
ARMED FORCES CHAMPION UPDATE

1. SUMMARY

At the Council meeting held on 28 June 2012 the Council appointed Councillor Maurice Corry as the Armed Forces Champion (AFC) to take on the task of ensuring that local service provision is mindful of the needs of Service Veterans.

This report provides an update to council on the work of the Armed Forces Champion and highlights a number of initiatives that are underway in Argyll and Bute

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 It is recommended that Council :

- a) Note the progress and activity report associated with the Armed Forces Champion.
- b) Agree to the incorporation of the Highland Reserve and Forces Cadet Association (HRFCA) as a signatory to the Argyll and Bute Armed Forces Community Covenant Partnership
- c) Note the proposal for the establishment of a World War 1 Commemoration Steering Group led by the Royal British Legion and the proposed development of a 4 year commemoration project.
- d) Agree to delegate the nomination of a representative elected member from each area to join the steering group to local Area Committees

3. DETAIL

3.1 At the Council meeting held on 28 June 2012 the Council appointed Councillor Maurice Corry as the Armed Forces Champion (AFC) to take on the task of ensuring that local service provision is mindful of the needs of Service Veterans. In addition, the Council considered a report which set out the aim of the Community Covenant Pledge and at its meeting on 20 September 2012, the Council, along with NHS Highland and Argyll Voluntary Action agreed to support the Armed Forces Community within Argyll and Bute by signing the Argyll and Bute Armed Forces Community Covenant.

3.2 The following sections provide an update on a number of initiatives that the Armed Forces Champion has been involved in and highlights a number of initiatives that are underway.

3.3 Community Covenant Grants Scheme Board

By 4th June 2013, the AFC had convened The Argyll & Bute Armed Forces Community Covenant Grants Awards Board(Local), on 2 occasions (November 2012 and February 2013) and considered a total of bids for projects across Argyll and Bute. To date 14 of the bids were for the Helensburgh and Lomond area with only 1 bid from elsewhere. These bids are thereafter submitted for consideration by the (The Armed Forces Community Covenant Grants Awards Board (National), MoD in London) and 1 bid have been successful to date. This project was for (Rhu and Shandon Gala for £5,000).

Of note the decision making on the grant scheme has now been devolved from London to Scotland allowing for more localised decision making.

3.4 The Firm Base Initiative

As agreed at the meeting on the 20th September 2012, the AFC is now moving forward with the establishment of the Argyll and Bute Armed Forces Community Covenant Partnership. The membership will include the Leader of the Council, Provost and The Armed Forces & Veterans Champion, representatives from the signatories of the Community Covenant through the CPP (in respect of NHS Highland and Argyll Voluntary Action); Commodore Clyde from HMNB Clyde (Faslane); and, subject to discussion, the Highland Reserve and Forces Cadets Association (HRFCA) as part of the Firm Base Initiative. Representatives from the Scottish Firm Base Group and The Royal Regiment of Scotland will also attend the meetings.

The first meeting of the partnership will be scheduled for August 2013 and the immediate agenda will include (members, partners, mission and terms of reference, constitution, meeting schedule, community partners, Armed Forces Community Covenant progress update). The incorporation of the HRFCA as a signatory to the Partnership would also take place in August.

3.5 World War 1 Commemoration

The 100th anniversary of the commencement of the first World War will be in 2014 and across the UK and elsewhere there are plans to commemorate the event. The AFC has been in discussion with the MOD in Whitehall regarding the local events that will link in with this commemoration and will look to establish a steering group led by the Royal British Legion in Argyll and Bute. Membership may include:

- the Council Provost and elected member representatives from each area of Argyll and Bute (suggested the nomination be delegated to the relevant local area committees)
- a representative from the 5 Royal British Legion branches in Argyll and Bute
- representatives from the Royal Navy, Royal Marines, Army, RAF and cadet forces.

- representatives from 7 Scots Battalion (51st Highlanders) and 5 Scots Battalion (Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders) of the Royal Regiment of Scotland

In conceptual terms the group would look to develop a 4 year project that engages the communities and schools in Argyll and Bute to live through the day to day events of the war on that day/year 100 years before. Communities will be encouraged to investigate and commemorate the impact of the Great War on their communities, develop related displays and working with the Scottish National War Memorial to compile and publish the names of those listed on local community memorials. The group will seek to define the project and to seek support funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund grant programme (First World War Programme -

<http://www.hlf.org.uk/news/Pages/NewFirstWorldWarProgrammeOpens.aspx>)

The Royal British Legion and the AFC have also obtained agreement from the Duke of Argyll to make Inveraray Castle available for the project launch which may be accompanied by a "Parade of a Thousand Colours" by the various uniformed military and non military organisations. The day may also include a commemorative service and event followed by a reception using marquees provided free of charge by the Estate.

3.6 Support for Schools Funding Support

In 2011 the Ministry of Defence launched the Support Fund for State schools with Service Children. The Fund which on current plans is £3M pa for four years starting in 2011, has been made available to schools to mitigate the effects of exceptional mobility or deployment of their Service communities: Regular Armed Forces and Reserve Forces.

The Fund is different from the Armed Forces Community Covenant Grant scheme which seeks to forge closer ties between the community and the Services who form a part of that community and which is open to a wider variety of organisations.

