



WARDS AFFECTED: ALL WARDS

1. **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

To consider the promotion of Armed Forces Community Covenant and the implementation of a Covenant in Hinckley & Bosworth.

2. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 That the good practice initiatives to date with armed forces communities is noted.
- 2.2 That Councillor David Cope as Executive Lead for Leisure & Culture is nominated as Lead Member for the Armed Forces and is supported by Cultural Services Manager.
- 2.3 That the measures outlined in the attached draft Covenant are agreed to enable the Covenant to be formally signed and implemented.

3. **BACKGROUND TO THE REPORT**

The Community Covenant is part of national initiative to support the Armed Forces. There are over 200 local authorities who have signed a Community Covenant Pledge.

Local authorities and the armed forces community are encouraged to work together to establish a community covenant in their area in order to:

- encourage local communities to support the armed forces community in their areas and to nurture public understanding and awareness among the public of issues affecting the armed forces community
- recognise and remember the sacrifices faced by the armed forces community
- encourage activities which help to integrate the armed forces community into local life
- to encourage the armed forces community to help and support the wider community, whether through participation in events and joint projects, or other forms of engagement

Community covenants may look quite different from one location to another. This is a scheme where one size does not fit all, and the nature of the support offered will be determined by both need and capacity

It is meant to be a pledge that sets out what a community covenant seeks to achieve in a particular area and, where possible, will be signed by representatives from all parts of the community. In most cases the lead signatories will be a senior representative from the local authority and one from the services who will sign on behalf of the armed forces community, whether that is the local military unit in your areas or those representing veterans' or families groups.

Reasons why the Council should support this initiative include:

- To commemorate and celebrate the good practice and initiatives in effective work with armed forces communities.

- To ensure there is clear leadership and accountability for the programmes of measures within the authority.
- To ensure there is an effective programme of measures going forward in partnership with armed forces communities.

Appendix A details our current initiatives and sets out how these could be enhanced.

Following agreement of this initiative, the Covenant will be formally signed by all partners. Officers will progress the programme of measures identified in Appendix A and in the Covenant. This will be reviewed by an annual meeting with Armed Forces personnel. A copy of the proposed covenant is contained within Appendix B.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS (D)

The list of measures identified in the attached draft covenant will be met as part of existing service budgets.

There are therefore no new financial implications arising from this report.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS (AB)

Like the national Military Covenant the Community Covenant is intended to set out moral rather than legal obligations as such there are no legal implications to this report.

6. CORPORATE PLAN

The partnership is assisting the Council in achieving its key aim 'Strong and Distinctive Communities'.

7. CONSULTATION

Colleagues within our Armed Forces community are fully supportive of this proposal.

8. RISK IMPLICATIONS

None relating directly to this report.

9. KNOWING YOUR COMMUNITY – EQUALITY AND RURAL IMPLICATIONS

The Community Covenant is a borough wide pledge.

10. CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

None relating directly to this report.

Background Papers:	None
Contact Officer:	Simon D. Jones, Cultural services Manager
Executive Lead:	Councillor David Cope, Executive member for Leisure & Culture

Appendix A

Current Initiatives

The Borough of Hinckley & Bosworth is proud of its longstanding links with the serving and ex-serving members of HM Armed Forces and supporting the armed forces forms a significant part of the Borough's civic life.

The Council has granted freedom of entry to the Borough of Hinckley & Bosworth to the 2nd Battalion Royal Anglian Regiment.

The Mayor attends many armed forces events during the course of the civic year in support of the local armed forces and the Royal British Legion, and is pleased to play an active role at receptions to mark special occasions.

The Council supports the national initiative to fly a flag for Armed Forces Day. The raising and flying of the Armed Forces Day flag in Argents Mead provides a high profile opportunity to raise awareness of the role our armed forces and their families continue to play.

The Council coordinates arrangements for marking Remembrance Sunday in Hinckley & Bosworth, which involves the Mayor alongside other civic dignitaries leading a public act of remembrance in Argents Mead and hosting a parade of local regiments through the Town, which on occasions includes presenting medals to members of the armed forces. The Mayor will also attend other remembrance services around the Borough during the day.

The Borough Council recognises the importance of marking Armistice Day. Two minute silence is commemorated at the Council Offices. Both events provide the opportunity for members of the public, Councillors and staff to observe the armistice in silence and reflect on previous wars and the sacrifices made by members of the armed forces.

Going forward

Hinckley & Bosworth will continue to demonstrate its support to the Armed Forces Community. This support includes (and is not an exhaustive list):

Upon notification of injured military personnel recovering/resettling in Hinckley & Bosworth the Borough Council will ensure carers and individuals in need receive up-to-date information of services available. This will also include support for veterans living with PTSD and other mental health problems.

The Council has included special qualifying provisions in recognition of recent government guidance in its revised Housing Allocations Policy to ensure that members of the armed forces are not disadvantaged by the requirement to have a local connection to qualify for inclusion on our Housing Register and therefore access to social housing.

These provisions recognise the special position of members of the Armed Forces (and their families) whose employment requires them to be mobile and who are likely therefore to be particularly disadvantaged by local connection requirements; as well as those injured reservists who may need to move to another local authority district to access treatment, care or support.

The Council will support service families and personnel to access and engage with Hinckley & Bosworth's community, heritage, and leisure services and facilities.

The Mayor of Hinckley & Bosworth takes an active role in presenting former members of the armed forces who live in Hinckley & Bosworth with their Veterans Badge. Retiring members of the armed forces can request that the Mayor presents to them their Veterans Badge and arrangements will be made to do this either at an existing event, the veteran's home or at the Mayor's Parlour.

The Mayor will continue to contribute to the relevant benevolent fund, either by donation or payment for attendance at events.

To coincide with Remembrance Day the Mayor will support the 'Lest We Forget' switch on event.

Continue to recognise the importance and contribution of local war memorials by having a dedicated named Officer to coordinate, promote and respond to matters. This Officer will be supported by War Memorials Trust.

An annual meeting between Armed Forces representatives and Hinckley & Bosworth will be held to review progress on all these measures.