

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL**LOCAL COMMITTEE (MOLE VALLEY)**

DATE: 15 JUNE 2016

LEAD OFFICER: PETER BRUINVELS
CIVILIAN MILITARY LIAISON ADVISER (SCC)
GRAEME KANE
CORPORATE HEAD OF SERVICE (MVDC)

SUBJECT: ARMED FORCES COMMUNITY COVENANT

DIVISION: MOLE VALLEY DISTRICT COUNCIL

SUMMARY OF ISSUE:

Surrey County Council (SCC) signed the Armed Forces Community Covenant with the military on 13 March 2012, with Mole Valley District Council (MVDC) signing on 6 September 2013. Following the signings, a countywide Surrey Civilian Military Partnership Board (SCMPB) was established to implement actions under the Covenant across Surrey.

This report provides an update of activities undertaken.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Local Committee (Mole Valley) is asked to note this report.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

This report is for information only.

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND:

1.1 SCC signed a Community Covenant with the military on 13 March 2012, and following this set up SCMPB. MVDC and local partners (Defence Medical Rehabilitation Centre Headley Court and representatives of the military, business, faith and voluntary communities) signed its Community Covenant on 6 September 2013.

1.2 A Community Covenant is a voluntary statement of mutual support between a civilian community and its local armed forces community (serving personnel and their families, reservists, cadets and veterans). The aim of the Community Covenant is to ensure that no member of the armed forces community should face disadvantage in the provision of public services compared to any other citizen. However, in some circumstances special treatment may be appropriate, especially for those injured or bereaved as a result of their service. The Community Covenant is intended to complement the Armed Forces Covenant, which outlines the moral obligation between the Nation, the Government and the Armed Forces.

1.3 The SCMPB has a high-level remit to ensure that the military community are given appropriate recognition and status within the county, and to maintain good relationships with the Ministry of Defence (MoD), and the military command structure within the county so that potential problems and frictions can be averted in good time and at the right level.

1.4 Councillor Vivienne Michael, as MVDC's Armed Forces Champion and Member of the Military Integration Task Board, and Graeme Kane, as Community Covenant Officer, provides a link to the Countywide Board.

2. ANALYSIS:

2.1 The Military in Surrey is fully engaged with the work of the Countywide Board. At a Countywide level this support is provided by 11 Infantry Brigade who will act as 'first port of call' to Surrey districts and boroughs for all military matters. At a district level we have a close working relationship with the Defence Medical Rehabilitation Centre Headley Court which supports injured members of armed forces, as they are currently located in the district.

2.2 11 Infantry Brigade cover the South East area and they have appointed Task Force Commanders. These Task Force Commanders provide a two way local link between the Military and the local authority. The key priorities for the Military in relation to engagement with the local authorities currently are youth engagement, community engagement and employer engagement. The Task Force Commander linked with MVDC is Lieutenant Colonel Helen Winder of 22 Field Hospital.

Key MVDC Achievements:

2.3 Over the years, and in recent months, MVDC has undertaken a number of initiatives which support the principles of the Community Covenant. Some of these are highlighted below.

Recognition and remembrance

- Events – MVDC has facilitated and organised a number of commemorative events throughout the year. This includes Remembrance Sunday services at Dorking and Leatherhead and Armed Forces Day 'Fly the Flag' ceremony. MVDC will also be supporting Merchant Navy Day in September 2016 by participating in the 'Fly the Ensign' campaign.
- Freedom of the District and Freedom March – To acknowledge the role Defence Medical Rehabilitation Centre Headley Court has in enhancing the wellbeing of its military patients through the consistent maintenance of a high-quality rehabilitation service; MVDC presented the Freedom of the District to Defence Medical Rehabilitation Centre Headley Court in 2010 and organised a Freedom March through Dorking High Street in June 2013, which was supported by more than 5,000 people.
- Promotion of Funding – MVDC has actively promoted relevant funding opportunities to local community groups. This includes the Respect and Remember Project, Royal Engineers Scheme and Armed Forces Day Fund. Most recently, officers from the Surrey Probation Service who administer the Respect and Remember Project through the Community Payback Scheme were invited to promote the Respect and Remember

Project to Parish Councils and Resident Associations at a meeting hosted by MVDC.

- Concessionary Rates – To acknowledge the sacrifices that members of the armed forces give for their country, MVDC provides concessionary rates for armed forces personnel at Dorking Sports Centre, Leatherhead Leisure Centre and Dorking Halls.
- Housing Policy – Acknowledging that service personnel often find themselves in a position where they have no connection to a local area as a result of being posted abroad or in another part of the country, MVDC continues to support the exemption to the Local Connection criteria in the Housing Allocation Scheme for armed forces personnel. This exemption has been in place since September 2014.
- Customer Service Unit – To ensure MVDC colleagues are informed to assist customers who are currently serving or have served in the armed forces, the Community Covenant Officer has attended the Customer Service Unit team meeting to brief advisors on the support MVDC provides to the armed forces community. A Customer Service Unit representative has also attended the Community and Corporate Covenant Conference and Workshop in November 2015.
- Website – MVDC's armed forces webpages have been updated to include more information on how we support the armed forces community and useful links to other partners and organisations that can provide support.

