

SUBJECT	Buckinghamshire Armed Forces Covenant
RELEVANT MEMBER	Councillor Patrick Hogan - Cabinet Member for Community, Health & Housing Councillor Duncan Smith – Armed Forces Champion
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER	Martin Holt- Head of Healthy Communities
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WARD/S AFFECTED	All wards affected by the item of the report

1. Purpose of Report

To report on the projects and activities supporting the Buckinghamshire Armed Forces Covenant over the last 12 months.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. **Members to recognise the positive work undertaken over the last 12 months across South Bucks supporting the Buckinghamshire Armed Forces Covenant.**
2. **Members note the continued support of the Buckinghamshire Armed Forces Covenant and its associated action plan**

2. Reasons for Recommendations

2.1 The Armed Forces Covenant recognises the sacrifices made by the armed forces community within Buckinghamshire and helps provide support for them and their families. This includes in-Service and ex-Service personnel, families and widow(er)s.

2.2 It is a two-way arrangement and the armed forces community is encouraged to do as much as they can to support their community. All the partners involved have agreed to develop, maintain and deliver an action plan.

The partners involved include:

- NHS Bucks
- Clinical Commissioning groups
- Emergency Services
- Business community
- Voluntary community
- Armed Forces charities

3. Content of Report

3.1 In July 2012, South Bucks District Council, Buckinghamshire County Council the Armed Forces in Buckinghamshire (Army, Navy and RAF), along with Buckinghamshire's other district councils, signed the Buckinghamshire Armed Forces Community Covenant.

3.2 The 2018/2019 Buckinghamshire Armed Forces Covenant Action Plan details various projects and initiatives that South Bucks District Council has supported. These include the Council being an active representative at the covenant's steering group meetings and working collaboratively with member organisations to bring military personnel and their families closer to the communities they live within. The National Armed Forces Community Covenant action plan has five work strands (Health and Wellbeing, Education Children and Young People, Economy and Skills, Environment and Communities and Recognise and Remember) that support four key objectives; Recognise, Remember, Integrate and Support. The county wide covenant working group meets quarterly to update its action plan.

3.3 The Council provides an active role in helping Armed Forces Communities access local services including housing services, which falls under the Environment and Communities work strand in the action plan.

3.4 In relation to social housing, ex-service personnel (i.e. those who served within the last 5 years) are exempted from the qualification requirements that apply to our housing waiting lists and are free to register.

3.5 The Council provides housing assistance through the Bucks Home Choice policy. Armed Forces Veterans may register regardless of local connection and whether or not they have a current housing need.

3.6 The Council's HR team continues to advertise vacancies on the Job4reservists website and Career Transitions Partnership, where appropriate. In addition, The Council have developed a Reserved Forces and Mobilisation policy.

3.7 South Bucks District Council contributed £1,000 to the Countywide WW1 centenary event held in Aylesbury, on Sunday 11th November 2018, which Councillor Wendy Matthews attended.

3.8 At a local district level a special small grants scheme was established inviting Town and Parish Councils and community groups to apply for funding of up to £300 per project to help commemorate the centenary of World War One. The scheme was launched in October 2018.

3.9 All seven applications received funding which totalled £1,250. The projects covered a range of special activities, from Beacons of light and inter-generational public speaking events through to the displaying of commemorative flags and soldier silhouettes in High Streets and village greens. This scheme also helped lever additional external funding from other sources including the Royal British Legion and local Town and Parish Councils.

3.10 One such project was Fulmer Parish Council working in partnership with St James Church and local residents- Following resident requests for the permanent installation of a six foot Tommy aluminium silhouette (to provide a focus for reflection and be a symbol for all the fallen during this Centenary year) the Parish Council agreed for the silhouette to be permanently cited in the grounds of Fulmer Village Green. Several pledges of funding from residents and St James Church contributed towards the overall cost with this special grant providing additional funds.

3.11 In addition, the South Bucks Armed Forces Champion, Councillor Duncan Smith attended a number of events held this last 12 months to commemorate 100 years since the end of World War One.

3.12 On Monday 24th June 2019 the Joint Councils held a 'Raising the Flag' ceremony. This was open to all CDC and SBDC staff, Members and colleagues from Bucks County Council, Royal British Legion and Thames Valley Police. The ceremony paid tribute to the British Armed Forces community during Armed Forces week. Service Personnel from RAF Wycombe in particular, Group Captain S Harris who spoke about the value of Armed Forces day to service personnel and the importance of strengthen links with the local community. The ceremony was closed with a national initiative, [#Salute Our Forces](#).

4. Consultation

Not Applicable- information only

5. Options (if any)

Not Applicable- information only

6. Corporate Implications

6.1 Financial

There are no additional resources associated with supporting the Buckinghamshire Armed Forces Covenant and all resulting projects have been achieved within existing budgets.

6.2 Legal

No implications.

6.3 Social Inclusion

The various projects highlighted have directly supported the voluntary and community sector to assist a diverse range of residents including; the elderly and vulnerable, young people, disabled residents and socially disadvantaged.

7. Links to Council Policy Objectives

7.1 Work towards supporting and promoting cohesive and stronger communities

- Promote local Communities
- Support the voluntary sector
- Engage with Town and Parish Councils
- Engage with local neighbourhoods
- Encourage collective working to promote and commemorate WW1
- Develop and support activities that encourage greater interaction between older and younger people, including events that relate to commemorating World Wars, local history projects.
- Facilitating community participation, engagement by publicizing, through councils social media platforms, the various events and activities.
- Be an active member of the Buckinghamshire Armed Forces Covenant Board.

8. Next Steps

8.1 Following this update, PAG to note the contribution of the Buckinghamshire Armed Forces Covenant and the positive work undertaken across South Bucks.