



Leicester
City Council

WARDS AFFECTED
All

FORWARD TIMETABLE OF CONSULTATION AND MEETINGS:

COUNCIL

24th January 2019

Armed Forces Covenant Annual Report 2018/19

Report of the Armed Forces Champion, Councillor Stephen Corral

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1. This report introduces Leicester City Council's first Armed Forces Covenant Annual Report, setting out the progress we have made on the Armed Forces Covenant over the past year.

During the past 12 months the Council has accelerated its commitment to the Covenant, which has led to the Council being awarded the Silver Award under the Ministry of Defence Employer Recognition Scheme which recognises what we do as an employer in supporting the Armed Forces community. This report seeks Council's support to continue this work.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. The Council is recommended to:

- (a) Endorse the Armed Forces Covenant work to date;
- (b) Note the proposed action plan for the next 12 months; and
- (c) Confirm its ongoing support to the Armed Forces Community in Leicester and to the Armed Forces Member and Officer Champions in continuing to champion and support the commitments made in the covenant.

3. Background

- 3.1. The Armed Forces Covenant is a promise by the nation ensuring that those who serve or who have served in the armed forces, and their families, are treated fairly. It encourages local communities to support the armed forces community in their area and promotes understanding and awareness amongst the public of issues affecting the armed forces community. The covenant focusses on helping members of the armed forces community, to not face any disadvantages as a result of them having served and to have the same treatment and access to government and commercial services and products as any other citizen.
- 3.2. The purpose of the council's Covenant pledge is to encourage support for the Armed Forces Community working and residing in Leicester and to recognise and remember the sacrifices made by them. This includes in-service and ex-service personnel and their families. Leicester City Council signed the Covenant in 2013 and reaffirmed its commitment to helping and supporting members of the Armed Forces Community in 2018.
- 3.3 The Council has an elected member Armed Forces Champion, currently Councillor Stephen Corral, and also a senior officer champion, the Director of Delivery, Communications and Political Governance who is also co-chair of the relatively new sub-regional Armed Forces Covenant partnership known as the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Civil and Military Partnership Board. The co-ordination of the Council's Armed Forces Covenant activity is undertaken day to day by the Democratic and Civic Support Manager and by key members of the Member and Civic Support Team, and this has been greatly assisted by a graduate project officer role in the last few months.

4. Activities in Leicester over the last year

- 4.1. To celebrate national Armed Forces Day in 2018, a parade through the City and a service at the Cathedral was held on the 23rd June.
- 4.2. At the Cathedral service, the council re-affirmed its commitment to helping and supporting members of the Armed Forces by re-signing the Armed Forces Covenant. The Council's Armed Forces Member Champion Councillor Stephen Corral joined the Lord Mayor for the signing of the Covenant alongside representatives from Leicestershire County Council and the Cathedral who also signed the Covenant. Appendix A is a copy of the re-signed covenant. As part of the pledge the council seeks to:
 - Promote the fact we are an armed forces-friendly organization
 - Support the employment of veterans and service leavers
 - Offer flexibility in leave for service spouses and partner before, during and after deployment

- Support reservist employees, allowing leave for training and deployment
 - Work with and support cadet force organisations
 - Activity participate in Armed Forces Day and Reserves Day
 - Promote the Defence discount scheme
 - Work in partnership with others to co-ordinate and improve services to our Armed Forces community
 - Acknowledge and celebrate the contribution of the Armed Forces community including celebrating the freedom of the city with local regiments and remembering the sacrifices of members of the Armed Forces through acts of remembrance and services of reflection.
- 4.3. The Armed Forces Covenant webpages on the council's website have been updated to reflect our new commitment to the Covenant. The updates include information on how different service areas in the council support the Armed Forces Community as well as information/signposting of local organisations that can provide support to the Armed Forces Community. Armed Forces webpages have also been added to the new Interface. This provides additional information for council employed Armed Forces members including links to relevant support services and contacts, as well as information for staff wanting to find out more about the Covenant.
- 4.4. A specialist Armed Forces Covenant e-learning tool has been added to the Council's e-learning platform Learning Pool. This offers an introduction to the aims of the Covenant and why it is important, the module has been developed to fit Council objectives and this has been promoted on the weekly staff Face email. Managers will be encouraged to use the e-learning package to help frontline staff increase their awareness of the Covenant and help start internal conversations about what the Covenant means and how staff respond to queries.
- 4.5. The Council has been actively engaged in the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Civil and Military Partnership Board, and the senior officer Armed Forces Champion, Miranda Cannon is the Co - Chair of this Board. The Board meets several times a year and is providing a useful forum for sharing good practice in supporting the Armed Forces Community, identifying organisations that provide specific types of support and in looking at common issues such as our role as employers.
- 4.6. Internally within the Council there is an Armed Forces Covenant officer group involving representatives from across a range of services including Housing, Customer Services, HR, Public Health and Adult Social Care. The group is a useful platform for sharing good practice in supporting the Armed Forces Covenant across all council services.

