

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL

CABINET

1 October 2015

Report by Chief Officer – Health and Social Care Partnership
and Deputy Chief Executive

Veterans Support Advisor Role

PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. To make the position of Veterans Support Advisor permanent across East Renfrewshire, Renfrewshire and Inverclyde councils. All are to bear a one third cost of approximately £12,000 per annum including on-costs from 31 March 2016.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2. It is recommended that Cabinet:
- (a) note the work of the Veterans Support Advisor in supporting service veterans and of the progress made by the Council in the development of a customer service model and pathways for veterans of the armed forces; and
 - (b) agree that a submission is made through the revenues estimates process for 2016/17 to make the position of Veterans Support Advisor permanent in order to continue to grow the service and its reputation and work with the customer service manager to ensure the model's sustainability.

BACKGROUND

3. In February 2012 the Council agreed to sign up to a Community Covenant with the Armed Forces. The Community Covenant Agreement is a voluntary statement of mutual support between a civilian community and its local Armed Forces Community. The aim of the Community Covenant is to encourage local communities to support the service community in their area and to promote understanding and awareness amongst the public of issues affecting the Armed Forces Community.

4. By signing up to the agreement, the Council and its partners became eligible to apply for funding from the Ministry of Defence Community Covenant and Libor funds for projects which would provide a benefit to service personnel and the communities in which they live.

5. Officers from Renfrewshire Council, Inverclyde Council and East Renfrewshire Council have met regularly as part of local "Firm Base" arrangements over the period since 2012, and developed a joint bid for funding from the Community Covenant scheme to enable the development of a veterans support model and customer access model. The bid was successful in attracting £87,000 of funding in 2014/2015. This partnership between the three councils is the first of its kind in the UK.

6. A Veterans Support Advisor was appointed as a focal point to work on behalf of the three councils, strengthening the partnership and becoming responsible for coordinating the delivery of this project's outcomes, sharing resources, expertise and minimising duplication of effort. Each council identified 5 Veterans Champions who work at the frontline for services provided and are trained by the Veterans Support Advisor. The first training session was completed in August 2014 and 15 customer service champions and three customer service managers completed this training. Close support is provided within the Council by money advice advisors, homelessness officers, CHCP and personnel from the Scottish Welfare Fund who will work closely with the Veterans Support Advisor to ensure the provision of specialist and targeted support as required by the individual client.

7. The establishment of a partnership agreement and pathway to the Veterans Welfare Service is currently being finalised. This is a critical part of the project as this is the organisation that holds the information on all serving and ex serving regular and reserve members of the armed forces.

8. Work to complete the customer service model is also being finalised and rolled out across the three councils.

9. Meetings have also taken place with charities and associations within the three council areas, and meetings with national veterans charities have also taken place and are an ongoing and critical part of the work.

REPORT

10. The project has been recognised as best practice in statements to the Scottish Parliament where the Veterans Support Advisor was praised for her work, and through the Veterans Commissioner's Transition in Scotland report. It has also been published in a guide to housing solutions on the Scottish Governments website that will be circulated to all council Chief Executives, Directors of Housing and Armed Forces Champions.

11. Funding for the development of the veterans support model will expire on 31 March 2016, and it is proposed that the position of Veteran's Support Advisor on a shared basis across the three Council areas should be continued beyond this date. The three councils will also continue to work to further develop the service and seek additional funding as appropriate to support the development of the service.

CONSULTATION

12. Consultation with Renfrewshire and Inverclyde Councils has taken place and they are also submitting Cabinet papers to ensure this role is made permanent.

CONCLUSION

13. Making the post of Veterans Support Advisor permanent reinforces our commitment to the Community Covenant and ensures military personnel past and present are not disadvantaged. It ensures we remain current and relevant to their needs and that we provide a streamlined service utilising funding streams as they are made available.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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 - (b) agree that a submission is made through the revenues estimates process for 2016/17 to make the position of Veterans Support Advisor permanent in order to continue to grow the service and its reputation and work with the customer service manager to ensure the model's sustainability.

Julie Murray, Chief Officer – Health and Social Care Partnership & Caroline Innes, Deputy Chief Executive

Author: Linda Wilson Customer Service Manager 0141 577 3406,
linda.wilson@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk

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Cabinet Contact Details:-

Councillor Jim Fletcher
(Leader of the Council)

Home: 0141 639 0265
Office: 0141 577 5107/8

BACKGROUND PAPER

Community Covenant with the Armed Forces, Council, February 2012

The foregoing background papers will be retained within East Renfrewshire CHCP for inspection by the public for the prescribed period of four years from the date of the meeting.

KEY WORDS

Community Covenant; veterans support; armed forces.