To date Community Services: Education has made three successful bids to this fund:

- £147,320 in 2011 was allocated
- £20,000 in 2012 was allocated
- £63,000 in 2013 was allocated.

The funding was provided for a number of projects: a matching curriculum exercise; training and resources to support vulnerable young people; a part-time youth worker; the creation of a welcome pack for young people; resources for HMS Heroes (in one primary school); extra support teachers; a psychology research assistant to help to evaluate projects; and a steering group with representatives from all stakeholders.

The Steering Group has been set up with representatives from education, parents, Naval Services and elected members. The matching curriculum project is available in all primary schools and the youth worker has completed her placement. The training, some resources, and staff currently funded by these bids are all in place.

Early indications suggest that the impact of the funding has been positive and this is evidenced in a number of ways:

- Strong partnerships are being created
- Schools are in a better position to support transition
- Children are better supported in a way which allows them to become more confident
- Targeted support is being provided to children with SEN

however, the on-going evaluation continues to identify further priorities and areas for development to be reported to the Steering Group.

3.7 Other Funding Programmes

The AFC has been active in pursuing further funding for activities in Argyll and Bute, these include:

- 1) The LIBOR Grant Programme (May funding round) provides funding to support armed forces related projects – the theme in this round is Children and Families – Mental Health. Argyll and Bute Council has submitted a bid for £788,000 to increase support to children across the Council area in relation to emotional wellbeing and positive mental health through raised self esteem, confidence and development of coping mechanisms. This is particularly pertinent for and will be largely targeted to children in armed forces or ex service families. There is no match funding required from the council to access this programme. A further funding round in this programme is expected in October 2013 however the theme for that round is not yet known.
- 2) The Scottish Government has made available a £1m fund to be administered by Historic Scotland to offer financial help to secondary schools considering educational visits to European battlefields. The Battlefield visit fund will provide up to £2,000 per school to help subsidise such educational trips.
- 3) The Heritage Lottery Fund has also announced a grants programme “First World War – Then and Now” (see section 3.5 above) – providing grants of between £3,000 to £10,000 to communities to help them mark the centenary of WW1.

<http://www.hlf.org.uk/HowToApply/programmes/Pages/FirstWorldWarThenandNow.aspx>

3.8 Other Groups Attended

The AFC has also attended:

- the Cross Party Group on Veterans along with other Council champions to feed in information and raise veteran issues with the Scottish Government. It is likely this will be a standing group to continue to link the national government in with the local Firm Base arrangements.
- Liaison meeting with the UK Department of Culture, Media and Sport and has helped influence the development of the WW1 commemoration programme and the development of the national community covenant outcomes framework.
- Liaison meetings with the MOD in Whitehall around the Community Covenant and has helped raise the pro active profile of Argyll and Bute Council.
- Tri lateral meetings at HMNB Clyde (Faslane) with senior Council staff from Argyll and Bute and West Dunbartonshire and the Royal Navy to continue the preparation and planning around the maritime change programme, other areas of potential joint work and associated liaison issues.

3.9 Argyll and Bute Welcome and Information Packs

Work has been ongoing on developing two packs available to active and ex service personnel and their families to assist with resettlement and integration of families affected by the maritime change programme (MCP). The Welcome Pack will be used to raise the profile of Argyll and Bute and the family life and services on offer to those service personnel who may consider relocation from bases throughout the UK as part of the MCP. It is important that an accurate and positive picture of Argyll and Bute is presented and that we encourage as many families as possible to actively relocate into our communities, stimulate their economic and demographic vibrancy and that they feel able to integrate fully into that community life.

Linked to the Welcome Pack is a First Contact Information Pack that will help active and ex service families understand the supports available to them, where to access information and services and ensure they know where to go if they need assistance. This information will be developed in conjunction with the Royal Navy NPFS who provide welfare supports to the armed forces community.

Both packs will be available in electronic format and will be available via dedicated armed forces pages created on the council website for veterans and armed forces personnel. These pages are also currently under development.

3.10 Championing the Rights of Individual Veteran and Armed Forces Families

On contact by the MOD, the AFC has been able to sign post individual families to relevant council services on issues such as housing, education, care services and also health services via the NHS. Additional liaison with a number of relevant charitable and community organisations, other families have been able to access help through specialist organisations such as SSAFA (Erskine Hospital).

4. CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 The role of the AFC has provided a number of opportunities to engage the armed forces communities across Argyll and Bute and to help establish a number of initiatives that both secures investment, jobs and grant assistance to Argyll and Bute and also promotes the area as a positive place to relocate to for businesses and families. A number of these initiatives are now starting to move forward and provides a national profile to the approach taken by Argyll and Bute Council in visibly demonstrating our commitment to the Armed Forces Community Covenant.

5. IMPLICATIONS

Policy: in accordance with Council Policy and Community Covenant;

Financial: Note the secured and potential grant assistance for initiatives associated with the Armed Forces Champion role.

Legal: None

Personnel: None

Equal Opportunities: in compliance with the Equal Opportunities Policy

Risk: None

Customer Service: Improved support to active and veteran service personnel and their families

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15 May 2013

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