

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

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| COMMITTEE | Council |
| DATE | 14 December 2020 |
| EXEMPT | No |
| CONFIDENTIAL | No |
| REPORT TITLE | Armed Forces Covenant Gold Accreditation Award |
| REPORT NUMBER | CUS/20/237 |
| DIRECTOR | Andy MacDonald |
| CHIEF OFFICER | Derek McGowan |
| REPORT AUTHOR | Derek McGowan |
| TERMS OF REFERENCE | 21 |

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To advise Council on the successful application for Gold Accreditation for the Armed Forces Covenant agreed at Council on 10th September 2018.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

That Council:-

- 2.1 Notes the successful Gold accreditation for the Council's Armed Forces Covenant through the Defence and Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS); and
- 2.2 Notes the ongoing work to promote the Armed Forces Covenant.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Defence Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS) encourages employers to support the Armed Forces and inspire others to do the same. The scheme awards bronze, silver and gold awards for employer organisations that pledge, demonstrate or advocate support to defence and the armed forces community, and align their values with the Armed Forces Covenant.

- 3.2 Aberdeen City Council was awarded the Defence and Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS) Silver award in 2017. On 10th September 2018 Council considered a [report](#) on refreshing the Armed Forces Covenant and agreed to adopt the refreshed Armed Forces Covenant, that the Lord Provost would remain as the Armed Forces Champion, and to establish an Advisory Working Group (AWG) to oversee the implementation of refreshed Covenant.
- 3.3 The Advisory Working Group (AWG) is chaired by the Chief Officer – Early Intervention and Community Empowerment with the Lord Provost, Councillor Houghton, Councillor Hutchison; and officers from Education, Housing, Social Work and Organisational Development completing the membership.
- 3.4 The AWG agreed an action plan towards completing the identified actions with the intention of applying for Gold award accreditation in March 2020. To be successful, the Council had to be able to demonstrate compliance with the measures contained in Appendix 1 to this report.
- 3.5 As part of the work for our submission, and in addition to meeting the criteria outlined in Appendix 1, a webpage was created as a space for collating our policies in support of our Armed Forces:

<https://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/services/people-and-communities/our-support-armed-forces>

An Armed Forces Network was established for employees of the Council who are veterans; a dedicated email address armedforces@aberdeencity.gov.uk was established to manage enquiries, and a series of social media messages were issued in support of Reserve's Day, Armed Forces Day and the role of the Armed Forces.

- 3.6 The application for the Gold award accreditation was submitted as required in March 2020, and we were notified in August 2020 that the application had been successful. Aberdeen City Council is one of only [four organisations](#) in the Highland Reserve Forces and Cadets Association area to be awarded Gold accreditation. On 15th September 2020 the Chief Executive was contacted by the Secretary of State for the Ministry of Defence congratulating the Council on achieving this award. The Council is now listed on the www.gov.uk as a [Gold Award winner](#). The official Gold Accreditation Award has now been received and presented to the Lord Provost.
- 3.7 Officers continue work to ensure we meet the requirements of our Armed Forces Covenant, and further progress will be provided by way of service updates.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations of this report

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendations of this report

6. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

| Category | Risk | Low (L) Medium (M) High (H) | Mitigation |
|------------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|---|
| Strategic Risk | Not applicable | | |
| Compliance | Failure to meet terms of the Covenant could lead to complaint and affect relationship with the Armed Forces | L | Working Group established and action plan completed. Action plan will be reviewed regularly and progress noted through service update to Council. |
| Operational | Not applicable | | |
| Financial | Not applicable | | |
| Reputational | Failure to meet terms of the Covenant could lead to complaint and affect relationship with the Armed Forces | L | Working Group established and action plan completed. Action plan will be reviewed regularly and progress noted through service update to Council. |
| Environment / Climate | Not applicable | | |

