

**To: Communities, Housing and Planning Policy Board**

**On: 29 October 2019**

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**Report by: Director of Communities, Housing and Planning Services**

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**Heading: Support for Veterans**

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## **1. Summary**

- 1.1 At the last meeting of the Communities, Housing and Planning Board a request was made for further information on the role of the Veterans Support Advisor.
  - 1.2 This report provides an update on the work of the Veteran's Support Advisor in developing pathways for service Veterans through the customer service model developed in partnership with East Renfrewshire and Inverclyde Councils.
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## **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Communities, Housing and Planning Policy Board:
    - (i) notes the work of the Council in supporting service Veterans and of the progress made in development of a customer service model and pathways for Veterans of the armed forces.
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## **3. Background**

- 3.1 In February 2012 the Council agreed to sign up to a Community Covenant with the Armed Forces. The Community Covenant Agreement is a voluntary statement of mutual support between a civilian community and its local Armed Forces Community. The aim of the Community Covenant is to encourage local communities to support the service community in their area and to promote understanding and awareness amongst the public of issues affecting the Armed Forces Community.

- 3.2 By signing up to the agreement, the Council and its partners became eligible to apply for funding from the Ministry of Defence Community Covenant and Libor funds for projects which would provide a benefit to service personnel and the communities in which they live.
- 3.3 Officers from Renfrewshire Council, Inverclyde Council and East Renfrewshire Council met regularly as part of local “Firm Base” arrangements over the period since 2012 and developed a joint bid for funding from the Community Covenant scheme to enable the development of a Veterans support model and customer access model. The bid was successful in attracting £87,000 of funding in 2014/2015. This partnership between the three councils was the first of its kind in the UK.
- 3.5 A Veterans Support Advisor (VSA) was appointed as a focal point to work on behalf of the three councils, strengthening the partnership and becoming responsible for coordinating the delivery of this project’s outcomes, sharing resources, expertise and minimising duplication of effort. The VSA has served 22 years in the armed forces which proves to be crucial by bringing a depth of knowledge of this community and experience to the councils to support their efforts to ensuring the Armed Forces Covenant commitments are met. She splits her time equally between the three councils. Each council identified Veterans Champions who work at the frontline for services provided and are trained by the Veterans Support Advisor. The first training session was completed in August 2014 and 15 customer service champions and three customer service managers completed this training. Close support is provided within the council by money advice advisors, homelessness officers, HSCP and personnel from the Scottish Welfare Fund who will work closely with the Veterans Support Advisor to ensure specialist and targeted support as required by the individual client is provided.
- 3.6 The establishment of a partnership agreement and pathway to the Veterans Welfare Service was a critical part of the project as this is the organisation that holds the information on all serving and ex serving regular and reserve members of the armed forces.
- 3.7 Work to complete the customer service model was also finalised and rolled out across the three councils.
- 3.8 Meetings have also taken place with charities and associations within the three council areas, and meetings with national Veterans charities have also taken place and are an ongoing and critical part of the work.
- 3.9 The project has been recognised as best practice in statements to the Scottish Parliament where Jane Duncan, the Veterans Support Adviser, was praised for her work, and through the Veterans Commissioner’s Transition in Scotland report. It has also been published in a guide to housing solutions on the Scottish Governments website that will be circulated to all LA Chief Executives, Directors of Housing and Armed Forces Champions.

- 3.10 Enquiries range from straightforward queries that can be handled by simply signposting customers to a relevant service to more complex situations requiring a range of provision. Partnerships have been formed with national and local agencies to support these referrals.
- 3.11 In total over 700 members of the Armed Forces community from Renfrewshire were supported between March 2016 and August 2019. The VSA has assisted service users by working with a range of services, Advice Works, DWP, Housing Providers, the Ministry of Defence, Combat Stress, Erskine, Scotland's Bravest Manufacturing Company, Scottish War Blinded, Hearing Loss Scotland, FDM, British Limbless Ex-Service Men's Association, SSAFA, RBL and Poppy Scotland. The VSA can keep up to date with local support provision, specialist government and charitable funding, and has developed close links with SSAFA, the "gatekeeper" for Veteran's charities.
- 3.12 Since the appointment of the VSA, support for the Armed Forces community has grown and an awareness of the challenges faced by this community and the opportunities available to support them are embedded in service area.

#### **4. Grants Awarded**

- 4.1 Over £500,000 has been awarded to local charities supporting service personnel within the last two years. The VSA is a member of The Scottish Veterans Fund team and has delivered training to local charities on writing a successful bid. She is also the link as the Local Authority Lead for supporting bids to funding.
- 4.2 Successful bids include SACRO, SBMC, Bravehound, West of Scotland College, Fare 4 Free, Erskine and Health 4 Heroes.

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#### **Implications of the Report**

1. **Financial** – None
2. **HR & Organisational Development** - None
3. **Community Planning**  
Community Care, Health & Well-being - The Veterans Support project provides support to serving and former serving members of the armed forces, regular and reserve, their partners, dependants and carers.
4. **Legal** - none
5. **Property/Assets** - none
6. **Information Technology** - none
7. **Equality & Human Rights** -
  - (a) The Recommendations contained within this report have been assessed in relation to their impact on equalities and human rights. No negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals' human rights have been identified arising from the

recommendations contained in the report because it is for noting only. If required following implementation, the actual impact of the recommendations and the mitigating actions will be reviewed and monitored, and the results of the assessment will be published on the Council's website.

- 8. **Health & Safety** - none
- 9. **Procurement** – none
- 10. **Risk** - none
- 11. **Privacy Impact** - none
- 12. **COSLA Policy Position** - none.
- 13. **Climate Risk** - none

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### **List of Background Papers**

- (a) Background Paper 1 ( Report to Council February 2012, Community Covenant with the Armed Forces)

The foregoing background papers will be retained within Communities, Housing and Planning Services for inspection by the public for the prescribed period of four years from the date of the meeting. The contact officer within the service is Mary Crearie, Director of Communities, Housing and Planning Services, ext 6256

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