

CABINET

25 OCTOBER 2021

SIGNING THE ARMED FORCES COVENANT (AFC)

Purpose:

For the Council to re affirm its commitment to the Armed Forces community by signing the updated Armed Forces Covenant.

Recommendations / key decisions required:

1. That the Council reaffirms its commitment to support the Armed Forces community by signing the updated Armed Forces Covenant (AFC).
2. To hold an event to officially sign the Covenant and to commemorate the 10th Anniversary of the AFC.
- 3.

Reasons:

The Council originally signed the Community Covenant in 2013, which was a partnership commitment with a range of other stakeholders. The Community Covenant has now been amended to become an Armed Forces Covenant which individual organisations support, therefore the Council needs to re-affirm its commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant.

Relevant scrutiny committee to be consulted NO

Cabinet Decision Required YES

Council Decision Required NO

CABINET MEMBER PORTFOLIO HOLDER:

Cllr. David Jenkins, Armed Forces Champion

Directorate: Chief Executive's

Name of Head of Service:

Noelwyn Daniel

Report Author:

Hayley Edwards

Designations:

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CABINET

25 OCTOBER 2021

SIGNING THE ARMED FORCES COVENANT (AFC)

Armed Forces serving personnel, veterans, reservists, and their families are valued members of our communities and represent approximately 12% of our population which is around 23k people in Carmarthenshire.

This proposal serves to ask the Council to reaffirm the Council's commitment to our Armed Forces Community and it will also serve to refresh the Council's commitments into more appropriate measures, and to be formally acknowledged nationally.

In June 2011 the UK Government launched the 'Armed Forces Community Covenant' following the notion of a 'Military Covenant' between the Government and the UK Armed Forces which all started in around 2000.

Carmarthenshire County Council (CCC) signed the 'Community Covenant' in 2013 with a range of other public and third sector partners. Businesses at the time signed a 'Corporate Covenant'. In 2014 the two evolved into the Armed Forces Covenant with organisations making a unilateral pledge to the covenant.

Since 2013 the Council has made progress on these commitments and the tenets of the covenant, thereby demonstrating our ongoing commitment to the Armed Forces community, led by the Armed Forces Champion Cllr David Jenkins. Cllr Jenkins represents the County Council at The Regional Armed Forces Forum which brings together representatives of the three Armed Forces Forums of Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion and Pembrokeshire, Hywel Dda University Health Board and other partners to consider matters relating to Health and the AFC on a regional footing. He also presides over the Carmarthenshire Armed Forces Forum with key stakeholders within our Armed Forces Community with the county.

Within the Council, the Education, Housing and People Management departments are developing initiatives in collaboration with the Regional Armed Forces Liaison Officer on strengthening the delivery of the covenant. The Council's Education Department have been very proactive in identifying where and how many of our schools have armed forces children so we can better meet their needs. The People Management Division have been working towards identifying our Armed Forces Community in our recruitment initiatives. Following discussion with our colleagues in people management it is recognised that our current practices and policies would enable us to apply for the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme. Notably Carmarthenshire's Housing Division has been commended recently by one of our Armed Forces Charities for their progressive work meeting the needs of service users from within the Armed Forces Community.

All councils are now being encouraged to sign the AFC. 15 of the 22 councils in Wales, along with some of our partner signatories on the Community Covenant (e.g. Dyfed Powys Police, Hywel Dda UHB, Age Cymru Dyfed) have gone on to sign the AFC unilaterally.

The Armed Forces Covenant for the Council to sign is attached as Appendix A. In signing it again, we are reaffirming our commitment to the principles of the AFC:

- (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. (In respect of those who have services related medical conditions or injuries and the bereaved).*

Carmarthenshire County Council recognises the value serving personnel, reservists, veterans and military families bring to our business. We will seek to uphold the principles of the Armed Forces Covenant, by:

- *promoting the fact that we are an armed forces-friendly organisation – through appointment of an Armed Forces Champion. The Champion will lead the delivery of a quarterly Armed Forces Covenant partnership forum which aims to bring together public and non-public bodies to ensure collaboration for the benefit of the Armed Forces Community as outlined in the Covenant.*
- *seeking to support the employment of veterans young and old, by working with our Armed Forces Community to enable this.*
- *Striving to support the employment of service spouses and partners.*
- *seeking to support our employees who choose to be members of the Reserve Forces reflected in our employment policies for accommodating their training and deployment where possible*
- *Apply for the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme award.*
- *Aiming to actively participate in Armed Forces Day*
- *Hosting the Wales Armed Forces Day in 2026 (as agreed with WLGA)*

2021 is a milestone year for the Armed Forces Community and marks three noteworthy events.

