our Veterans is a commitment to the establishment of a Lord Provost's Commission to promote policy development in this area.

3. Main report

- 3.1 Edinburgh is home to a sizeable population of some 1500 serving Armed Forces personnel based at Dreghorn and Redford Barracks, Craigiehall, Edinburgh Castle and Glencorse (Midlothian). There are also Reserve units including the Royal

Marines Reserve, Army Reserve and the Royal Auxiliary Air Force (RAuxAF). Overall numbers, sites and units are subject to refinement under Army 2020.

- 3.2 Service families live mainly in AS Families Accommodation with many children attending local schools and nurseries. Single soldiers live in Single Living Accommodation within Barracks.
- 3.3 There are 16 Cadet Units (Sea, Royal Marine, Army and Air) comprising around 500 Cadets and 150 adult volunteers.
- 3.4 Veterans Scotland estimates that veterans represent approximately 5-10% of the population. In Edinburgh this is likely to be towards the higher end due to the serving personnel footprint. The known former serving members are those in receipt of a war pension or forces compensation. The Armed Forces are represented on the Edinburgh Partnership by the Garrison Commander at Edinburgh Castle. The Partners shared Covenant vision is “to engender an environment where the Services community across Edinburgh is not disadvantaged as a result of their service and is regarded as an asset to society”.
- 3.5 Since 2012 sixteen Edinburgh community integration projects have secured £279,811. A Lothian wide project secured £200,000 under the Strengthening Local Authority Delivery of the Covenant strand of the fund. The City of Edinburgh Council and the Firrhill cluster of schools have received a total of £1,210,119 from the MOD Education Support Fund over the fund’s lifetime of 2011 to 2017.

Covenant for Business

- 3.6 As Veterans’ Champion, the Lord Provost now wishes the Council to sign a Covenant Business Pledge in its own right, to run alongside the Covenant pledge entered into by the Edinburgh Partnership. This will strengthen the shared commitment to the Armed Forces in the city This is a written and publicised voluntary pledge from businesses and other organisations wishing to demonstrate their support for the Armed Forces community.
- 3.7 By signing the Covenant for Business the Council will highlight the supportive measures that are already in place. A key example is the Housing Service whereby time spent in the forces is recognised as years of tenure for the Edindex if veterans declare themselves as such within 3 years of leaving the forces. Housing information and briefings are also provided for serving personnel on a regular basis.
- 3.8 The Council will also commit to supporting employees as reservists and to becoming a forces friendly employer. This will assist with the diversification of the work force, valuing the wide range of unique skills and experiences that reservists and veterans can bring to the organisation. There is only a small number of declared reservists within the Council at present and it is essential to remove any perceived barriers to reservist status.
- 3.9 The Covenant for Business should be signed by the Council with the Garrison Commander invited to be present, along with the Governor of Edinburgh Castle and Royal Navy and Royal Air Force Service Chiefs before 27 March 2019.

