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<b>REPORT TO:</b>	<b>COUNCIL</b>	<b>AGENDA ITEM: 10</b>
<b>DATE OF MEETING:</b>	<b>17<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2019</b>	<b>CATEGORY: RECOMMENDED</b>
<b>REPORT FROM:</b>	<b>ALLISON THOMAS (STRATEGIC DIRECTOR)</b>	<b>OPEN</b>
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<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>ARMED FORCES COVENANT</b>	
<b>WARD(S) AFFECTED:</b>	<b>ALL</b>	<b>TERMS OF REFERENCE:</b>

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### **1.0 Recommendations**

1.1 That the Council notes the content of the revised Armed Forces Covenant and agrees to this being re-signed.

### **2.0 Purpose of the Report**

2.1 This Report provides background on the new Armed Forces Covenant, and the additional actions that are needed to be taken by the Council to adhere to it.

### **3.0 Detail**

3.1 The Armed Forces Covenant is a promise from the nation to ensure that those who serve or who have served, and their families, are treated fairly. This commitment is made in recognition of the sacrifices they make on behalf of the country. The Armed Forces Covenant is not designed to give the Armed Forces, Veterans and their family's preferential treatment compared with other citizens but it should ensure that they get a fair deal and are not disadvantaged because of their military service.

3.2 All serving personnel (regulars and reserves), Veterans and their families are considered to be the Armed Forces Community. Children of Armed Forces personnel, no matter the marital status of their parents, should always be considered part of the community while still dependent.

3.3 There are no definitive statistics on the number of Armed Forces personnel and Veterans in South Derbyshire. Latest MOD figures estimate around 6-8% of the population are Armed Forces personnel and Veterans in the East Midlands. Therefore, (with a considerable caveat) a very broad extrapolation would be that approximately between 6,000 and 8,000 serving personnel and veterans currently reside in South Derbyshire.

3.4 Local Authorities have a part to play in addressing the enduring effects of domestic upheaval, whether constraints are felt in gaining fair access to housing, schooling,

employment or healthcare. The Covenant requests that the Armed Forces Community is taken into account when writing and implementing policies that impact upon local populations.

- 3.5 Underlying the promise that the Armed Forces Community should be treated fairly are two principles:
- The Armed Forces Community should not face disadvantage compared to other citizens in the provision of public services.
  - Special consideration is appropriate in some cases for those who have given the most, such as the injured or bereaved.
- 3.6 In 2012 there were two versions of the Armed Forces Covenant, the Armed Forces Community Covenant and the Armed Forces Business Covenant. South Derbyshire District Council signed up to the Armed Forces Community Covenant. The two versions of the covenant have been amalgamated to produce the current Armed Forces Covenant. The draft version of the revised covenant is appended to this report (Appendix A).
- 3.7 The Council has reviewed the revised covenant to assess potential impact on service delivery. It has been identified that the majority of the requirements of the new Armed Forces Covenant are already being met by existing practice and / or policy. The additional actions required to adhere to the Covenant are detailed in 3.9 below.
- 3.8 The MOD publication Armed Forces Covenant; A Guide for Local Authorities (Appendix B) advises that each Local Authority should have an Elected Member Champion and Officer point of contact. These are already in place within the Council and both attend the county-wide Armed Forces Covenant Partnership Board that meets twice a year.

### **Additional requirements**

- 3.9 Subject to Council agreeing to resign the Covenant staff training may be need for staff on the requirements of the Covenant, especially in relation to access to services and how they are administered.
- 3.10 Upon signing, the Council website will need to be updated to identify that the Council has signed the Armed Forces Covenant and to provide key information together with a statement that identifies what members of the Armed Forces Community can expect.
- 3.11 The MOD publication Armed Forces Covenant; A Guide for Local Authorities also states that each Local Authority will produce and publish an Action Plan to underpin the Covenant commitment; this will help to set out the overall direction and to ensure that the authority keeps on track.
- 3.12 The Council will also be required to promote the Armed Forces Covenant Fund to Community Groups and Forces personnel. This is an enduring government grant awarded to projects that will benefit the Armed Forces community.

## **4.0 Financial Implications**

4.1 None additional as a result of this report.

## **5.0 Corporate Implications**

5.1 Every Local Authority in the country signed up to the previous Armed Forces Community Covenant and are in the process of re-signing the revised Covenant. This will align South Derbyshire District Council with all Local Authorities in Derbyshire and nationally.

## **6.0 Community Impact**

6.1 The Covenant presents an opportunity for Local Authorities to bring knowledge, experience and expertise to bear on the provision of help and advice to members of the Armed Forces community.

6.2 For the Armed Forces community, the Covenant encourages the integration of Service personnel, Veterans and their families into civilian life and to engage with their local community.

## **7.0 Conclusions**

7.1 Signing the Armed Forces Covenant will reaffirm the commitment of the Council to the principles of:

- The Armed Forces Community should not face disadvantage compared to other citizens in the provision of public services.
  
- Special consideration is appropriate in some cases for those who have given the most, such as the injured or bereaved.

## **8.0 Background Papers**

8.1 Appendix A – Draft Armed Forces Covenant  
Appendix B – Armed Forces Covenant – A Guide for Local Authorities.