

Report to: Lead Member for Children and Families and Armed Forces
Champion for East Sussex County Council

Date of meeting: 14 February 2023

By: Director of Children's Services

Title: The Armed Forces Covenant

Purpose: To note the change to the current Armed Forces Covenant
arrangements and to agree to sign the updated Armed Forces
Covenant.

RECOMMENDATIONS: The Lead Member is recommended to:

- 1) note the change to the current Armed Forces Covenant for East Sussex County Council;**
 - 2) agree to the pledges outlined by the East Sussex County Council Armed Forces Covenant document; and**
 - 3) sign the updated Armed Forces Covenant**
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1 Background

1.1 The Council is committed to the Armed Forces Community who live and work in East Sussex.

1.2 To demonstrate this ongoing commitment East Sussex County Council (ESCC) plans to apply for Gold Accreditation under the Employers Recognition Scheme, which is administered by the Ministry of Defence (MOD). Cllr Bob Bowdler, the Lead Member for Children and Families, leads this work for the Council and is the Armed Forces Champion for East Sussex. The Gold Accreditation scheme application has enabled the Council to consider how it might re-state its adherence to the Armed Forces Covenant and to review where it might pledge to go further for (ex)service members and their families.

1.3 **The Armed Forces Act 2021** introduced a new requirement for local authorities to pay due regard to the principles of the [Armed Forces Covenant](#) (Appendix 1) when carrying out specific public functions in the areas of housing, healthcare, and education.

The core principles of the Covenant are that all organisations (as defined in s.343AA (3) of the Armed Forces Act 2006 as amended) should have regard to:

- a. The unique obligations of, and sacrifices made by, the armed forces;
- b. The principle that it is desirable to remove disadvantages arising for service people from membership, or former membership, of the armed forces, and
- c. The principle that special provision for service people may be justified by the effects on such people of membership, or former membership, of the armed forces

This is set out in section 343A of the [Armed Forces Act](#) 2021. (Appendix 2).

1.4 ESCC signed The Armed Forces Community Covenant along with District and Borough partners and other local organisations in May 2013. May 2023 marks the month where the Covenant pledges will need to be reviewed and re-signed.

1.5 In the last month, ESCC have been advised by our Regional Employer Engagement Director (MoD) that we will need to draft and sign an East Sussex County Council bespoke

Armed Forces Covenant ahead of applying for Gold Accreditation, as Community Covenants are no longer valid.

1.6 In order to comply with the new processes, ESCC must draft, re-sign and submit a bespoke Armed Forces Covenant by 1 March 2023. Pledges must demonstrate our commitment to the Armed Forces Community and adhere to our responsibilities contained in the Armed Forces Act 2021 whilst linking to the County Council's strategic plans.

2 Supporting information

2.1 To support the drafting of a new Armed Forces Covenant, we have obtained guidance on the style and content from the MoD website. The website includes examples of best practice, a list of suggested pledges, and a template to support the drafting of the required bespoke pledge. These documents can be accessed by following this link: [Useful resources - Armed Forces Covenant](#)

2.2 The draft East Sussex County Council Armed Forces Covenant can be found in appendix 3 to this report.

2.3 There are no financial implications arising from signature of the Covenant; the arrangements in terms of agreed leave for staff linked to the Covenant are already in place.

3. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

3.1 In order to continue demonstrating support to the Armed Forces Community, and to aim for Gold Accreditation on the Employers Recognition Scheme in 2023, East Sussex County Council will need to re-submit a bespoke Armed Forces Covenant by 1 March 2023.

3.2 The Lead Member for Children and Families and Armed Forces Champion for East Sussex County Council is therefore recommended to: 1) note the change to the current Armed Forces Covenant for East Sussex County Council;

2) agree to the pledges outlined by the East Sussex County Council Armed Forces Covenant document; and

3) sign the updated Armed Forces Covenant

ALISON JEFFERY
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LOCAL MEMBERS

All Local Members

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None