

MINUTES of a meeting of the ARMED FORCES COMMUNITY COVENANT TASK AND FINISH GROUP held in the Room 140, Council Offices, Coalville on TUESDAY, 18 FEBRUARY 2014

Present: Councillors J Cotterill, V Richichi, N Smith and M Specht

In Attendance: Councillor A V Smith MBE

Officers: Mrs C Hammond, Mr G Lewis and Mr J Richardson

Interested Parties: Lt. Col. R Pope (Ministry of Defence), Mr J Bailey, Mr A Moore, Mr J Rowlinson, Mr B Smith and Mr D Starbuck (Royal British Legion)

1. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED THAT:

Councillor N Smith take the chair for the remainder of the meeting.

The Chairman then went round the room introducing all attendees.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor T Saffell.

3. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interests received.

4. TO IDENTIFY KEY MEASURES THAT DELIVER THE PRINCIPLES SET OUT IN THE ARMED FORCES COMMUNITY COVENANT AND REPORT BACK RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP AND CABINET AT THE EARLIEST OPPORTUNITY

Members considered the Armed Forces Community Covenant that had been circulated at the start of the meeting.

The Head of Community Services thanked everyone for attending and provided Members with the background as to why the Task and Finish Group had been established.

Lt. Col. Pope provided Members with a brief overview of his role in supporting all the authorities in Leicestershire to sign covenants. He informed Members that the covenant was a formalisation of what many local authorities already did, but advised Members that during the first year, following the signing, the Council may find ways of improving the support that they offer to the Armed Forces Community within the district.

Following questions from Councillor N Smith, Lt. Col. Pope advised Members that not all of the local authorities within the County had signed their covenants, but he was working with those Councils towards them signing. He outlined to Members the support that every Armed Forces service personnel was entitled to, however it was difficult to encourage personnel to take this help.

Mr A Moore took the opportunity to provide Members with an overview of the work carried out by the Poppy Support Services.

Councillor M Specht stated that he spent time volunteering with a local group carrying out various projects and felt it would be beneficial to encourage ex service personnel to come along and take part.

Lt. Col. Pope advised Members that community group events like this would be ideal to advertise on the Armed Forces webpage and that funding would be available to support groups like this.

The Head of Community Services informed the Members that the Council would need to appoint an Armed Forces Champion and it was recommended that the Community Services Portfolio Holder be nominated.

Lt. Col. Pope took the opportunity to outline to role of the Armed Forces Champion to Members, advising them that it was not just evolving the covenant once it had been signed, but being the face of the covenant and getting out to meet the Armed Forces Community.

Members supported the role of an Armed Forces Champion and recommended that the Community Services Portfolio Holder be nominated.

Councillor A V Smith left the meeting at 5.58pm.

Councillor V Richichi stated that he was unsure as to how the Council would be able to assist members of the Armed Forces Community when they are able to receive assistance and support from both the Ministry of Defence and the Royal British Legion. Lt. Col. Pope responded by informing Members that, as the elected representatives for the district, Councillors were in a better position to assist with Local Authority issues than the Royal British Legion.

Members and representatives then discussed the grants scheme that was available and what sort of projects would meet the criteria. Members were advised that up to £250,000 could be applied for. This could be for a new War Memorial for a village, however it would be the responsibility of the Local Authority, either District or Parish/Town for the upkeep of this. The Head of Community Services informed Members that the Council would support any local groups in applying for funding.

RECOMMENDED THAT:

The Policy Development Group has due regard to the following recommendations made by the Task and Finish Group when making its representation to Cabinet.

1. That the Portfolio Holder for Community Services be nominated as the on-going Armed Forces Champion.
2. That the Draft Community Covenant as presented and debated at the meeting be recommended to Policy Development Group (12 March 2014) and Cabinet (24 June 2014) for adoption.
3. That the Cultural Services Team Manager, as support officer, begin working on the relevant measures.

5. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED THAT:

The Task and Finish Group would convene again to review the covenant after the first year. Date and Time to be agreed at a later date.

Chairman's initials

The meeting commenced at 5.30 pm

The Chairman closed the meeting at 6.17 pm

Chairman's initials