

**FALKIRK COUNCIL**

**Subject: SUPPORT FOR VETERANS**  
**Meeting: FALKIRK COUNCIL**  
**Date: 20 JUNE 2012**  
**Author: CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

**1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 In June 2009 The Scottish Parliament Cross Party Group on Supporting Veterans wrote to Councils inviting them to nominate a local councillor to act as a local Veterans Champion. Councillor Spears was Veterans Champion from October 2009 until May 2012. The Depute Provost, Councillor John Patrick was appointed as Veterans Champion for Falkirk Council on 18 May 2012.
- 1.2 On 8 February 2012 Falkirk Council agreed to allocate £50,000 to support veterans who are resident or likely to be resident in the area.
- 1.3 The term veteran relates to all who have served within the armed forces, war widows and widowers, families and dependants of veterans and carers of veterans.

**2. BACKGROUND TO SERVICES FOR VETERANS**

- 2.1 The majority of people leaving the armed forces suffer no ill effects, entering full time employment and leading meaningful and fulfilling lives.
- 2.2 Some veterans do find it difficult on leaving service. They may settle initially, but may have difficulty engaging with statutory, voluntary and third sector agencies who provide support to the community in general in relation to:
  - Employment;
  - Housing;
  - Finances;
  - Education;
  - Addiction;
  - Homelessness;
  - Health and Wellbeing; and
  - Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

- 2.3 All services/agencies in the area should be aware of the needs of veterans and the services available for them. This may already be clearly established within the services currently offered or available from the Council or voluntary services in the area. For example, the Falkirk Council Housing web page provides detail of housing options for ex service personnel and those leaving the armed forces including information on the Home Spot Information Booklet.
- 2.4 Veterans and their dependants should also be aware of what to expect from services or agencies within the area they are to settle in after serving in the armed forces. To help achieve this there is a web page on [www.falkirk.gov.uk](http://www.falkirk.gov.uk) dedicated to Veterans Champion information. This lists 22 organisations (with contact telephone numbers) that provide support to veterans throughout the UK.
- 2.5 Advice from Veterans Scotland, one of the leading charities supporting veterans, has been sought to help inform the role of local Veteran's Champion. The following comprises the suggested role description of a Veterans Champion:
- To ensure that the interests of the local veterans community are properly represented, considered and prioritised within the Councils policies, strategies, plans and operational activities;
  - To consider the impact on the veterans community of any council decisions and policy;
  - To hold the Scottish Government to account, either singly or with the support of other members, in terms of the delivery of Council Services to members of the veterans community;
  - To liaise as appropriate with Armed Forces', Veterans and Service Families organisations and representatives to discuss matters of concern to the veterans community in the Falkirk Council area;
  - To monitor complaints against Council Services and actions which have an adverse effect on the veterans community;
  - To help raise the profile of the veterans community in the council area and to facilitate support for:
    - Homecoming parades;
    - Remembrance parades and events;
    - Armed Forces Day; and
    - Fund-raising events undertaken by service charities.
  - To engage with Scottish Ministers and appropriate, UK Defence Ministers and others in relation to veterans community requirements; and
  - To provide regular reports to all Elected Members of activities in relation to the veterans community which have taken place in the council area.
- 2.6 It is suggested that this should form the role description for the Veterans Champion in Falkirk Council.

### **3. FORTH VALLEY / CENTRAL SCOTLAND ARMED FORCES CHAMPION GROUP**

3.1 The Forth Valley/Central Scotland Armed Forces Champions Group is chaired by The Medical Director of NHS Forth Valley and has representation from the three Councils (Falkirk's representatives are our Veterans Champion and an officer from Human Resources), veterans/service organisations, police, fire and rescue service and the local Citizens Advice Bureaux (CAB). The group has discussed the identification of veterans who come into contact with the organisation including police, health and prison and who may require special consideration in treatment/care.

3.2 The group has also discussed the continuation/extension of a project currently provided by the Stirling CAB. This service is funded by Citizen's Advice Scotland (CAS) and covers the whole of the Forth Valley area. CAB (Scotland) operates the Armed Services Advice Project (ASAP) and has produced the resource 'Advice and Information for the Armed Forces Community – a resource for CAB advisers' written for anyone providing advice to the Armed Forces Community.

#### ***Armed Services Advice Project (ASAP)***

3.3 The Armed Services Advice Project (ASAP) has been created to be the focal point for the Armed Forces Community in Scotland for access to advice, information and support.

