

PLYMOUTH CITY COUNCIL

Subject: Community Covenant
Committee: Cabinet
Date: 12 June 2012
Cabinet Member: Councillor Penberthy
CMT Member: Carole Burgoyne (Director for People)
Author: Darin Halifax (Community Cohesion Co-ordinator)
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Ref:
Key Decision: Yes
Part: 1

Executive Summary:

Plymouth City Council has been asked to sign a Community Covenant which is a voluntary statement of mutual support between a civilian community and its local Armed Forces communities.

In December 2011, we started a small working group made up of representatives of Plymouth City Council and the Armed Forces to establish what we could do to remove barriers experienced by Armed Forces personnel, veterans and reservists and their families. In March 2012, we signed an Interim Community Covenant with the Armed Forces and their associated organisations.

The Interim Covenant was signed with a view to further consultation and asking full council to agree a full Covenant prior to Plymouth hosting National Armed Forces day on 30th June 2012.

Corporate Plan 2012-2015:

The Community Covenant supports our city priorities in particular Value for Communities and the outcome measure of increasing the % of people who believe people from different backgrounds get on well together in their local area.

Implications for Medium Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications: Including finance, human, IT and land

Development and maintenance of the Covenant can be met from within existing resources. Once the covenant is signed, national funding of up to £250,000 will be available to bid for to enable us to deliver an action plan.

Other implications: eg Child Poverty, Community Safety, Health and Safety, Risk Management and Equality, Diversity and Community Cohesion

An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed. There is potential adverse impact on gender, concerning meeting the needs of separated families, specifically a separated partner that is not in the Armed Forces. The Community Covenant Action Plan will specifically address this issue to mitigate such impact.

The Community Covenant Action Plan will take into account child poverty issues for armed forces members, veterans and reservists and their families.

Recommendations & Reasons for recommended action:

It is recommended that Cabinet seeks full council’s agreement to sign the Community Covenant contained in this report.

This would build on work already done with Armed Forces representatives, help improve outcomes for Armed Forces families and the wider community and allow us to access funding for specific actions.

Alternative options considered and reasons for recommended action:

The alternative would be to not sign a community Covenant. This would be seen by Armed Forces representatives involved in the interim Covenant as a retrograde step and would mean we could not access government funding for this purpose.

Background papers:

Letter from Rt Hon Andrew Robathan MP, 16/8/11
Community Covenant
Equality Impact Assessment

Sign off:

Fin	Peop leF HD1 213 001 NC	Leg	147 59/ DV S	HR		Corp Prop		IT		Strat Proc	
Originating SMT Member Stuart Palmer (Assistant Director for Homes & Communities)											
Have you consulted the Cabinet Member(s) named on the report? Yes											

Community Covenant

1. Introduction

1.1 We received a letter on 16/8/11 from Rt Hon Andrew Robathan MP asking us to consider whether Plymouth City Council could become a city with a Community Covenant. The then Leader replied saying we would consider it.

1.2 A Community Covenant is a voluntary statement of mutual support between a civilian community and its local Armed Forces communities. It is signed by various representatives from the local community including people from the Armed Forces, Local Authorities, charities, volunteer groups etc. It encourages local communities to support their local Armed Forces Communities, and vice versa, to ensure local Armed Forces Communities are integrated and participate in local life and activities.

2. Initial work

2.1 In December 2011, we started a small working group made up of representatives of Plymouth City Council and the Armed Forces to establish what we could do to remove barriers experienced by Armed Forces personnel, veterans, reservists and their families. The group felt the work could form the basis of the Community Covenant and an associated action plan.

2.2. In March 2012, we signed an Interim Community Covenant with Commander Tom Herman (Royal Navy) on behalf of all the Armed Forces and their associated organisations. The signing ceremony took place at the Lord Mayors residence at Elliot Terrace. It was attended by representatives from organisations such as the Royal British Legion, Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association (SSAFA) and HMS Heroes¹, and received comprehensive coverage in the local press. The Interim Covenant was signed with a view to further consultation (Please see para 4.1), develop a draft action plan and asking full council to agree a full covenant prior to Plymouth hosting National Armed Forces day on 30th June 2012. The draft action plan is currently being developed and will be completed once the full Community Covenant has been signed.

2.3 Up to and including April 2012, established members of the Community Covenant steering group are Plymouth City Council Safer Communities, Children and Young Peoples Services, Strategic Housing and Economic Development, Portfolio Holder, Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association (SSAFA), Royal British Legion, Plymouth Argyle Football Club, Plymouth and District Ex Service Federation, Babcock Marine, HMS Heroes, Devon and Cornwall Police, Royal Navy Bristol, Royal Navy HMS Drake, Community and Social Action Plymouth and The Nepalese Society. Our partners in health have yet to be involved although there are processes in place to resolve this situation.

3. Advantages

3.1. The advantages of adopting a Community Covenant are:

- It is a tangible demonstration of our commitment to the Armed Forces and its families
- We can access a Community Covenant Grant scheme which provides funding for projects we include in our action plan (to be developed after the Covenant is in place); this is new money to our city

¹ Her Majesty's Schools Heroes is a unique pupil voice group, affiliated to the Royal British Legion (Devon), for the support of service children and young people.

- Community leaders and representatives will be able to lead on and support specific local initiatives that should reap beneficial outcomes.

3.2 The work to date has been undertaken within existing resources. Once the Covenant is signed, national funding of up to £250,000 will be available to bid for to enable us to deliver an action plan.

4. Consultation

4.1. A series of consultation events have been held with families of armed forces personnel. They advised us that the key issues were a) how to engage with the council, b) barriers regarding education, and c) general advice on leaving the Armed Forces. This will guide development of our action plan.

5. Conclusion

5.1 Signing a full Covenant is an opportunity to build on work already done with Armed Forces representatives, help improve outcomes for Armed Forces families and the wider community and allow us to access funding for specific actions.