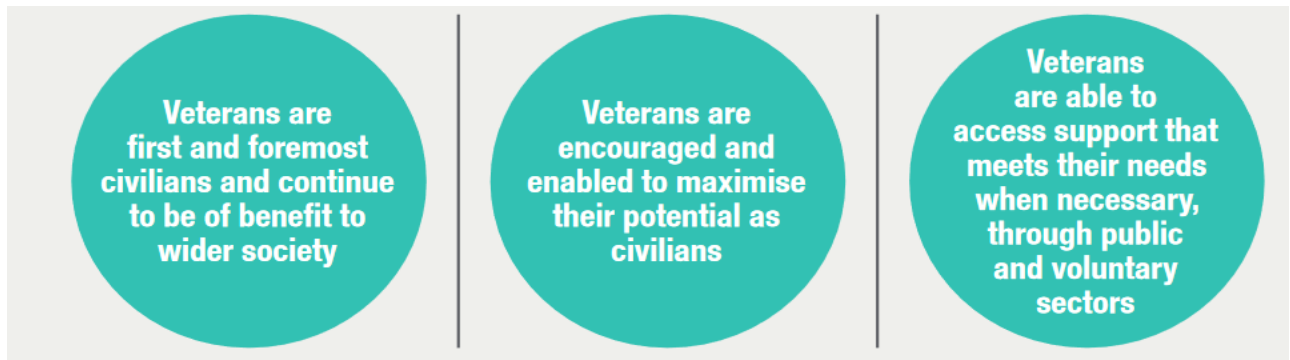
Employer Recognition Gold Standard

- 3.10 The proposed signing of the Covenant for Business is a key step for the Council prior to achieving the Employer Recognition Gold Standard. To progress from the current position of Silver to Gold, the Council must satisfy specified criteria in putting forward its nomination. These include the requirement that the Council must:
- 3.10.1 have signed the Armed Forces Covenant;
 - 3.10.2 proactively demonstrate its forces-friendly credentials as part of its recruiting and selection processes;
 - 3.10.3 actively ensure that its workforce is aware of the employer's positive policies towards defence personnel issues;
 - 3.10.4 be an exemplar within its market sector; and
 - 3.10.5 within the context of Reservists must have demonstrated support to mobilisations or have a framework in place.
- 3.11 Of particular note in this regard is that the Council is a partner in the Lothian and Armed Forces Veterans' Project. Also relevant is the e-learning package which is being rolled out to staff and the establishment of an Armed Forces Employee Forum.
- 3.12 In addition, the Lord Provost chairs the reinvigorated Edinburgh Armed Forces Covenant Group. This cross-sector group of lead officers meets twice a year to share best practice, identify issues requiring joint intervention, review progress on the action plan and discuss Covenant Fund applications.
- 3.13 The submission of the Council's citation and nomination by the 27 March 2019 deadline will involve a considerable amount of preparation and Officer time. It is proposed therefore that an Officer working group under the direction of the Executive Director for Resources will undertake the necessary work. This will assist in ensuring that the Covenant pledges are fulfilled by the Corporate Leadership Team.
- 3.14 Achieving Gold Standard would enable the Council to join the Business Network for Gold Award holders and give access to MoD Leadership Training courses.

Strategy for our Veterans

- 3.15 In November 2018 the Scottish Government launched the new UK Strategy for our Veterans <https://www.gov.scot/publications/strategy-for-our-veterans/> and invited views from Armed Forces and Veterans Champions during the consultation phase which runs until February 2019.
- 3.16 The Strategy which has a 10 year scope to 2028 sets out a Vision whereby "Those who have served in the UK Armed Forces, and their families, transition smoothly back into civilian life and contribute fully to a society that understands and values what they have done and what they have to offer".

3.17 The Principles which articulate the strategic objectives of the Vision are set out below:



3.18 These Principles are consistent with, and underpinned by, the Armed Forces Covenant. Looking ahead to the next ten years, the Strategy sets the intent for the delivery of public services to Veterans. The purpose of the consultation is to obtain the best ideas and views on how to make this happen.

3.19 The city clearly has a major contribution to make given the size of the Armed Forces and Veterans' community, the operation of leading Veterans' organisations in Edinburgh, and the firm presence of the three Armed Forces (Army, Navy and Royal Air Force) in and around the capital.

3.20 From the perspective of the Lord Provost as Veterans' Champion there is a commitment made to establishing a Lord Provost's Commission on the Strategy for Our Veterans in Edinburgh. The purpose would be to bring all the key partners together in analysing the identified cross-cutting factors, set out as:

- Collaboration between organisations;
- Co-ordination of Veterans' services;
- Data on the Veteran community;
- Public perception and understanding; and
- Recognition of Veterans.

3.21 These policy matters would be examined against the backdrop of existing delivery and provision under the Armed Forces Covenant for the city. Gaps in provision and future policy direction would be identified in order to address the key themes and 2028 outcomes that the Strategy is committed to.

4. Financial impact

4.1 Any costs arising will be contained within existing budgets.

5. Risk, policy, compliance and governance impact

- 5.1 There are no adverse risks or policy impacts associated with this report. Outputs from the proposed programme of work as outlined in this report, and where appropriate, related equality and sustainability impacts assessments, will be used to identify and mitigate potential risks to the Council and other stakeholders involved.

6. Equalities impact

- 6.1 The work of the Council, the Office of Lord Provost and by veterans and related interest groups, assists both the Council and city partners to deliver key equality and rights outcomes, and to meet the Equality Act 2010 public sector equality duties to (i) eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, and victimisation, (ii) advance equality of opportunity and (iii) foster good relations.
- 6.2 The specific proposals within the report reflect the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 public sector equality duties.

7. Sustainability impact

- 7.1 Proposals contained in this report, contribute to the delivery of Sustainable Edinburgh 2020 objectives, the advancement of vibrant flourishing communities, social and economic wellbeing and an efficient and effectively managed city.

8. Consultation and engagement

- 8.1 The Council, in particular the Office of the Lord Provost, currently works cooperatively with veterans and related interest groups and this commitment will continue in order to progress the proposals contained in this report.

9. Background reading/external references

- 9.1 Armed Forces Covenant - The Strategy for Our Veterans Valued.
<https://www.gov.scot/publications/strategy-for-our-veterans/>

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10. Appendices

None