

Report to: Governance Committee

Date of meeting: 23 January 2018

By: Director of Adult Social Care and Health

Title: ESCC Armed Forces Member champion

Purpose: To seek agreement to appoint an Armed Forces Champion for ESCC

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Governance Committee is recommended to appoint the Lead Member for Communities and Safety as the ESCC Member Armed Forces Champion

1 Background Information

1.1 The East Sussex Community Covenant was signed by the East Sussex Strategic Partnership and Ministry of Defence (MoD) in May 2013. The covenant's twin underlying principles are that members of the armed forces community should face no disadvantage compared to other citizens in the provision of public and commercial services; and that special consideration is appropriate in some cases, especially for those who have given the most such as the injured or the bereaved.

1.2 There is an obligation to meet the requirements of the Armed Forces Covenant reinforced by the NHS Constitution, Care Act 2014 and other national contracts for both social care and the NHS.

1.3 There are no regular armed forces barracks or training bases within East Sussex but there is a Reserve centre in Eastbourne (4 Platoon, B (Royal Sussex) Company, 3rd Battalion the Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment). Ministry of Defence information shared by the British Legion estimates that there are 38,000 veterans in East Sussex.

1.4 There is no Civilian Military Partnership Board (CMPB) to take forward the Covenant in East Sussex. In August 2016 the Safer Communities Partnership subsumed the community safety aspects for veterans and their families and now performs the functions of a Civilian Military Partnership Board. The Sussex Armed Forces Network (SAFN) is led by the Director of the Armed Forces Community on behalf of the seven Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) hosted by Hastings and Rother CCG. The Director of the Armed Forces Community is a member of the Safer Communities Board. Key contacts from the Ministry of Defence and Royal British Legion participate in the annual Safer Communities engagement events.

1.5 The needs of cadets, reservists and veterans in the community for council services (at county and district / borough level) are considered through assessments and any issues arising specifically from a person's military status are considered and addressed through the assessments of care & support needs in Adult Social Care.

2. Financial Analysis

2.1. There are no financial implications arising from this report.

3. Member Armed Forces champion

3.1 It is estimated that over 90% of Councils have an Armed Forces Champion¹ and East Sussex is the only area within the Forces Connect South East partnership without Member representation (see below for

¹ Our Community – Our Covenant. Improving the delivery of local Covenant pledges – Shared Intelligence (commissioned by the LGA and Forces in Mind Trust) – September 2016

further information related to the Forces Connect South East project). In order to make the best of the potential funding and partnership opportunities through this new project and to maintain credibility within the partnership, it is an appropriate time to appoint a Champion. See Appendix A for an example of a Member Armed Forces Champion role description from Kent.

3.2 It is proposed that Governance Committee appoint the Lead Member for Communities and Safety as the ESCC Member Armed Forces Champion. The Champion will represent ESCC at the Member working group for delivery of the Forces Connect South East project. The group will meet every six months for the duration of the project.

3.3 Appointment of the Lead Member for Communities and Safety as the ESCC Member Armed Forces Champion would align with the membership of the rest of the Member working group:

- Surrey – Cllr Peter Martin (Chairman of Surrey CC)
- Kent – Cllr Richard Long (Cabinet Lead for Traded Services – not on Cabinet)
- Hampshire – Cllr Andrew Joy (Executive Member for Communities, Partnerships and External Affairs)
- West Sussex – Cllr Debbie Kennard (Cabinet Member for Safer, Stronger Communities)
- Medway – Cllr Howard Doe (Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Services)

3.4 Briefings for the Member Armed Forces Champion will be provided via the Executive Officer to the Chief Executive and Leader and Assistant Director Planning Performance and Engagement, Adult Social Care & Health, who also has lead ESCC officer responsibility for Safer Communities.

4. Additional actions to enhance the ESCC commitment to local armed forces community

4.1 In addition to the Member Armed Forces Champion, the Corporate Management Team (CMT) have agreed proposals to enhance the Council's commitment to the local armed forces community through the following three areas of activity:

4.2 Armed Forces Covenant

The Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS) encourages employers to support their local armed forces community. East Sussex County Council achieved Bronze status in 2015. CMT have agreed that ESCC should apply for Silver status from April 2018. This would align ESCC with local Health organisations.

4.3 Armed Forces Covenant Fund project – Forces Connect South East

We, alongside Surrey, Kent, Brighton & Hove, Hampshire, West Sussex and Medway councils, and associated Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) have successfully bid for funding from the Armed Forces Covenant Fund to support activity to Strengthen Local Government Delivery of the Covenant. The project/partnership is known as Forces Connect South East. The Lead Officer from the Sussex Armed Forces Network co-ordinates much of this work, along with Surrey County council who are the lead council.

A total of £321,300 has been allocated to Forces Connect South East, to deliver a two year project which will:

- Build upon the core infrastructure already established
- Spread the exemplary practice already in place – learn from what we each do best.
- Embed and mainstream the delivery of the Covenant across the South East

4.4 Project oversight and local delivery will be overseen through a Member working Group to meet twice a year and an Officer Group. The project work will be mainly delivered through a project post appointed in Surrey CC and the Sussex Armed Forces Network. A range of outcomes have been agreed for the project (see appendix B) including practical support for front line ESCC and local service provider staff such as a signposting app and e-learning materials.