7. OUTCOMES

| <u>COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN</u> | |
|---|---|
| | Impact of Report |
| Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement | The adoption of the Community Covenant supports the 'People' policy approach, through the provision of a proportion of the new 2000 Council homes to veterans. |
| Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan | |
| Prosperous Economy Stretch Outcomes | The adoption of the Community Covenant provides for the development of tailored employment pathway for Service leavers. This supports LOIP stretch outcomes 1: 10% increase in employment across priority and volume growth sectors by 2026. and 2: |

| | |
|--|---|
| | 90% of working people in Living Wage employment by 2026. |
| Prosperous People Stretch Outcomes | <p>The adoption of the Community Covenant provides for support and engagement of our local cadet units on local schools and communities to promote the role and benefits of cadet forces and Reserve Armed Forces.</p> <p>This supports LOIP stretch outcome 6:</p> <p>95% of children living in our priority localities will sustain a positive destination upon leaving school by 2026.</p> |
| Prosperous Place Stretch Outcomes | No impact. |
| Regional and City Strategies | The proposals within this report support the Regional Economic Strategy through the promotion of employment and educational opportunities. |
| UK and Scottish Legislative and Policy Programmes | The proposals within this report support the allocation of housing under Housing legislation and the duty to prevent and alleviate homelessness. This includes our Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan and Housing 1 st Programme, and recently refreshed allocations policy. |

8. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

| Assessment | Outcome |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Impact Assessment | Full impact assessment not required |
| Data Protection Impact Assessment | Not required |

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

[Local Authority Community Covenant \(motion by Cllr Ross Thomson\) 24th June 2015.](#)

[Local Authority Community Covenant report 11th October 2017](#)

[Refreshed Community Covenant report 10th September 2018](#)

10. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Criteria for Gold Award accreditation

Appendix 2 – Aberdeen City Council Armed Forces Covenant

11. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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Appendix 1

Criteria to be satisfied for the Gold award accreditation.

The Council:

- Must have signed the Armed Forces Covenant
- Must have an existing relationship with their National Account Manager / Regional Employer Engagement Director / appropriate defence representative
- Must have already stated their intent to be supportive by using the ERS website to register at Bronze level
- Must proactively demonstrate their forces-friendly credentials as part of their recruiting and selection processes. Where possible, they should be engaged with [Career Transition Partnership](#) (CTP) in the recruitment of service leavers
- Must employ at least one individual from the armed forces community category that the nomination emphasises. For example, an employer nominated for support to the Reserves must employ at least one Reservist
- Must actively ensure that their workforce is aware of their positive policies towards defence people issues. For example, an employer nominated for support to the Reserves must have an internally publicised and positive HR policy on Reserves
- Must be an exemplar within their market sector, advocating support to Defence People issues to partner organisations, suppliers and customers with tangible positive results
- Within the context of Reserves the employer must have demonstrated support to mobilisations or have a framework in place. They must provide at least 10 days' additional leave for training, fully paid, to the Reservist employee
- The employer must not have been the subject of any negative PR or media activity

Appendix 2

Our Armed Forces Covenant commitments:

- We will offer up to 1% of our 2,000 new Council houses to those leaving the armed forces and adapt up to a further 0.5% for those injured in service
- We will support the employment of veterans and work with the Career Transition Partnership (CTP) to establish a tailored employment pathway for Service leavers
- We will support the employment of Service spouses and partners and provide advice services to support cadet forces to prepare for future employment
- We will support our employees who are members of the Reserve forces, including by accommodating their training and deployment where possible
- We will offer support to our local cadet units, either in our local community or in local schools and we will engage with local schools and communities to promote the role and benefits of cadet forces and Reserve Armed Forces
- We will support our employees who are members of the Reserve forces, including by accommodating their training and deployment where possible
- We will offer support to our local cadet units, either in our local community or in local schools and we will engage with local schools and communities to promote the role and benefits of cadet forces and Reserve Armed Forces
- We will work with other organisations across the city to promote sporting opportunities for the armed forces
- We will arrange for colleagues from SAAFA, the Armed Forces Charity, to use a council office one day a week to improve access to support for veterans
- We will ensure that Armed Forces Personnel are not disadvantaged when it comes to gaining a place at a school for their children
- We will take part in Armed Forces Day