

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Council
DATE	24 th June 2015
LEAD OFFICER	Chief Executive
TITLE OF REPORT	Local Authority Community Covenant (motion by Councillor Ross Thomson)
REPORT NUMBER	OCE/15/023
CHECKLIST COMPLETED	Yes

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The report updates the Council on progress in relation to the notice of motion by Councillor Ross Thomson in relation to the Local Authority Community Covenant and indicates next steps to be taken on the matters raised.

2. RECOMMENDATION

To agree to receive a report at a future meeting once the Scottish Government has reviewed the Scottish Veterans Commissioner's report *Transition in Scotland* and decided how it wishes to take its recommendations forward.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no specific financial implications to this report. Future reports will detail the financial implications for the Council of any proposals arising through discussion with interested parties.

4. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

The report has no other implications at this stage. As with finance above, future reports will address the implications of any emerging proposals.

5. BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES

At its meeting of 20th August 2014 the Council had before it a notice of motion by Councillor Thomson in the following terms:-

That this Council:-

- i. restates its commitment to the Local Authority Community Covenant which ensure that Aberdeen City Council supports the local armed forces community;
- ii. recognises the enormous contribution that the armed forces and their families make and the sacrifices that the armed forces and their families make every day for the safety and security of our country;
- iii. to recognise the contribution made by our armed forces, agrees to request a report examining what more Aberdeen City Council can do to support our armed forces and veterans community across the services it provides;
- iv. instructs officers to engage with neighbouring authorities on their allocation of housing to members of the armed forces;
- v. instructs officers to meet with Legion Scotland and to establish a protocol for an ongoing relationship between the Council, Legion Scotland and other pertinent organisations; and
- vi. congratulates and welcomes the Armed services Advice Project (ASAP) provided by the Scottish Citizens Advice Bureau which is the focal point for the City's armed forces community for access to advice, information and support.

The Council resolved:-

- i. to instruct officers to submit a report to the next Council meeting; and
- ii. to accept the offer from ASAP, as intimated by Councillor Yuill, to deliver a presentation to members at a future meeting.

At its meeting of 8th October 2014 the Council received a report by the Chief Executive on the motion (OCE/14/038) and noted that at its meeting of 22 August 2012 the Council approved a motion by the Lord Provost in the following terms:-

That this Council works with the armed forces, veterans' groups, health and social care providers, the business community and other local bodies to develop a Community Covenant for Aberdeen.

The Lord Provost and the Chief Executive signed the resulting Community Covenant on behalf of the Council on 30th January 2013. The other signatories to the Covenant are Aberdeen's Armed Forces Community, the Highland Reserve Forces and Cadets Association, Veterans Scotland, Royal British Legion Scotland, Combat Stress, SaBRE Supporting Britain's Reservists and Employers, NHS Grampian and Jobcentre Plus.

The Council further noted at its meeting in October 2014 that the Lord Provost in his role as the Council's Veterans Champion would convene a meeting of interested parties both to discuss the protocol envisaged

by Councillor Thomson's motion and what additional actions the Council might take in order to support the armed forces and veterans community in Aberdeen.

The Lord Provost met with Councillor Thomson, Major Bill Austin of Aberdeen Universities' Officer Training Corps and Kate Dean of the Armed Services Advice Project in May 2015.

The discussion focussed on three main areas where support to those leaving the armed forces might be of assistance – jobs, housing and wellbeing. In addition it was recognised that a key prerequisite ahead of identifying what support might be offered would be an accurate assessment of the numbers of individuals and their families likely to be looking to settle in Aberdeen in any given period.

Improved signposting and marshalling of information regarding sources of potential assistance within and outwith the Council was also agreed to be likely to be helpful.

The publication in March 2015 by the Scottish Veterans Commissioner of his first report *Transition in Scotland* (<http://tinyurl.com/ptn8fo2>) was also noted at the meeting. The report makes a number of recommendations to the Scottish Government and its views are awaited on how they may be taken forward in partnership with other agencies including local authorities. Scottish Government officials have embarked on a programme of activity to refresh the Scottish Government's 2012 policy document *Our Commitments* (<http://tinyurl.com/oe6ykp4>). It is suggested that a further report be brought to Council once the Scottish Government's position is known.

In the meantime Major Austin informed the meeting of the intention to hold a forum to discuss transition matters in September 2015. The City Council will be represented at the forum and reports will be brought back to Committee as appropriate.

6. IMPACT

The subject matter of the report relates both to the Smarter Living and Smarter People facets of the policy document *Aberdeen – the Smarter City* and by extension to the Council's delivery of the Single Outcome Agreement for the City.

7. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

The report responds to the terms of a notice of motion.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Scottish Veterans Commissioner's report – *Transition in Scotland*, 27th March 2015.

Scottish Government policy statement – *Our Commitments: Scottish Government Support for the Armed Forces Community in Scotland*, 2012.

9. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

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