4.5 In order to support delivery of the project, ESCC will need representation on the Officer and Member working Groups. The Assistant Director, Planning, Performance and Engagement (ASC&H) and Executive Officer to the Chief Executive and Leader are able to support the Officer Group. The Assistant Director, Planning, Performance and Engagement (ASC&H) represented ESCC at the Member working Group, in the absence of an ESCC Member Armed Forces Champion.

4.6 Armed Forces service champions

Additional Armed Forces Service Champions are also being sought from the ESCC workforce. Anyone interested in becoming a Champion will be able to access the Champions training in Eastbourne on 31 January 2018.

Once trained Champions can:

- better understand how to engage with the Armed Forces Community
- understand how they can gain support from other services/charities
- reinforce the integration between communities

5. Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

5.1 The recommendations in this report are designed to further develop and enhance ESCC working with the Armed Forces Network and local armed forces community. The activities set out above will enable ESCC to deliver its commitments under the Armed Forces Covenant and to help shape, deliver and benefit from the outcomes of the Forces Connect South East project.

5.2 The Governance Committee is recommended to appoint the Lead Member for Communities and Safety as the ESCC Member Armed Forces Champion

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Armed Forces Champions for Borough and District Councils in Kent

The Profile:-

A Member of the Executive/Cabinet, or Chairman of an appropriate Scrutiny Committee, or a Member with an interest in the Armed Forces community.

Some Armed Forces experience would be an advantage.

Appointed by Council (on the recommendation of the Executive/Cabinet) to emphasise the importance the Council places on the role.

The Role:-

Underlying all actions is the objective **to raise the profile and needs of the Armed Forces community (serving personnel, both regular and reserve, their families, veterans and Cadets), within the Council and the Borough/District.** It will be essential that the Champion is kept informed of all relevant developments through Kent / Medway Leaders' representatives on the Kent & Medway Civilian Military Partnership Board and its associated Task Groups, and through the KCC Community Partnerships Team.

Close liaison with the senior member of Borough/District staff, who is appointed by the Borough/District Chief Executive as Armed Forces Covenant Officer, with particular reference to the Council's obligations undertaken through the Armed Forces Covenant and the Community Covenant.

Close liaison with the Mayor/Chairman on all ceremonial matters in which the Mayor/Chairman should be involved. (e.g. ranging from Armed Forces Day flag raising, attendance at local Armed Forces events, to Freedom Marches).

The Champion is encouraged to keep the local Member/s of Parliament apprised of the activity within the Borough/District in relation to the Armed Forces community.

Where local circumstances suggest this is appropriate (e.g. a significant local Armed Forces presence) to establish (if not already established) and if appropriate to chair (but certainly be a member of), an Armed Forces Panel of Members and Officers meeting regularly with an agenda to ensure all areas of Council business take into account the needs of the Armed Forces community.

To liaise as appropriate with local members of the Armed Forces, in particular the appropriate Task Force Commander (appointed by 11 Infantry Brigade) to assist in understanding where help may be most needed and to enable in return a better understanding within the Armed Forces of the limitations and different responsibilities of Local Government and its decision-making processes.

To be the primary focal point for liaison with businesses/local organisations within the Borough/District to promote the Armed Forces Corporate Covenant and encourage engagement with the Armed Forces, in particular Reservists and Cadets. Close liaison with the Council's Business/ Economic Development Section (or equivalent) on these matters would be required.

To support local Cadet units by acting as the key link with the local authority, and to look to provide local ceremonial, remembrance and volunteering opportunities.

To sponsor an Annual Report to the Executive/Cabinet, or equivalent Committee of the Borough/District, perhaps first reviewed by the relevant Scrutiny Committee, detailing the Council's actions over the past year in respect of the obligations to the Covenants.

Project Outcomes



What will we have achieved at the end of the project

1. Councils have a good understanding of the needs of the Armed Forces Community and the expectations associated with effective delivery of the Covenant.
2. Clear integrated pathways ensure the Armed Forces Community benefit from improved access and signposting to relevant information, advice, guidance and support to ensure no disadvantage.
3. A partnership approach between the Armed Forces and Local Authorities is embedded within our ways of working
4. Delivery of the Armed Forces Covenant within public sector organisations across the South-East region is embedded and sustained.
5. Disadvantage in accessing crucial public services such as housing, schools and adult social care is reduced as there is wider awareness of the issues the Armed Forces Community face

Benefits



The Armed Forces Community

- Will have access to clear information and signposting
- Will be able to access support in transitioning to Civilian Life
- Will have support, if needed in their day-to-day dealings with public services 'outside the wire'.
- Will have clarity as to what can realistically be provided.

Benefits



Front-Line Local Authority Staff

- Will be well-trained in the aims of the Covenant.
- Will understand areas of potential disadvantage such as housing, school admissions and access to health services.
- Will be given new referral pathways to enable the Armed Forces Community to access appropriate and timely support.
- Will have clarity and consistency as to what is required by the Armed Forces Community.