

Communities Committee

Item No.

Report title:	Norfolk Armed Forces Covenant - Appointment of a new Commissioner and Terms of Reference
Date of meeting:	4 July 2018
Responsible Chief Officer:	Tom McCabe, Executive Director, Community and Environmental Services
Strategic impact The Armed Forces Covenant is a voluntary commitment by a local authority to support members of their local armed forces community. Its aim is to ensure that members of the armed forces receive the support they need in their local communities in recognition of their dedication and sacrifice.	

Executive summary

This report asks Communities Committee to approve the recruitment and appointment of a new Armed Forces Commissioner. The incumbent Commissioner completes his term of office in March 2019.

The Committee is also asked to endorse the amended terms of reference for Norfolk's Armed Forces Covenant Board, which have already been approved by the Board.

Recommendations:

Communities Committee is asked to:

- 1. Approve the establishment of a Panel consisting of Norfolk County Council's Armed Forces Member Champion and two other members of the Covenant Board to oversee the recruitment process and make an appointment to the Armed Forces Commissioner role to commence 1 April 2018.**
- 2. Endorse the amendments to the Norfolk Armed Forces Covenant Board Terms of Reference, attached at Appendix 1.**

1. Introduction

1.1. Norfolk's Armed Forces Covenant

1.2. Set up in 2012, Norfolk's Armed Forces Covenant (NAFC) is a well-established part of the national covenant programme. The national covenant programme is underpinned by Armed Forces Act 2011.

1.3. An Armed Forces Covenant is a voluntary, non-binding commitment by a local authority to support members of its local armed forces community. Its aim is to embed and sustain activity, to ensure that members of the armed forces community receive the support they need in their local communities in recognition of their dedication and sacrifice; nurture public understanding and awareness of the issues affecting the armed forces community (including veterans); and encourage activities, which help to integrate the armed forces community into local life.

1.4. The Norfolk Armed Forces Covenant comprises of three strategic priorities and action plan, agreed annually and monitored by the independent Norfolk Armed Forces Covenant Board. The aim of the strategy is to coordinate actions across the county to support Norfolk's armed forces community.

1.5. **Norfolk's Independent Armed Forces Covenant Board**

- 1.6. Norfolk's Covenant Board is an independent board chaired by Norfolk's Armed Forces Commissioner, Tony Tomkinson. The Board meets twice a year to oversee delivery of agreed priorities and actions. The Board membership includes Cllr Kiddie as the County Council's Armed Forces Member Champion.
- 1.7. The Board reports twice a year on progress to Communities Committee.

2. **Norfolk Armed Forces Commissioner Role**

- 2.1. The role of Norfolk Armed Forces Commissioner was created in 2012, to support the independent Board to deliver upon the expectations of the Armed Forces Act 2011.
- 2.2. The Commissioner role provides a central point of contact for Norfolk's Covenant, and is supported by Norfolk County Council as the lead partner. As well as chairing the Armed Forces Covenant Board, the Commissioner acts as a critical link between all aspects of the armed forces community, statutory services and charities.
- 2.3. The post is a non-political appointment and must not be an employee or elected Member of Norfolk County Council or a current serving military officer.
- 2.4. The current Commissioner has served the Board for seven years and is due to complete his term of office on 31 March 2019.
- 2.5. Under the current Commissioner, Norfolk's Covenant Board has widened its reach across the armed forces community, strengthened its capacity to work with partners, agreed a robust strategy to address local issues and raised expectations.
- 2.6. The end of the tenure for the current Commissioner has provided an opportunity to review and strengthen the appointment process for a new Commissioner and the Norfolk Covenant Board's Terms of Reference.
- 2.7. **Review of the role of Commissioner**
- 2.8. The Board reviewed the role of Commissioner in March 2018. The review highlighted that there will be increasing demands on the role in future years, due in part to changes instigated by the MOD which will impact on the local armed forces community, particularly on those currently serving, and Norfolk's established network of armed forces charities and statutory services that provide support.
- 2.9. In view of this, the Board advises that the Armed Forces Commissioner role is to:
- Chair the Norfolk Armed Forces Covenant Board and be responsible for its performance, promoting its work at every opportunity both locally and nationally.
 - Have knowledge of emerging issues facing the armed forces community and be able to communicate these to a variety of audiences with a view to finding local solutions where possible.
 - Act as the link between the armed forces community, partner agencies and service charities in Norfolk by keeping regular contact with both to promote greater understanding of the community and its needs.
 - Act on feedback from the armed forces community, in conjunction with the Senior Armed Forces Covenant Officer.
- 2.10. **Appointment and Term of Office**
- 2.11. The Board has suggested that the Commissioner's initial term of office should be for three years, extendable for a further maximum period of two years at the discretion of the Board. A period of succession planning will be built into the final

six months of the term of office to enable an effective handover.

