

## Part A

**Report to:** Cabinet

**Date of meeting:** Monday, 6 December 2021

**Report author:** Executive Support Officer

**Title:** Hertfordshire Armed Forces Covenant

### 1.0 Summary

1.1 Watford Borough Council is a signatory to the Hertfordshire Armed Forces Covenant launched in 2011. The Covenant has been refreshed to ensure that it is in line with the current language of the Armed Forces Covenant and will be reaffirmed at a ceremony on 16 December 2021. A copy of the refreshed Covenant is attached to this report.

1.2 As Watford looks towards celebrating 100 years since its grant of charter in 1922, there is an opportunity to renew focus on the town's veterans. It is suggested that proposals should be brought to Cabinet drawing on the aspirations of the Hertfordshire Armed Forces Covenant and best practice from other authorities.

### 2.0 Risks

#### 2.1

Nature of risk	Consequence	Suggested Control Measures	Response (treat, tolerate, terminate or transfer)	Risk Rating (combination of severity and likelihood)
Cabinet members are unaware of changes to the Hertfordshire Armed Forces Covenant	Cabinet members' knowledge of the Covenant would be out of date	Circulate the refreshed Covenant to Cabinet	Treat	2
Watford's veterans are not included in plans to mark the town's charter centenary	The contribution of veterans to the life of the town would be overlooked	Ensure that the responsible Portfolio Holder and the council's representative on the Hertfordshire Armed Forces Covenant Board are involved in plans to mark the town's centenary	Treat	2

### 3.0 Recommendations

#### 3.1 That Cabinet:

1. notes the changes to the Hertfordshire Armed Forces Covenant
2. agrees to use Watford's centenary celebrations in 2022 as an opportunity to focus on the support offered to local veterans.

#### **Further information:**

**Ishbel Morren**

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### 4.0 Detailed proposal

- 4.1 The Armed Forces Covenant is a promise by the nation to ensure that those who serve or who have served in the Armed Forces, and their families, are treated fairly. The covenant focusses on helping members of the armed forces community have the same access to government and commercial services and products as any other citizen.
- 4.2 Local authorities and the Armed Forces community are encouraged to work together to establish a Covenant. Hertfordshire's Covenant was launched in 2011 and Watford Borough Council, along with the county's other district and borough councils, is a signatory. Although Hertfordshire is not a garrisoned county, it is home to:
- UK's Permanent Joint Headquarters in Northwood
  - 162 Medical Squadron, 254 Medical Regiment RAMC, based at the Army Reserve Centre, Hitchin
  - 6 Platoon, 3 (Essex & Hertfordshire) Company, 3rd Battalion The Royal Anglian Regiment based at the Army Reserve Centre Hertford.
- 4.3 The Hertfordshire Armed Forces Covenant aims to ensure that veterans and those in the armed forces are not disadvantaged in accessing services and that their sacrifices are recognised and remembered. The Covenant also seeks to encourage the integration of service life into civilian life.
- 4.4 The Hertfordshire Armed Forces Covenant Board, promoted locally as Hertfordshire Heroes, is responsible for delivering the aims of the Covenant and meets twice a year. Watford Borough Council is represented by Councillor Bill Stanton. The Board is chaired by County Councillor Terry Douris, Executive Member for Education, Libraries and Lifelong Learning, and is administered by Hertfordshire County Council.

- 4.5 At the Hertfordshire Armed Forces Covenant Board meeting on 30 September 2021, Hertfordshire's refreshed Covenant was considered and is attached to this report. The document has been updated to ensure that it is in line with the current language of the Armed Forces Covenant. During discussions some additional wording was agreed by the Board. A reaffirmation ceremony for the Covenant will be held on 16 December 2021.
- 4.6 Under the Covenant, and in line with government legislation, Watford Borough Council gives 'additional preference' on its Housing Register to those who have served in the armed forces. This means that current and former armed forces personnel get more preference than other applicants with 'reasonable preference' i.e., the homeless, those in insanitary or overcrowded conditions, those who need to be housed in Watford due to social or medical welfare reasons and would be caused considerable hardship if this did not happen. Over the past three years, three applicants from the Armed Forces have been housed by the council. A further three applicants are currently on the authority's Housing Register.
- 4.7 The council also seeks to celebrate and honour the armed forces community by observing Armed Forces Day, which takes place on the last Saturday in June each year, with the Mayor and Chairman raising the Armed Forces Flag outside the Town Hall.
- 4.8 As Watford looks towards celebrating 100 years since its grant of charter, there is an opportunity to renew focus on the town's veterans. In addition to considering what further practical help and support might be afforded to former service personnel, any events should include recognition of the significant contribution of Watford's veterans to the life of the town. It is suggested that further proposals should be brought to Cabinet to meet this objective drawing on the aspirations of the Hertfordshire Armed Forces Covenant and best practice from other authorities.

## 5.0 **Implications**

### 5.1 **Financial**

- 5.1.1 The Shared Director of Finance comments that any changes to policies with budget implications will be considered as part of the overall Budget.

### 5.2 **Legal Issues** (Monitoring Officer)

- 5.2.1 The Group Head of Democracy and Governance comments that there are no legal implications in this report.

### **5.3 Equalities, Human Rights and Data Protection**

5.3.1 Having had regard to the council's obligations under s149, it is considered that any events celebrating Watford's grant of charter should take equalities obligations into account.

5.3.2 Having had regard to the council's obligations under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2018, it is considered that officers are not required to undertake a Data Processing Impact Assessment (DPIA) for this report.

### **5.4 Staffing**

5.4.1 There are no staffing implications as a result of this report.

### **5.5 Accommodation**

5.5.1 There are no accommodation implications as a result of this report.

### **5.6 Community Safety/Crime and Disorder**

5.6.1 There are no community safety or crime and disorder implications as a result of this report.

### **5.7 Sustainability**

5.7.1 There are no sustainability implications as a result of this report.

## **Appendices**

- Hertfordshire Armed Forces Covenant

## **Background papers**

Watford Borough Council Nominations Policy