

THE MILITARY COVENANT ADVISORY PANEL

TERMS OF REFERENCE

ADOPTED: 24 MAY 2021

The Military Covenant Advisory Panel was established on 25 October 2012 at Full Council to advise on and steer the implementation of activities in support of the Armed Forces Community Covenant which the Council entered into on the same day.

The establishment of the Covenant followed an approach by the Commanding Officer at the Army Training Centre at Pirbright to establish a local community covenant with Woking Borough Council to establish closer links between the Armed Forces and the local community. The covenant was intended to develop relationships between the civilian and military organisations in Woking for the benefit of all communities and develop projects of mutual benefit for submission to the Armed Forces Community Covenant Grant Scheme. Details of the Armed Forces Community Covenant are outlined in Appendix 1 to these Terms of Reference.

Membership

The Military Covenant Advisory Panel shall comprise five Members of the Council, or such other number that the Council will determine, representing all Groups on the Council based on proportionality. The Elected Members to be appointed annually by Council in May. Substitute Councillors will not be required.

Members of the Advisory Panel will be expected to gain the views of Councillors/Officers/other representatives with a view to reporting those views to the Task Group. Members of the Advisory Panel may also be charged with specific areas to research and report back on to the Task Group.

Members of the Task Group may be expected to present proposals to the Executive or Council and, where necessary, prepare written reports.

Armed Forces Champion

The Membership of the Advisory Panel to include the Borough's Armed Forces Champion who is to be appointed annually by Council, together with a named substitute. The Armed Forces Champion is chosen by the Council to represent the Authority and the Borough on all matters military. An outline of the roles and responsibilities of the Armed Forces Champion are set out in Appendix 2.

Details of the membership of the Advisory Panel are to be maintained, and published, by the Democratic Services Team of Woking Borough Council.

Chairman and Vice-Chairman

The election of Chairman and appointment of Vice-Chairman will take place annually at the first meeting of the Military Covenant Advisory Panel.

Remit

To advise on and steer the implementation of activities in support of the Covenant and suggest ideas that may be developed to further the principles of the Covenant.

Reporting

Any proposals that impact on Council policies, practice or budgets will have to be put forward as recommendations to the Executive and/or Council.

Terms of Reference and Meeting Management Protocol

Meetings of the Military Covenant Advisory Panel

The Military Covenant Advisory Panel will be serviced by Woking Borough Council's Democratic Services Team.

The Military Covenant Advisory Panel will have THREE regular scheduled meetings which will be held in private. Additional meetings may be arranged in consultation with the Chairman of the Advisory Panel. Meetings of the Advisory Panel will be held either in-person at the Civic Offices or through an appropriate online meeting management system (Zoom or MS Teams).

The Members of the Military Covenant Advisory Panel will receive Agendas and Reports for, and Minutes of, its meetings. These will be made available to all Members of the Advisory Panel on a confidential basis.

Draft Minutes will be issued within five working days of a meeting of the Military Covenant Advisory Panel, which will be approved, or amended and approved, at the next meeting of the Advisory Panel.

Community Engagement

The Advisory Panel may invite outside organisations, community/voluntary groups or other interested parties to participate in meetings but, should voting on any issue be required, this will be reserved to the Members of the Advisory Panel, including the Armed Forces Champion.

Voting

Should voting be required, this will be determined by a simple majority of the Members of the Advisory Panel present, and in the event of a tied vote, the Chairman shall have the casting vote so long as the Chairman participated in the initial vote. It should be clearly noted, however, that given the Advisory Panel has no executive or delegated authority, it is anticipated that most decisions will be made on the basis of general consensus rather than formal voting.

THE ARMED FORCES COMMUNITY COVENANT

PARTICIPANTS

This Armed Forces Community Covenant is made between:

- The serving and former members of the Armed Forces and their families working and residing in Woking Borough
- Woking Borough Council
- the public, business, charitable and voluntary sector organisations in Woking Borough
- The Armed Forces Charities

PRINCIPLES OF THE ARMED FORCES COMMUNITY COVENANT

The Armed Forces Community Covenant is a voluntary statement of mutual support between a civilian community and its local Armed Forces Community. It is intended to complement the Armed Forces Covenant, which outlines the moral obligation between the Nation, the Government and the Armed Forces, at the local level.