Employment and skills

- Reservist Policy - MVDC is committed to granting additional paid leave of two weeks per year to Reservists specifically to enable them to attend their annual training camp.
- Employer Recognition Awards - MVDC has been awarded a Bronze Employer Recognition Award, which recognises the Council's support and commitment towards the armed forces.
- Career Transition Partnership - MVDC is signed up to the Career Transition Partnership and our HR team will advertise MVDC's job vacancies through this site.
- Sandhurst Leadership Challenge - Two MVDC staff (Josh Lambe and Jonny Pickering from the Environmental Services Team and the Partnerships Team) have attended the Sandhurst Leadership Challenge. This leadership training day offers a unique opportunity to develop the leadership and teamwork skills of young executives and managers under the expert guidance of the reserve forces.

Education and young people

- Cadets – MVDC is continuing to establish strong links with local cadet units. This is being achieved through cadet parade visits where officers from the Cadets, the Task Force Commander and MVDC are building better partnership links. These include offering all cadets work experience

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at MVDC, a tour of the offices, inviting representative to attend MVDC's annual Armed Forces Flag Raising ceremony and identifying ways in which MVDC can support the important role cadets play in our communities. In May 2016, the Chairman of the Council, Cllr Margaret Cooksey, and Lord Lieutenant of Surrey, Michael More-Molyneux, attended a Service of Thanksgiving at St Martin's Church for the 75th Anniversary of 1408 (Dorking) Squadron Air Training Corps and the Dedication of their new Squadron Banner.

Next Steps for Mole Valley Wide Work:

2.4 MVDC plans to undertake a number of actions and initiatives to further support the Community Covenant. These are outlined below.

- Corporate Covenant – MVDC will look to promote the Corporate Covenant to local businesses through local contacts, business breakfasts and Chambers of Commerce, whilst also providing information on MVDC's website.
- Covenant Fund - MVDC is working with local museums to put in an application to the Covenant Fund to create a 'Book of Memory'. The aim of the 'Book of Memory' is to commemorate all of those who died in action after WW2 who had a local connection to Mole Valley. While local museums are happy to contribute to the project through its volunteers, MVDC would require funding to search the national archives.
- Employer Recognition Awards – MVDC to promote the awards to local businesses and partners and to consider how to achieve Silver Award status.
- Concessionary Rates – Encourage local businesses to sign up to the Defence Discount Service which provide discounts for armed forces personnel at shops across the country.
- Recruitment – Ensure that all recruitment literature includes information about our commitment to the armed forces, both as an employer and a local authority.
- Promotion of the Aged Veteran Fund and MVDC's Disabled Facilities Grant.

Key Surrey Wide Achievements:

2.5 Annex 2 sets out the initiatives and successes that the Community Covenant at the countywide level has achieved which complements the work carried out in Mole Valley.

3. OPTIONS:

3.1 This report is for information

4. CONSULTATIONS:

4.1 There have been no consultations undertaken.

5. FINANCIAL AND VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS:

5.1 There are no financial implications as this report is for information.

6. EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS:

6.1 The aim of the Community Covenant is to ensure that the armed forces community are not disadvantaged by their service.

7. LOCALISM:

7.1 11 Infantry Brigade have implemented the concept of Task Force Commanders, where a Commanding Officer of a Surrey Regiment is linked with a particular borough or district council area to work closely together on issues of mutual concern. MVDC has been linked with 22 Field Hospital based in Aldershot.

8. OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Area assessed:	Direct Implications:
Crime and Disorder	No significant implications arising from this report
Sustainability (including Climate Change and Carbon Emissions)	No significant implications arising from this report
Corporate Parenting/Looked After Children	No significant implications arising from this report
Safeguarding responsibilities for vulnerable children and adults	No significant implications arising from this report
Public Health	No significant implications arising from this report
Human Resource/Training and Development	No significant implications arising from this report

9. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

9.1 Members of the Committee are asked to note the contents of this report.

10. WHAT HAPPENS NEXT:

Members are asked to act as ambassadors locally to help promote links to the armed forces community, including local bases, and to promote the Corporate Covenant with local businesses.

Officers supporting the Surrey Board will continue to further promote the work of the Community and Corporate Covenant within Mole Valley.

Contact Officer:

Peter Bruinvels, SCC Civilian Military Liaison Advisor, 07721411688
Graeme Kane, MVDC Corporate Head of Service, 01306 870622

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Consulted:

MVDC Armed Forces Champion - Councillor Vivienne Michael
MVDC Task Force Commander – Lieutenant Colonel Helen Winder

Annexes:

Annex 1 – Armed Forces Champion Job Profile
Annex 2 - Surrey Civilian Military Partnership Board - Successes 2015/16

Sources/background papers:

None

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