

<b>Body:</b>	<b>Cabinet</b>
<b>Date:</b>	<b>29<sup>th</sup> May 2013</b>
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Armed Forces Community Covenant</b>
<b>Report Of:</b>	<b>Ian Fitzpatrick, Senior Head of Community</b>
<b>Ward(s)</b>	All
<b>Purpose</b>	To raise awareness of the joint local 'Community Covenant' for East Sussex, and to note that the Council has formally become a signatory to it.
<b>Decision Type:</b>	Key
<b>Recommendation:</b>	Cabinet notes the joint Community Covenant and work undertaken to date and that Eastbourne Borough Council has signed sign the joint covenant.
<b>Contact:</b>	Monica Ray, Community Involvement Manager, Telephone 01323 415000 or internally on extension 5004. monica.ray@eastbourne.gov.uk

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## **1.0 Background**

1.1 The community covenant scheme was launched by the Government in 2011 following a high profile British Legion campaign on Armed Forces Covenant issues. The scheme was announced as part of a wider Armed Forces Covenant package in May 2011. The principles are:

- Recognising the unique nature of Service
- Ensuring that there is no disadvantage, e.g. in accessing public services, as a result of Service in the Armed Forces, and
- Allowing special treatment where justified, e.g. in the case of injured personnel

These have been enshrined in the Armed Forces Act 2011.

## **2.0 Community Covenants**

2.1 Community Covenants are voluntary statements of mutual support between civilian communities and their local Armed Forces community. They are intended to complement, at a local level, the Armed Forces Covenant, which outlines the mutual obligations between the Nation, the Government and the Armed Forces.

2.2 Community Covenants aim to:

- Encourage local communities to support the Armed Forces community in their areas
- Nurture public understanding and awareness of the issues affecting the Armed Forces community
- Recognise and remember the sacrifice made by the Armed Forces community
- Encourage activities which help to integrate the Armed Forces community into local life
- Encourage the Armed Forces community to help and support the wider community, whether through participation in events and joint projects, or other forms of engagement

2.3 Signing a community covenant is one way a local authority can support the Armed Forces Covenant locally; it also offers groups, organisations and individuals within the area access to the Community Covenant Grant Scheme. The aim of this scheme is to financially support projects, at a local level, which strengthen the ties or the mutual understanding between members of the Armed Forces community and the wider community in which they serve. Applications are invited for sums from £100 to £250,000 and must provide benefits to both the Armed Forces and civilian communities.

2.4 Community Covenants are not intended to be a one-size fits all scheme and as such the processes that are followed will be different for each local authority area to reflect local circumstances. For instance, in areas where the Armed Forces have bases and/or a long history, it is likely that the local authority will appoint an elected member as a named 'Armed Forces Champion' who will lead on networking with stakeholders and organisations appropriate for this role, whereas in areas with low Armed Forces presence, the local authority may find it more beneficial to sign up to a partnership scheme with other local authorities and partner organisations. Therefore it is expected that community covenants will be fit for purpose for their locality and reflect the local community and local needs, and, as such, local authorities and Armed Forces representatives may choose to take a particular approach based on the situation locally.

### **3.0 Local Joint Approach**

3.1 A joint Community Covenant for East Sussex was agreed in principle at the East Sussex Chief Executives Group meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> December 2012 and then formally at the ESSP on 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2013 and East Sussex Joint Leaders and Chief Executives meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> February. This was also sent to the MOD for comment who has now replied that they are happy with the joint approach. County will now look to obtain signatures and it is anticipated that the Covenant will be signed mid May. The joint covenant is attached as appendix 1.

3.2 The local measures are to:

- Support the work of the Sussex Armed Forces Health Network in relation to the provision of housing and health services to the Armed Forces.
- Continue to use a person-centered approach to service provision that ensures veterans' issues are recognised and picked up as part of assessment processes.

- Ensure that information on the Community Covenant Grant and how to bid is easily available to charities, community and voluntary organisations.

3.3 East Sussex Strategic Partnership (ESSP) will provide overall direction and oversight of the work under the Covenant. A virtual Civilian-Military Partnership Board will be established, comprising members of the ESSP and military personnel. If business arises that is not easily or best conducted electronically then a meeting of the Board will be arranged.

#### **4.0 Resource Implications**

4.1 Financial – none arising from this report. Should any future initiative connected to the Covenant have a financial implication this will be considered within the Council’s existing services and financial planning process.

4.2 Staffing – none . Any associated activity will be absorbed into the normal working practices of the Community Involvement team.

#### **5.0 Other Implications**

5.1 Equality and Fairness – as the Covenant is focused towards the involvement of and cohesion between different communities it is relevant to equality. As the lead agency is the County Council their analysis work will be shared among partner agencies for publication.

#### **6.0 Conclusion**

6.1 Members are asked to note that Eastbourne Borough Council has signed the joint covenant.

<p><b>Monica Ray</b> <b>Community Involvement Manager</b></p>
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<p><b>Background Papers:</b></p>
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<p>The Background Papers used in compiling this report were as follows:</p>
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<p>Best practice guide to Community Covenants</p>
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<p>National Association of Civic Officers – Armed Forces Community Covenant Toolkit</p>
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<p>Community covenant and guidance notes from the MOD can be found here:</p>
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<p><a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/community-covenant-pledge">https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/community-covenant-pledge</a></p>
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<p>ESSP Joint Community Covenant (appendix 1)</p>
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<p>To inspect or obtain copies of background papers please refer to the contact officer listed above.</p>
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