- 4.7. To raise awareness of the Armed Forces Covenant, we have actively been promoting our Covenant commitment for the past year. Some of the ways we have done this include:
- Developing business cards including details of our commitment and Armed Forces Covenant email address to distribute to key partners/armed forces ambassadors and local organisations that are in a position to pass them to members of the armed forces community who may need them.
 - Developing posters and banners to be placed in public and staff areas within the Council to raise the profile of the Covenant including a large prominent display in the Customer Service Centre window. Promotional screens have also been utilised in public facing areas.
 - Encouraging local partners to sign the Covenant and, in addition to the Cathedral who have now signed the Covenant, we have been working with a range of partners and charities to explain the benefits of signing the Covenant for them and their service users.
- 4.8. We have been working to focus on our role as an employer in supporting the Armed Forces. We are advertising council job vacancies on the Career Transition Partnership website, which is a specific website to support those leaving military service. We are also working to include information about our Armed Forces commitment in our recruitment and induction process and looking to capture information on a voluntary basis about any newly recruited staff who may have served in the Armed Forces or who are reservists.
- 4.9. An Armed Forces Covenant generic email has been created and is being widely advertised publicly as a way for members of the public to raise Covenant related issues. The email address is monitored by members of the Democratic and Member and Civic Support teams with issues referred to relevant Council Covenant Service contacts as necessary.
- 4.10. The Lord Mayor held a reception as part of the national Reservist's Day and invited council employed reservists, veterans and staff with immediate family members who serve in the Armed Forces to join him. The reception was very well received, and it is hoped to hold more such events in the future and managers will be encouraged to allow staff to attend.

5. Priorities and actions for the future

- 5.1. The priorities and actions for the coming 12 months are set out in the Armed Forces Covenant Action Plan in Appendix B. The action plan supports the

Council's Armed Forces Covenant commitment. This plan is designed to deliver against three main priorities:

- Increase awareness of the Armed Forces Covenant
- Strengthen the council's commitment to the Covenant
- Work in partnership with other local organisations to support the Covenant

5.2. The Senior Officer Armed Forces Champion, Miranda Cannon will monitor progress regularly against the action plan and will liaise with the Armed Forces Member Champion with a view to providing a further annual update to Council in 2020. A new Armed Forces Member Champion will need to be appointed following the May 2019 elections, when Councillor Stephen Corral will have retired as an elected member.

6. FINANCIAL, LEGAL AND OTHER IMPLICATIONS

6.1. Financial Implications

6.2. Legal Implications

There are no legal implications.

Kamal Adata, City Barrister and Head of Standards

6.3. Equalities Implications

There are no direct equality implications arising from the report. The covenant reflects the commitment made in terms of the national promise which is then reiterated locally and is about removing disadvantages so armed service personnel, past and present, get the same treatment and access to services as the civilian community.

Surinder Singh, Equalities Officer

6.4. Climate Change and Carbon Reduction Implications

There are no significant climate change implications associated with this report.

Aidan Davis, Sustainability Officer

7. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

OTHER IMPLICATIONS	YES/ NO	Paragraph/References Within the Report
Equal Opportunities	No	
Policy	No	
Sustainable and Environmental	No	
Crime and Disorder	No	
Human Rights Act	No	
Elderly/People on Low Income	No	
Corporate Parenting	No	
Health Inequalities Impact	No	

8. REPORT AUTHOR

8.1. Ebyan Abdullahi, Graduate Project Officer.