2.12. Recruitment Process

- 2.13. In strengthening the appointment process to the role of Commissioner, the Board has looked at evidence from approaches taken by other covenants, and suggested the creation of a role specification, followed by advertising the post, drawing up a shortlist of potential candidates and conducting interviews to select the new Commissioner.
- 2.14. This approach will support transparency, help to draw potential candidates from the widest pool possible of skills and experience, and promote equality and diversity.
- 2.15. The Board has requested that the recruitment and appointment of the new Commissioner be undertaken by a Panel consisting of an appropriate representative of the County Council and two representatives from the Norfolk Covenant Board (which must include a serving officer and a charity) and who will be chosen by the Board.
- 2.16. The recruitment process will be supported and advised on by senior officers from Norfolk County Council's HR Team and will take place during the autumn of 2018.

3. Norfolk Armed Forces Covenant Board Terms of Reference

- 3.1. The Board's Terms of Reference were approved in 2012 when the Norfolk Armed Forces Covenant was set up. In the past six years, Norfolk's Covenant has received national recognition and proved itself adaptive and responsive to issues affecting Norfolk's armed forces communities.
- 3.2. The Government has made it clear that expectations of what local Covenant Boards should deliver is increasing and local authorities, statutory bodies and local partners all have a role to play in this.
- 3.3. The Terms of Reference have been revised by the Board to better reflect this.
- 3.4. The revised Terms of Reference are attached at Appendix 1. In summary, the main changes are strengthening the role of the Board, the governance arrangements and the management of meetings.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1. The Commissioner is an unpaid role. There is a budget for travel expenses
- 4.2. The recommendations in this report can be met within the Board's existing resources.

Officer Contact

If you have any questions about matters contained in this paper or want to see copies of any assessments, eg equality impact assessment, please get in touch with:

Officer name : Merry Halliday

Tel No. : 01603 228871

Email address : merry.halliday@norfolk.gov.uk



If you need this report in large print, audio, braille, alternative format or in a different language please contact 0344 800 8020 or 0344 800 8011 (textphone) and we will do our best to help.

Norfolk Armed Forces Covenant Board Terms of Reference 2018

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Armed Forces Covenant is a voluntary commitment by a local authority, statutory services, military charities and the private sector to support members of their local armed forces community. Its aim is to ensure that members of the armed forces community receive the support they need in their local communities in recognition of their dedication and sacrifice. At its heart, the Covenant expects those in the armed forces community to be treated fairly, not to be disadvantaged as a result of their service, and that special consideration is appropriate in some cases, especially for those who have given the most, such as the injured and the bereaved.
- 1.2 The Government's Armed Forces Act of 2011 set out the requirement for the creation of local military / civilian partnership boards to ensure the Covenant was honoured locally.
- 1.3 The Norfolk Armed Forces Covenant Board was formed in March 2012. The Terms of Reference originally set out in 2012 were revised by the Board in March 2018. They set out the governance arrangements for the Board.

2 Purpose of Norfolk Armed Forces Covenant Board

- 2.1 The purpose of the Board is to oversee the development of the Armed Forces Covenant in Norfolk, by;
 - Raising awareness of the Covenant among the serving and civilian communities, within local authorities, statutory services and the private sector.
 - Working with partners to identify the issues that may affect all service personnel, veterans and their families in Norfolk e.g. housing, health, employment, skills and education, and recommend appropriate responses and solutions.
 - Encouraging local businesses to sign the Armed Forces Covenant and become part of the MOD's Defence Employer Recognition Scheme.
 - Supporting community integration through joint activities.
 - Developing, implementing and monitoring the annual action plan.
 - Putting forward applications to the MOD's covenant grant scheme.

