

HR POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND REVIEW

22nd September 2022

Report of the Projects Delivery Lead

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To enable the Committee to consider and approve the introduction of a new Armed Forces Employment Policy

This report is public.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the new draft Armed Forces Employment Policy appended to this report is considered by the committee and approved.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 From time to time the Council will create new Human Resources policies and procedures.
- 1.2 A new Armed Forces Employment Policy has been developed as part of a wider project to embed the commitments of the Armed Forces Covenant into our organisation. The policy is also part of a wider commitment to Fair Work and an example which demonstrates best practice for the proposed Fair Work Charter.
- 1.3 The policy incorporates amendments from comments of the previous JCC meeting on 7th September 2022 as follows:
- Inclusion of a statement regarding welcoming applicants who have been wounded sick or injured during the line of duty.
 - Reference to feedback being given to all veteran applicants unsuccessful at interview.

2.0 Armed Forces Employment Policy

- 2.1 Lancaster City Council signed the Armed Forces Community Covenant in 2014. In 2019 we re-affirmed our commitment to the Covenant and were awarded the Bronze Award of the MOD Employer Recognition Scheme to acknowledge our employment practices. These are aimed at ensuring fairness and reducing disadvantage for the armed forces community both as applicants and as continuing employees.

The Armed Forces covenant is a promise to those who proudly protect our nation, that we acknowledge and understand that those who have served in the armed forces, and their families, should be treated with fairness and respect in the communities, economy and society they serve with their lives.

In 2021 the council subsequently achieved the Silver Award Employer Recognition Award. As part of our application for this award we developed an Armed Forces

Employment policy to formalise our approach to employment of Armed Forces Community members. Council resolved on 29th September 2021 that we would further commit to achieve the Gold award in 2022 a commitment which we since successfully achieved.

Part of the Gold ERS criteria is to have an active policy for the Employment of the armed forces Community. Employment is a key area in which we can support our armed forces.

Armed Forces families often move around the country at short notice, may not have formal qualifications that employers recognise and may require additional flexibility during their employment to manage family life whilst they are serving. Those who are reservist often also struggle to find employment due to the time commitments that they need to give to the MOD for regular training and development. Similarly, those who volunteer their time as Cadet Force adult volunteers are required to commit to regular weekly meetings as well as annual camp.

2.2 The Policy covers areas such as:

- Attraction of Armed Forces Talent including advertising and a guaranteed interview scheme.
- Provision of paid Forces Special Leave for Adult Cadet Volunteers and Reservists to attend annual camp.
- Employment of reserves and arrangements applicable to mobilisation; including continuous service provisions, financial assistance and pre and post-mobilisation line management support.

2.3 In addition to this policy within the past 12 months the council has also developed intranet and internet pages, to further promote our commitment to the covenant and embed the principles within the organisation.

A staff Armed Forces network has been created, and this network has its own intranet page, as well as a Microsoft team's group, where staff share news and experiences with each other.

An Armed Forces Covenant e-learning package for frontline workers had also been rolled out, to help educate our staff on the issues that the armed forces community face and equip them to ask the right questions when dealing with members of the public, to ascertain whether they are part of this community.

More recently the Armed Forces Covenant Community Partnership Group has been re-started, Chaired by Cllr Dennison as our Armed Forces Champion. This group creates opportunities for organisations from across the district to work together on their commitments to the covenant and allows the council a forum to externally advocate for the Armed Forces Community.

3.0 Options

The options available to the Committee in respect of the Policy are to approve the appended document as drafted, to approve the document with amendments, or not to approve the document.

However, if substantial changes in respect of any Policy are proposed at the Personnel Committee meeting, it may be appropriate for consideration of that Policy to be deferred

to a future meeting to enable Officers to consider the proposed amendment in more detail and to consult further with the trade unions.

4. Conclusion

Members are asked to consider and accept the Officer recommendations set out above in respect of the draft policy appended to this report.

CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT

(including Health & Safety, Equality & Diversity, Human Rights, Community Safety, Sustainability and Rural Proofing):

Please see associated Equality Impact Assessment in respect of the proposed policy. There is no notable impact.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

The [Armed Forces Act 2021](#) now enshrines the Armed Forces Covenant into law to help prevent service personnel and veterans being disadvantaged when accessing public services.

[Clause 8](#) amends Part 16A of the Armed Forces Act 2006 to introduce a duty to have due regard to the principles of the [Armed Forces Covenant](#), as follows:

- (a) the unique obligations of, and sacrifices made by, the armed forces
- (b) the principle that it is desirable to remove disadvantages arising for service people from membership, or former membership, of the armed forces
- (c) the principle that special provision for service people may be justified by the effects on such people of membership, or former membership, of the armed forces.

These principles are already set out in the existing duty on the Secretary of State to make an annual Armed Forces Covenant report (section 343A of the AFA 2006). The new duty will apply to specified persons or bodies, including councils, when exercising certain housing, education or healthcare functions (excluding social care).

All councils have voluntarily signed the Armed Forces Covenant. The further enshrinement of the Covenant into law is an opportunity to build upon work councils are already leading to help serving personnel, reservists, veterans, and their families to have the same equality of access to public services as their civilian neighbours. This includes the areas of focus in the Act – housing, education and healthcare. Many local Covenant projects go beyond this, for example to cover employment, public health, welfare, and transport.

The Act requires the Secretary of State for Defence to lay draft statutory guidance before Parliament, which will come into force at a date to be specified by the Secretary of State. The Ministry of Defence is developing the statutory guidance in consultation with colleagues from across central government, local government and the third sector. The Ministry of Defence intends to commence the due regard duty later in 2022 and that the final statutory guidance will be published ahead of that to give councils time to prepare for its implementation.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no notable financial implications to the implementation of the policy.

OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS, such as Human Resources, Information Services, Property, Open Spaces:

Not applicable.

SECTION 151 OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The Section 151 Officer has been consulted and has no comments to add.

MONITORING OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The Monitoring Officer has been consulted and has no comments to add.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

New Policy Appended

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