



Community Leadership & Libraries

11 May 2023

Title	Armed Forces Covenant Action Plan
Report of	Cllr Sara Conway – Chair of the Community Leadership & Libraries Committee
Wards	All
Status	Public
Urgent	No
Key	No
Enclosures	Appendix - Updated Armed Forces Covenant Action Plan
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Summary

The renewed Armed Forces Covenant was approved by Full Council on 29 October 2019. When approving the Covenant, it was agreed that the Council should work towards achieving the silver and gold Defence Employer Recognition Scheme accreditation. In November 2019 the Committee reviewed and approved the Barnet Council Action Plan aimed at delivering the requirements of the Covenant and achieving accreditation. An update was reported to the Committee in October 2021. This report is to highlight the current situation in line with the Barnet Action Plan: Renewing the Covenant in the Capital.

Officers Recommendations

1. That the Committee note that the Armed Forces Covenant was re-signed in November 2021.
2. That the Committee note that the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme Silver accreditation was achieved in June 2022.

- 3. That the Committee note an application and evidence supplied to the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme for Gold accreditation has been submitted.**
- 4. That Officers be instructed to continue to implement the Barnet Council Action Plan.**

1. WHY THIS REPORT IS NEEDED

- 1.1 The Committee agreed the Barnet Action Plan at their meeting on 20 November 2019. The Committee agreed the updated Barnet Action plan on 6 October 2021. This report is needed to update the Committee on the current situation and to monitor the further delivery of the Barnet Action Plan.
- 1.2 To establish where there is need for support in the delivery of the Barnet Action Plan.

2. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 To ensure Barnet Council are fully aware of the Covenant.
- 2.2 To review policies and ensure they have been adjusted to suit the Covenant and are accessible by all through dedicated council web pages.
- 2.3 Make frontline staff, Members and other officers aware of the Covenant and how to best signpost those in need.
- 2.4 To continue to increase awareness of the Covenant within the Council and its partners, military units and service families.

3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND NOT RECOMMENDED

- 3.1 None.

4. POST DECISION IMPLEMENTATION

- 4.1 The Council will continue to deliver training to services in a range of areas to enable staff to support the Armed Forces Community and be aware of their specific issues and needs.
- 4.2 The Council will continue to deliver its support to the Armed Forces community. An application for Gold accreditation has been submitted to the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme and decision is awaited - due in July 2023.

5. IMPLICATIONS OF DECISION

- 5.1 **Corporate Priorities and Performance**

5.1.1 The delivery of the Barnet Action Plan in relation to the Armed Forces Covenant in Barnet would contribute to all corporate priorities and objectives.

5.2 **Resources (Finance & Value for Money, Procurement, Staffing, IT, Property, Sustainability)**

5.2.1 Staff time from various different services will continue to be delivered within the existing budgets.

5.3 **Social Value**

5.3.1 The aim of the Armed Forces Covenant is to encourage local communities to support the Service community in their area and nurture understanding and awareness amongst the public of issues affecting the Armed Forces community.

5.4 **Legal and Constitutional References**

5.4.1 Council approved the original Covenant in 2012. Given the significant and cross-cutting nature of the Covenant, it was determined that Full Council approval was required as it is a matter which is so significant that it requires all Members to determine (Council Constitution, Article 4 (The Full Council)).

5.4.2 Renewing the Covenant in the Capital – The revised Barnet Armed Forces Covenant was signed in November 2021.

5.4.3 The Armed Forces Act 2021 amended the Armed Forces Act 2006 ('the Act') These place a legal duty (the 'Covenant Duty') on specified public persons and bodies ('specified bodies'), including local authorities to have due regard to the principles of the Armed Forces Covenant when exercising certain statutory functions in the fields of healthcare, education and housing. The Covenant Duty came into effect on 22 November 2022.

5.4.4 Council Constitution, Article 7 – the Community Leadership & Libraries Committee has responsibility for "...libraries, culture, civic events, the Mayoralty, community safety, registration and nationality service."