3 Membership and quorum

- 3.1 The membership will be as follows:
 - Norfolk Armed Forces Commissioner
 - Norfolk County Council – Member Champion for Armed Forces
 - Two District Council representatives

- Four serving personnel representing all three of the Armed Forces Services
- Three representatives from the national armed forces charities
- Reserve Forces and Cadets Association
- NHS Armed Forces lead
- Job Centre Plus Armed Forces lead
- Adult Social Services representative
- Housing representative
- Education representative
- Economic Development representative
- Employer Engagement representative.

3.2 If members are unable to attend they should nominate a representative to represent their organisation.

3.3 Members are accountable for reporting to and from all the organisations they represent on the Board.

3.4 The quorum for the Board is one quarter of the voting membership rounded up.

4 Board Chairman

4.1 The Chairman of the Board will be the Norfolk Armed Forces Commissioner.

4.2 The role of the Chairman will be to:

- Determine the agenda for Board meetings, in consultation with Norfolk County Council.
- Chair meetings of the Board. If they are unable to Chair, the meeting will be chaired by the Norfolk County Council Member Champion for the Armed Forces.
- Represent the Board at appropriate events and meetings to promote Norfolk's Covenant work and to engage with communities.

4.3 The Commissioner's initial term of office will be for three years, extendable for a further maximum period of two years at the discretion of the Board. A period of succession planning will be built into the final six months of the term of office to enable an effective handover.

5 Frequency of Meetings

- 5.1 The Board will meet three times a year: twice formally - spring AGM and autumn; and once informally in January for annual planning.
- 5.2 The meetings will be hosted by partners around Norfolk.

6 Decision-making

- 6.1 Decisions will normally be made by consensus. In exceptional circumstances, where, in the opinion of the Chair this cannot be achieved he or she will call for a show of hands. In the event of a tie, the Chair shall have an additional casting vote.
- 6.2 The Board can make recommendations to individual agencies but it cannot commit individual agencies to particular actions.
- 6.3 In formulating any recommendations to address identified issues, the Board will always pay due regard to the opinions of relevant communities, or relevant evidence setting out the views of communities.

7 Standing Agenda Items

- 7.1 Standard agenda items will include:
 - Progress made delivering the action plan.
 - The budget.
 - Progress reports from organisations who have received funding the Norfolk's Covenant.
 - Presentations by invited speakers.

8 Board administration

- 8.1 Norfolk County Council will arrange and minute Board meetings.
- 8.2 Board meeting attendees will be provided with agenda papers at least five working days before scheduled meetings.

9 Action Plan

- 9.1 The Board will develop a three-year rolling action plan which it will update annually and agree in March at the AGM. The action plan will be formulated at an informal planning workshop.

10 Financial Management

- 10.1 The Board receives an annual income from Norfolk County Council.
- 10.2 The Board's Finance Sub-Group comprises the Commissioner and three volunteers, drawn from the Board. The role of the Sub-Group is set out separately. In summary, it performs a scrutiny role, on behalf of the Board, reviewing bids for funding from the Norfolk Armed Forces Covenant and for applications being submitted to

national organisations (such as the MOD's Covenant Grant Trust).

- 10.3 Bids considered by the Finance Sub-Group to be of the appropriate quality will be forwarded to Board recommended for approval.
- 10.4 Where there is not a consensus either within the Finance Sub-Group or the Board, the Commissioner makes the final decision.

11 Sub-Groups

- 11.1
- Sub-groups will be set up to drive the work forward, as directed by the Board. These will change as needed and the number of sub-groups will vary depending upon the work being done at any time.
 - The remit of any sub-group will be set by the Board.
 - Sub-groups will be made up of people with relevant expertise, who will be invited from outside the Board as needed. Each sub-group will have the fewest number of members needed to deliver the outputs required.
 - Each sub-group will elect a lead who, if they are not a member of the Board, will be invited to attend Board meetings as required to report on the work of that sub-group.

12 Responsibilities of members of the Board

- 12.1
- Members will attend meetings or send a substitute.
 - Members will actively contribute to discussion and decision-making both at meetings and via email.
 - Members will respect other members' opinions and values, and will behave appropriately.
 - Members will take part in sub-groups as appropriate.
 - Representatives of organisations must ensure they do not explicitly or tacitly use the Board as a platform to promote the work of their own organisation. If they do they will be asked to leave the meeting and step down from the Board.

13 Conflicts of interests

- 13.1 Board members who have a personal interest in any business of the Board including a financial interest, must declare this.