The purpose of this Community Covenant is to encourage support for the Armed Forces Community working and residing in Woking Borough and to recognise and remember the sacrifices made by members of this Armed Forces Community, particularly those who have given the most. This includes in-Service and ex-Service personnel their families and widow(er)s in Woking Borough.

For Woking Borough Council and partner organisations, the Community Covenant presents an opportunity to bring their knowledge, experience and expertise to bear on the provision of help and advice to members of the Armed Forces Community. It also presents an opportunity to build upon existing good work on other initiatives such as the Welfare Pathway.

For the Armed Forces community, the Community Covenant encourages the integration of Service life into civilian life and encourages members of the Armed Forces community to help their local community.

OBJECTIVES AND GENERAL INTENTIONS

Aims of the Community Covenant

The Armed Forces Community Covenant complements the principles of the Armed Forces Covenant which defines the enduring, general principles that should govern the relationship between the Nation, the Government and the Armed Forces community

It aims to encourage all parties within a community to offer support to the local Armed Forces community and make it easier for Service personnel, families and veterans to access the help and support available from the MOD, from statutory providers and from the Charitable and Voluntary Sector. These organisations already work together in partnership in Woking.

The scheme is intended to be a two-way arrangement and the Armed Forces community are encouraged to do as much as they can to support their community and promote activity which integrates the Service community into civilian life.

Terms of Reference and Meeting Management Protocol

MEASURES

Woking Borough Council, the public, business, voluntary sectors and Armed Forces Charities will work with the Army represented by The Army Training Centre at Pirbright in order to achieve the general aims identified at section three above and ensure that Woking Borough remains an inclusive and welcoming home for military personnel and civilians alike.

Woking Borough Council, the public, business, voluntary sectors and Armed Forces Charities will work with the Army represented by The Army Centre at Pirbright to support projects meeting the aims of the Community Covenant.

THE ARMED FORCES CHAMPION

The Armed Forces Champion should be an individual with an interest in the Armed Forces community. Some Armed Forces experience would be an advantage. The position is appointed to by Council (on the recommendation of the Council's Selection Panel), recognising the importance the Council places on the role.

The Role:

Underlying all actions is the objective to raise the profile and needs of the Armed Forces community (serving personnel, both regular and reserve, their families, veterans and Cadets), within the Council and the Borough/District. It will be essential that the Champion is kept informed of all relevant developments.

Close liaison with the senior member of Borough/District staff, who is appointed by the Borough/District Chief Executive as Armed Forces Covenant Officer, with particular reference to the Council's obligations undertaken through the Armed Forces Covenant and the Community Covenant.

Close liaison with the Mayor on all ceremonial matters in which the Mayor should be involved. (such as Armed Forces Day flag raising, attendance at local Armed Forces events, and Freedom of the Borough Marches).

The Champion is encouraged to keep the local Member/s of Parliament apprised of the activity within the Borough/District in relation to the Armed Forces community.

Where local circumstances suggest this is appropriate (e.g. a significant local Armed Forces presence) to establish (if not already established) and if appropriate to chair (but certainly be a member of), an Armed Forces Panel of Members and Officers meeting regularly with an agenda to ensure all areas of Council business take into account the needs of the Armed Forces community.

To liaise as appropriate with local members of the Armed Forces, in particular the appropriate Task Force Commander (appointed by 11 Infantry Brigade) to assist in understanding where help may be most needed and to enable in return a better understanding within the Armed Forces of the limitations and different responsibilities of Local Government and its decision-making processes.

To be the primary focal point for liaison with businesses/local organisations within the Borough/District to promote the Armed Forces Corporate Covenant and encourage engagement with the Armed Forces, in particular Reservists and Cadets. Close liaison with the Council's Business Development Section (or equivalent) on these matters would be required.

To support local Cadet units by acting as the key link with the local authority, and to look to provide local ceremonial, remembrance and volunteering opportunities.

To sponsor an Annual report to the Executive/Cabinet, or equivalent Committee of the Borough/District, perhaps first reviewed by the relevant Scrutiny Committee, detailing the Council's actions over the past year in respect of the obligations to the Covenants.