

Agenda Item 7

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Ward (s) affected	All
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Subject	Armed Forces Community Covenant
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RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Council be a participatory signatory to an Armed Forces Community Covenant as a voluntary statement of mutual support between the civilian community of Mole Valley and its local Armed Forces Community; and that the Corporate Head with responsibility for Democratic and Legal Services be authorised to finalise the covenant in consultation with the Chairman and Leader of the Council, and to arrange for the formal signing of the Covenant.

CORPORATE PRIORITIES

Participation in the Armed Forces Community Covenant presents the Council and its partner organisations with an opportunity to bring their knowledge, experience and expertise to bear on the provision of help and advice to members of the Armed Forces Community and, as such supports all the strands of the Access to Services priority:- improving the way we engage with our Customers and listen to our communities, working with our partners to provide the right services to our local residents, and ensuring that our residents are supported through Welfare Reform and the emerging Health and Wellbeing agenda.

The Council has the authority to determine the Recommendation

1.0 BACKGROUND/INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 A Community Covenant is a voluntary statement of mutual support between a civilian community and its local Armed Forces Community. It is intended to complement the Armed Forces Covenant, which outlines the moral obligation between the Nation, the Government and the Armed Forces, at the local level.
- 1.2 Surrey County Council and a number of the Boroughs and Districts in Surrey have already signed a Community Covenant.

- 1.3 The purpose of the Community Covenant is to encourage support for the Armed Services Community working and residing in the Mole Valley District and to recognise and remember the sacrifices made by members of Mole Valley's Armed Forces Community. For Mole Valley District Council and partner organisations, the Community Covenant presents an opportunity to bring their knowledge, experience and expertise to bear on the provision of help and advice to that Community. It also presents an opportunity to build upon existing good work on other initiatives. For the Armed Forces Community, the Community Covenant will encourage the integration of Service life into civilian life and encourage members of the Armed Forces community to help their local community.
- 1.4 The Community Covenant aims to encourage all parties within a community to offer support to the local Armed Forces personnel and make it easier for them, their families and veterans to access the help and support available from the MOD, from statutory providers and from the Charitable and Voluntary Sector. These organisations already work together in partnership at local level. If the Council supports the signing of such a covenant, partner organisations will be identified who might be willing to participate in the Covenant.
- 1.5 The scheme is intended to be a two-way arrangement and the Armed Forces Community are encouraged to do as much as they can to support their personnel and promote activity which integrates the Service community into civilian life.
- 1.6 The Armed Forces Community in Mole Valley includes DMRC Headley Court which was awarded Freedom of the District in 2010 and recently honoured by the march through Dorking.
- 1.7 In signing the Covenant, Mole Valley District Council and the other signatories will agree to work with the Armed Forces Community to achieve the aims of the Community Covenant and ensure that Mole Valley remains an inclusive and welcoming home for military personnel and civilians alike, and to support projects meeting the aims of the Community Covenant.
- 1.8 Subject to the Council's agreement that Mole Valley District Council should sign an Armed Forces Community Covenant with the aims set out above, discussions will be held with possible signatories to the covenant, a covenant will be prepared and a signing ceremony will be arranged with all the participatory signatories.

Financial Implications – Expenses associated with the signing ceremony will be met from the Civic budget.

A Community Covenant grant scheme, administered by Surrey County Council has been set up to fund local projects which strengthen the ties or the mutual understanding between members of the Armed Forces Community and the wider community in which they live. Over £30 million over four financial years has been set aside by the Government to help communities across the country to undertake projects that promote greater understanding between the military and civilian populations. Organisations from across Surrey are eligible to bid to this grant scheme. Funding of between £100 -

£250,000 is available to individual projects under this scheme, with bids considered on a quarterly basis. Organisations/projects in Mole Valley are therefore able to seek funding through the submission of bids to this grant scheme.

Legal Implications – The Armed Forces Covenant is a pledge made by the Government, published in May 2011, to ensure that the armed forces are not disadvantaged as a result of their service. Community covenants complement the Armed Forces Covenant at a local level. The Armed Forces Covenant itself is not a legal document, but it is referenced in the Armed Forces Act 2011.

2.0 CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

(a) **Monitoring Officer commentary** – The Monitoring Officer is satisfied that all legal implications have been taken into account.

S151 Officer commentary – The S151 Officer has confirmed that all financial implications have been taken into account.

Risk Implications - There are no risk implications as a direct consequence of this report.

Equalities Implications – The Community Covenant aims to ensure that the Armed Forces Community is not disadvantaged as a result of their service, and that the Service Community is integrated into civilian life within the local community.

Employment Issues - There are no employment implications in this report.

Sustainability Issues - There are no sustainability implications in this report.

Consultation – The Mole Valley Community Covenant will be discussed with the local Armed Forces Community and other partners.

Communications – Subject to Council approval of the recommendation, the subsequent signing ceremony will be publicised by the Council.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

'The Armed Forces Covenant' – MOD, published on gov.uk
Surrey Community Covenant and the Surrey Civilian Military Partnership Board
- published on surreycc.gov.uk

