

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL**LOCAL COMMITTEE (REIGATE & BANSTEAD)****DATE: 12 DECEMBER 2016**

**LEAD OFFICERS: PETER BRUINVELS,
CIVILIAN MILITARY LIAISON ADVISER (SCC)
KAMAL MEHMOOD, PARTNERSHIPS CO-ORDINATOR (RBBC)**

SUBJECT: ARMED FORCES COVENANT**DIVISION: ALL REIGATE AND BANSTEAD DIVISIONS****SUMMARY OF ISSUE:**

Surrey County Council (SCC) signed the Armed Forces Community Covenant with the military on 13 March 2012, with Reigate and Banstead Council (RBBC) signing on 24 June 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 (Reigate & Banstead) 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 the SCMPB. RBBC and local partners signed its Community Covenant on 24 June 2013 and subsequently signed the Corporate Covenant on 13 November 2014.
- 1.2 The Armed Forces 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 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.
- 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 In May 2015 Councillor Roger Newstead was appointed as Armed Forces Champion for RBBC and has represented the authority at the Surrey-wide meetings of Armed Forces Champions as well as the Surrey-wide Covenant Conference. The role of the Armed Forces Champion is detailed in Annex 1.

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, and at a Reigate and Banstead level it is provided by 4 Armoured Medical Regiment (4 Armd Med Regt) based out of Keogh Barracks.

2.2 11 Infantry Brigade covers the South East area and they have appointed Task Force Commanders to be the local links. These Task Force Commanders (Commanding Officer of 4 Armd Med Regt) 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.

Key Reigate and Banstead Achievements:

2.3 Reigate and Banstead Borough Council has undertaken a number of actions/initiatives in support of the Covenant. Some of these are highlighted below.

- a. An action plan was developed which set out how the Council intends to respond to the covenant. The document was subsequently shared with neighbouring authorities to inform their own plans.
- b. The Council's Housing Register Allocations Policy was updated in May 2015. In addition to the priority given on the Housing Register, we offer extra income disregards for people receiving war pensions, etc. and this also applies to our local Council Tax Support scheme.
- c. In February 2016 an event was held at the Town Hall Reigate to raise awareness of local support services and explore how local organisations may work smarter together to support the armed forces community. The event included presentations from:
 - the Office of the Surrey Police Crime Commissioner on "Revolving Doors" regarding Regulars and Reservists who enter the Criminal Justice System;
 - Reigate and Banstead Citizens Advice senior debt caseworker;
 - Voluntary Action Reigate and Banstead (VARB) on wider voluntary sector support.

The meeting enabled organisations to form new links and network. "Ben's Place" launched in October 2016 is an example of an initiative that came about as a result of connections that were made at the February event. This public, private and voluntary sector partnership initiative offers pro bono support and advice to Ex-forces Personnel

and their families and includes legal, housing, financial, employment help and mental health support.

- d. A page has been published on RBBC's website with information about the covenant and signposting residents to relevant services.
- e. While Borough officers were unsuccessful in their bid to the covenant fund they have also provided support to Merstham Community Facility Trust in their bid to develop a range of sustainable support groups providing new services in East Surrey including:
 - Ben's Place
 - East Surrey breakfast Club: providing veterans of all ages and their families the chance to come together once a month in Pistachio's, the café in Redhill Memorial Park. The venue having been chosen as it is run by two ex-service personnel.
 - Mental health First Aid (MHFA) Armed Forces Courses: Initially funded by Virgin Care SERVES initiative providing subsidised mental health training to the wider community including frontline council staff and PCSOs.
 - Kid's Time: a peer support group for forces children in the local area (including boarders at Royal Albert and Alexandra School)
 - PWRR Veteran Welfare
- f. The two Armed Forces Champions for Reigate & Banstead and Tandridge (Cllr Roger Newstead and Cllr Pat Cannon) meet on a regular basis with Major Stuart Young and Peter Bruinvels.
- g. Flag raising ceremonies are held annually to mark Armed Forces Day. The event took place on the 20 June 2016 and was well attended by staff from the Council, Councillors, a number of representatives from the Royal British Legion, HM Lord Lieutenant of Surrey, Michael More-Molyneux and armed forces representatives including those from 4 Armd Med Regt and cadets.
- h. A WWI working group has been established to develop and coordinate commemorative centenary programme of events and initiatives such as adopt a grave and the inclusion of local school children at Armistice Day services at 6 memorials across the Borough.
- i. We are a veteran friendly employer and are positive about employing people who have served in the Armed Forces. We guarantee an interview to any applicant who meets the essential requirements of the role and has served in the Armed Forces in the past 3 years.

Next Steps for Reigate and Banstead Wide Work:

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

- a. In partnership with Tandridge District Council a leaflet has been drafted to provide information to Armed Forces personnel, their

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families and veterans concerning a range of statutory and voluntary services (e.g. those relating to employment, debt advice, further education, housing and welfare). The aim is to distribute the leaflet at local events and key locations across the Borough.

- b. Cllr Newstead has spoken to the Headmasters of Reigate Grammar School and the Royal Alexandra and Albert School regarding careers talks and interaction with their cadets and received a positive response from both.

Officers intend to make contact with further local secondary schools offering visits by senior military representatives to inform students of the role of the modern day army and potential career opportunities.

- c. 4 Armd Med Regt have also offered support in relation to Combined Cadet Force inspections and borough officers will work with schools to facilitate this.
- d. Encourage local companies to sign up to the Armed Forces Covenant across Surrey.

Key Surrey Wide Achievements:

2.5 Annex 2 sets out the initiatives and successes that the Armed Forces Covenant at the countywide level has achieved which complements the work carried out in Reigate and Banstead.

2.6 A recent major success for Surrey County Council is the award of the national Gold Employer Recognition Scheme by the MoD for advocating support to Defence and the Armed Forces Community. Annex 3 sets out the national press release and Annex 4 shows the letter from the Minister to the Chief Executive of Surrey County Council informing them of the award.

Next Steps for Surrey Wide Work:

- To continue to support the SCMPB and the Community Integration Task Group and the Recognise and Remember Task Group.
- To hold the third Armed Forces Covenant Conference at RLC Deepcut on 15 November 2016.
- To build on Cross Border Regional work with Kent, Hampshire, East and West Sussex and Brighton and Hove sharing best practice and developing areas of specialism.
- To continue to support the link between Armed Forces Champions and Task Force Commanders.
- To promote training for frontline staff around the Covenant and issues facing the Armed Forces Community.
- To encourage companies to sign up to the Armed Forces Covenant across Surrey.
- Officers working on the University Technical College in Guildford will continue to liaise with the Military to ensure appropriate links are made at an early stage. This includes consideration of a Combined Cadet Force at the college.
- Officers will continue to maximise MoD funds brought into Surrey through successful Armed Forces Covenant Grant bids.

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 Armed Forces 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 council area to work closely together on issues of mutual concern. Reigate and Banstead Borough Council and Tandridge District Council are linked to 4 Arm'd Med Regt.

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 Armed Forces Covenant with local businesses.

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Officers supporting the Surrey Board will continue to further promote the work of the Covenant within Tandridge.

Contact Officer:

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Consulted:

Local Committee Chairmen

Annexes:

Annex 1 – Armed Forces Champion Job Profile
Annex 2 - Surrey Civilian Military Partnership Board - Successes 2015/16
Annex 3 – SCC Gold Employer Recognition Award press release
Annex 4 - Letter from the Minister to the Chief Executive of Surrey County Council
Annex 5 – Examples of local initiatives within Reigate & Banstead

Sources/background papers:

None