1. The 10th Anniversary of the Armed Forces Covenant (AFC) being in existence;
2. The 2021 Census including for the first time ever a question about the Armed Forces Community, which supports the commitment made by local government under the armed Forces Covenant and will help to understand the and needs of the ex-military community and in turn step up more targeted and efficient support;
3. The UK Government Armed Forces Bill 2021 (AFB21) will establish a legal duty for public authorities to have due regard to the principles of the AFC, moving from the current voluntary support. The forthcoming legislation (which is currently making its way through UK Government) will place a statutory duty upon us to have due regard to the principles of the Armed Forces Covenant in the areas of health, education and housing.

REPORT ATTACHED?

YES:

- Armed Forces Covenant

IMPLICATIONS

I confirm that other than those implications which have been agreed with the appropriate Directors / Heads of Service and are referred to in detail below, there are no other implications associated with this report:

Signed: **Noelwyn Daniel, Head of ICT & Corporate Policy**

Policy, Crime & Disorder and Equalities	Legal	Finance	ICT	Risk Management Issues	Staffing Implications	Physical Assets
NONE	NONE	NONE	NONE	NONE	YES	NONE

7. Staffing Implications:

Defence Employer Recognition Scheme: The criteria for each level are below:

Bronze Award Holders

- Must have signed the Armed Forces Covenant
- Pledge to support the Armed Forces and be open to employing veterans (including the wounded, injured and sick), military spouses, reservists, cadet instructors
- Promote being armed forces-friendly
- Receive an electronic certificate, and logos to display on their website and stationery

Silver Award Holders: In addition to the above:

- Be at Bronze level already
- Proactively demonstrate that armed forces community are not unfairly disadvantaged as part of their recruiting and selection processes.
- Employ at least one individual from the Armed Forces Community.
- Actively ensure that their workforce is aware of their positive policies towards defence people issues, e.g. an employer who supports the reserves must have internally publicised and positive HR policy on Reserves.
- Within the context of reserves, demonstrate they have support for mobilisation or have a framework in place. Demonstrate support to training by providing at least 5 days additional unpaid/paid leave.
- Must not have been the subject of any negative PR or media activity.

Gold Award Holders: In addition to the above;

- Have existing relationship with their National Account Manager/REED appropriate defence representative
- Be at Silver Level
- Must proactively demonstrate their forces-friendly credentials as part of their recruiting and selection processes. Where possible, they should be engaged with [Career Transition Partnership](#) (CTP) in the recruitment of service leavers and have registered for the [Forces Families Jobs](#) (FFJ) portal.
- the employer must be an exemplar within their market sector, advocating support to defence people issues to partner organisations, suppliers and customers with tangible positive results.
- within the context of Reserves the employer must provide at least 10 days' additional leave for training, fully paid, to the Reservist employee.

CONSULTATIONS

I confirm that the appropriate consultations have taken in place and the outcomes are as detailed below

Signed: Noelwyn Daniel, Head of ICT & Corporate Policy

1. Scrutiny Committee – N/A

2. Local Member(s) - N/A

3. Community / Town Council - N/A

4. Relevant Partners

The Council works with a range of public and third sector partners to progress and support this work locally and regionally.

5. Staff Side Representatives and other Organisations - N/A

**CABINET MEMBER PORTFOLIO
HOLDER AWARE/CONSULTED**

YES:

Cllr. David Jenkins supportive of the suggested approach.

Section 100D Local Government Act, 1972 – Access to Information

List of Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:

THESE ARE DETAILED BELOW

Title of Document	File Ref No.	Locations that the papers are available for public inspection
Welsh Health Circular Priority Treatment and Healthcare for Veterans	WHC 2008 051 & WHC (2017) 041	Available through Hayley Edwards