

Armed Forces Community Covenant - Overview of Progress

Executive Portfolio Holder: Ric Pallister, Strategy and Policy
Appointed Representative: Councillor Ian Martin
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Purpose of the Report

This report updates the Council on progress with the Somerset Armed Forces Community Covenant Partnership (SAFCCP)

Forward Plan

This report appeared in the Executive Forward Plan with an expected presentation date of March 2015.

Public Interest

This report updates the Council on progress with the Somerset Armed Forces Community Covenant Partnership (SAFCCP). Community Covenants are a Government initiative designed to ensure that the armed forces community (in the widest sense of the word and including veterans) are not disadvantaged compared to the community as a whole by the activities of local authorities and partners in the public and private sector.

Recommendation

That the District Executive note the report.

Background

The Armed Forces Community Covenant is a Ministry of Defence led initiative, which operates in every area with a strong military presence. It is a partnership between the local armed forces, local authorities and voluntary sector. The Covenant itself is a voluntary statement of mutual support between the civilian community and the armed forces community. The aim of the Community Covenant is to encourage local communities to support the Armed Forces Community in their area, and nurture understanding and awareness amongst the public of issues affecting the Armed Forces Community.

The Somerset Armed Forces Community Covenant Partnership was established in summer 2011 and signed at the Fleet Air Arm in February 2012. Members include all local authorities, armed forces, NHS, businesses, education, voluntary sector and other groups representing serving and former members of the armed forces in Somerset

A report was taken to SSDC District Exec in December 2011 to confirm our commitment and to confirm the appointment of Cllr Ian Martin as the SAFCCP Champion for SSDC.

Structure

- The **Full Partnership** is co-ordinated by SCC and meets 2 x per year. Chair is SCC Cllr Christopher Le Hardy and it is co-ordinated by SCC Strategic Manager - Governance & Risk
- The **Partnership Executive** meets three times per annum and a smaller group including SCC, SSDC, RNAS Yeovilton and some military charities and has responsibility for taking forward the Action Plan and supporting bids to the MoD
- The **Bids Assessment Panel** considers applications for MoD funding, assesses against the criteria and makes recommendations to the Partnership Executive as to whether or not they should be supported for submission to the MoD Panel. It is chaired by Jeremy Greenop (RNAS Yeovilton) and comprises SSDC, SCC and a number of other organisations.

The Partnership has been successful since 2012 when the government funding became available in bringing in just under £400k into Somerset for community projects which bring the civilian and armed forces community closer together. A full list of the successful projects is attached for the information and it is important to note that of the available £400k just under £300k has been allocated to projects within South Somerset. This is because the scheme has been well promoted in South Somerset and both members and officers have worked with community groups to develop bids for funding.

Achievements

As part of our commitment to the SAFCC within SSDC we have:

- incorporated Armed Forces into our Equality Analysis
- worked with Homefinder Somerset Board to alter the criteria for forces personnel on the countywide social housing register
- developed excellent links with the Community Relations Officer at Yeovilton;
- facilitated community engagement/partnership meetings to discuss the return of 900 new soldiers and their families into the Yeovilton area (mainly Yeovil & Wincanton) as the 2 Army Air Corps Regiments redeploy into Somerset over the next 2 years (project WINFRA);
- improved links between the Yeovilton Resettlement Officer, our Housing Team and local housing providers to ensure closer liaison and referrals;
- ensured that our Welfare Benefits officers now ask if clients have served in the forces to ensure they get correct support;
- improved links with RNAS Yeovilton and the Yeovil Innovation Centre to maximise the opportunities for people leaving the forces to start up business;
- promoted the defence Discount Card with the Somerset Chamber;
- developed and adopted a policy on Reservists to support staff (model has now been adopted by SCC and is being considered by others on the Partnership);
- set up a Covenant page on our website and promoted the grants scheme to SSDC, local agencies and groups;
- hosted a conference on the Health of Armed Forces Veterans;
- supported community groups to develop bids to the Armed Forces Community Covenant Grants Scheme bringing just under £300k to fund projects within South Somerset;
- introduced a British Legion drop in advice centre based at the Petters Hub in Yeovil town centre.

For further information on the Armed Forces Community Covenant, or if you are interested in applying for a Community Covenant grant, please visit

http://www.somerset.gov.uk/irj/public/council/initiatives/initiative?rid=/wpcccontent/Sites/SCC/Web%20Pages/Council/Initiatives/Somerset%20Armed%20Forces%20Community%20Covenant_0

Or for further information on the Armed Forces Libor Fund please visit

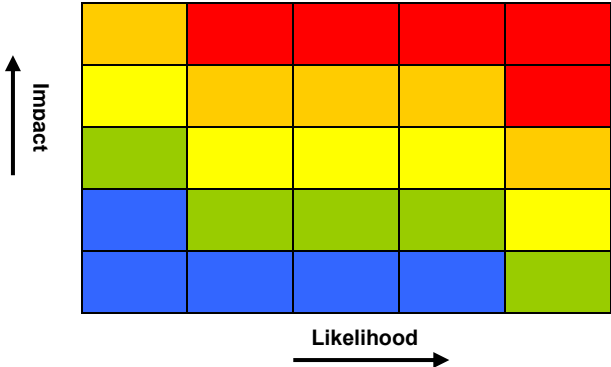
[Armed forces covenant \(Libor\) fund: successful projects - Publications - GOV.UK](#)

Financial Implications

None.