5.5 **Risk Management**

5.5.1 If the armed forces community are not supported this could have a negative impact and carries a reputational risk to the council.

5.5.2 If there is a low take up of training to frontline staff, Members and other officers this may impact the service delivery to the Armed Forces Community.

5.6 **Equalities and Diversity**

5.6.1 Recognising the Armed Forces Community in relevant service area considerations and policies will ensure inclusion without prejudice.

- 5.6.2 The Armed Forces Covenant recognises that the whole nation has a moral obligation to members of the Armed Forces and their families and it establishes how they should expect to be treated. It exists to redress the disadvantages that the Armed Forces Community faces in comparison to other citizens, and to recognise sacrifices made.
- 5.6.3 In some cases this will require special consideration, especially for those who have given the most such as the injured and the bereaved. The principle behind the Covenant is that the Armed Forces Community should not face disadvantage because of its military experience. The Covenant covers issues from housing and education to support after Service, and in it veterans have great importance.
- 5.7 Corporate Parenting**
- 5.7.1 Implementing the action plan allows measures to be put in place to support the needs of children of serving Armed Forces members and their families.
- 5.8 Consultation and Engagement**
- 5.8.1 Consultation with the Project Manager for the Renewing of the Armed Forces Covenant in the Capital at a meeting held in June 2019 with Armed Forces Champion, Leader, Senior Staff and partners.
- 5.8.2 Engagement between the Barnet Armed Forces Champion and the Project Manager for the Renewing of the Armed Forces Covenant for delivery of training to upskill senior staff and frontline staff.
- 5.8.3 Council agreement of the renewing of the Covenant on 20 October 2019.
- 5.8.4 Committee approval of Barnet Action Plan 20 November 2019 and Updated Barnet Action Plan 6 October 2021.
- 5.8.5 Series of Face to Face training sessions held with senior managers and line managers across relevant service areas.
- 5.8.6 Engagement between Barnet Armed Forces Champion, Project Manager for renewing of the Armed Forces Covenant, Barnet Safety Health and Welfare team and Access E-learning platform supplier to upload e-learning training package.
- 5.8.7 Introduction of E-learning training sessions to frontline staff, members and other officers.
- 5.8.8 Engagement with Middlesex University to extend e-learning training.
- 5.8.9 Engagement with the Gurkha soldiers and the wider Nepalese community in Barnet to extend e-learning training.
- 5.8.10 Engagement with London District Armed Forces Headquarters, Horseguards, to discuss the introduction of standard policies across London.
- 5.8.11 Transfer of e-learning to new programme (POD) as Council discontinue Enterprise e-learning platform.

5.8.12 Engagement with Defence Employer Management team for progression requirements for accreditation

5.8.13 Engagement with employees of Barnet Council who are Reserve Forces or Cadet Force Volunteers.

5.9 **Insight**

5.9.1 A review of Council Policy Best Practice document and other London Boroughs commitments to the Armed Forces Covenant.

6. **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

6.1 A guide for local authorities

6.2 Letter to the Leader

6.3 Council Policy Best Practice Document

6.4 Council, 29 October 2019, Report of the Head of Governance, Reviewing the Armed Forces Covenant: [Agenda for Council on Tuesday 29th October, 2019, 7.00 pm \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

6.5 Community Leadership and Libraries Committee, 20 November 2019, Armed Forces Covenant: [Agenda for Community Leadership and Libraries Committee on Wednesday 20th November, 2019, 7.00 pm \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

6.6 Community Leadership and Libraries Committee, 20 September 2020, Armed Forces Covenant Update: [Agenda for Community Leadership and Libraries Committee on Wednesday 16th September, 2020, 7.00 pm \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

6.7 Community Leadership and Libraries Committee, 6 October 2021, Armed Forces Covenant Update: [Agenda for Community Leadership and Libraries Committee on Wednesday 6th October, 2021, 7.00 pm \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)