Risk Matrix

This matrix only identifies the risk associated with taking the decision as set out in the report as the recommendation(s). Should there be any proposal to amend the recommendation(s) by either members or officers at the meeting then the impact on the matrix and the risks it identifies must be considered prior to the vote on the recommendation(s) taking place.



Key

Categories	Colours (for further detail please refer to Risk management strategy)
R = Reputation	Red = High impact and high probability
CpP = Corporate Plan Priorities	Orange = Major impact and major probability
CP = Community Priorities	Yellow = Moderate impact and moderate probability
CY = Capacity	Green = Minor impact and minor probability
F = Financial	Blue = Insignificant impact and insignificant probability

Council Plan Implications

Council Plan 2012 – 2015 – Focus Four: Health and Communities.

Carbon Emissions and Climate Change Implications

There are no specific affects on carbon emissions either from the council’s operations or in the wider community arising from actions described in this report.

Equality and Diversity Implications

The broad aims of the Covenant will be to ensure people in the armed forces have improved access to public services and are not disadvantaged as a result of their particular circumstances. A key issue is making forces' personnel aware of the diverse range of support available, especially as they make the transition from forces into civilian life.

The Equality Objectives (2012 - 2016) are required as a specific statutory duty under the Equality Act 2010. They set out how SSDC will deliver and achieve our equality aims through key tasks in our Equality Objectives action plan.

Equality Objective 1 – Equality is at the heart of our decision making process
SSDC have committed to undertake Equality Analysis when we make decisions that are likely to affect people or to support the assessment of local needs and priorities, and this includes the Armed Forces.

Privacy Impact Assessment

No implications at the current time.

Background Papers

None

Appendix One

Community Covenant Grants awarded to Community Projects in Somerset

Pre-October 2013

4-40 Volunteers, linked to 40 Commando –

support for families while their husbands are on duty £6,310

Bishop Henderson Primary School –

created an outside space with play equipment and picnic tables
for families to enjoy out of school hours £58,000

The Somerset Military Tattoo –

Now in its second year, which they were able to self-fund with
the proceeds from its launch in 2013 £18,000

The Tall Trees Community Centre Refurbishment Project –

A facility for the children from the married quarters at RNAS Yeovilton
and families living in Ilchester £69,000

Post October 2013

Long Sutton C of E Primary School – Swimming Pool refurbishment

The pool had fallen into disrepair in spite of untiring efforts by the
parents and supporters of the school and can now be used again. £21,976

Roundabout Pre-School Buildings' Foundation Project Somerton £31,000

St Margaret's School Foundation Unit (FSU), Tintinhull £69,995

914 Air Training Corps (Glastonbury & Street) replacement Squadron
minibus for the cadets use and to share with the local community clubs, etc. £11,000

Salute to Yeovil Country Park

£14,298

A series of inter-active projects to increase the use of this facility in the centre of Yeovil, which will be accessible to the two new areas of housing being built for the Army Corps now stationed at Yeovilton

Ilchester Multi-Use Games Area

£82,500

Pending approval from the Treasury

Total: £382,079

At the last Grants sub panel the following grants were recommended for approval:**Soldiering on Film**

£24,550

NHS South West Veterans Service and 'Combat Stress' report that 1 in 5 Armed Forces Veterans and Serving Personnel will succumb to mental ill-health issues. Early recognition is key to better treatment, but one of the greatest barriers to recovery is denial that there is a problem and/or the hiding of mental wounds due to perceived stigma and threat to career and reputation.

'Soldiering On' will be a short film which uses humour to raise awareness of unrecognized 'hidden wounds' like depression and anxiety and promote the fact that we shouldn't judge people by their appearances or 'turn a blind eye'; humour being a subtle way to deliver a strong, inspirational message and educate a wide audience about mental health and wellbeing in a positive way.

Create & Connect

£14,992

Art Kits Ltd will provide a programme of visual arts activity in collaboration with members of 40 Commando Royal Marines during their role as Lead Commando Group until May 2015. This activity will include the production and distribution of up to 300 pocket-sized Art Kits and the provision of workshop activities with Marines. The project will culminate in a high-profile public exhibition within the county later in 2015, enabling Marines to share both their work and experiences with the local population.

Kingsbury Episcopi Community Centre & Shop

£25,000

Kingsbury Episcopi Amenities committee (KEAC) and Kingsbury Community Enterprise Ltd. (KCEL) intend to build a Community Centre on the recreation ground. This will accommodate a hall, meeting room, shop with café, changing-rooms and storage space. At present there is limited indoor space within the parish for any sizeable gathering. The Community Shop is housed in a converted shipping container with planning permission expiring in 2016. The

café operates outside the shop, weather permitting. Their changing facilities are housed in a dilapidated porta-cabin and they have inadequate storage facilities for maintenance equipment. All these facilities desperately need replacing.

WW1 Centenary for Taunton Deane

£5,700

To deliver a community focused WW1 Centenary project for the borough of Taunton Deane, population 110,000.

Our project entails collecting and collating WW1 information and artefacts from local people for a public exhibition and online exhibition. This is achieved by running several public events so the public can bring in their WW1 information and have it collated, photographed and scanned. This material is used for a 4 week exhibition at CICCIC along with an online exhibition and a remembrance service at St Mary's Magdalene, Taunton.