3.4 ASAP is provided by the Scottish Citizens Advice Bureau Service, a highly trusted network with decades of experience delivering a free, independent, confidential and impartial service to the general public. The project is funded by Poppy Scotland, The Royal Air Force Benevolent Fund, The Maritime Charities Funding Group, ABF the Soldiers Charity, Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association – Forces Help (SSAFA Forces Help) the Robertson Trust and Turn2us.

3.5 Contact can be made with ASAP by the following groups:

- Persons currently serving in the Armed Forces, either Regular or Reserve or a dependant of someone who is;
- Persons who have served in the Armed Forces, either regular or reserve, or a dependant of someone who has; and
- A member of the Merchant Navy who served in a commercial vessel in support of legally defined UK military operations, or a dependant.

3.6 ASAP can provide information in relation to:

- Benefits,
- Debt and Money Advice ,
- Housing,
- Work-related problems, and
- Consumer issues and relationships.

3.7 CAB have knowledge and experience to help individuals and through ASAP will form critical links to the armed services community, local organisations and agencies in support of this project.

- 3.8 CAB Falkirk have been consulted with regard to the provision of an ASAP exclusively within the Falkirk area and have determined that this could be provided for £20,000. This would provide 1 year's funding to support a part-time adviser to work across Falkirk, Denny and Grangemouth CABs with potential clients as identified in Para. 3.5 and to link with the existing ASAP currently based in Stirling CAB though with a Forth Valley remit.
- 3.9 CAB Falkirk would work with existing Veteran Organisations/Associations to ensure that the service provided would meet the needs of potential clients.
- 3.10 It is recommended that Falkirk Council allocate £20,000 to CAB Falkirk to provide an ASAP in liaison with Grangemouth and Denny CAB within the Falkirk Council area.

#### **4. ARMED FORCES COMMUNITY COVENANT**

- 4.1 This initiative launched by the UK Government in 2011 builds a code of understanding and support between the Armed Forces and the communities in which they are based. The covenant allows partner organisations an opportunity to bring their knowledge, experience and expertise to bear on the provision of support services, help and advice to members of the Armed Forces Community including veterans.
- 4.2 The Armed Forces Community Covenant aims to ensure that service personnel, their families and ex service personnel are not in any way disadvantaged in the provision of the usual entitlements and support from statutory services due to the transient nature of their military employment.
- 4.3 The Covenant aims to encourage all parties within a community to offer support to the local armed forces community and make it easier for service personnel, families and veterans to access help and support available from the MOD, from statutory providers and from the charitable and voluntary sector within their community. These organisations already work together in partnership at a local level.
- 4.4 The Covenant would be a two way arrangement and the Armed Forces community are encouraged to do as much as they can to support their community and promote activity which integrates the service community into civilian life, providing visibility and understanding of the military within the local community.
- 4.5 The objectives of the Armed Forces Community Covenant would be outlined in a local action plan with agreed outcomes in the areas of;
- Children, Young People and their Families;
  - Health and Wellbeing;
  - Housing;
  - Community Partnerships – Working in Partnership;
  - Support to Veterans and their Families; and
  - Employability.
- 4.6 Possible partners are identified as;
- The Armed Forces Community;

- Local Authorities;
- NHS;
- Employment Agencies;
- The Business Community; and
- Further Education.

This list is not exhaustive and partners would be dependant on agreed outcomes.

- 4.7 Creating an Armed Forces Community Covenant for the Falkirk Council area would allow applications to be made to the nationally organised Community Covenant Grant Fund that otherwise would not be available.
- 4.8 An approach has been made to the Falkirk Council Employment and Training Manager by Jobcentre Plus to consider the creation of a Falkirk Community Covenant. This is a concept which a number of our Community Planning partners support and would allow an application to be made for additional support from the Community Covenant Grant Fund specifically for employment and training initiatives for veterans. The fund is also available to community groups, schools and other local organisations to deliver projects of community benefit.
- 4.9 The development of an Armed Forces Community Covenant will be led by a veteran's charity i.e. Veterans Scotland and they have indicated their capacity to undertake such work. The Council can assist the development of a covenant by making a financial contribution towards this organisation to undertake this work and as such it is proposed that the remaining £30,000 of the resource agreed on 8 February 2012 be allocated to Veterans Scotland.
- 4.10 The development of a covenant by Veterans Scotland, supported by a Council financial contribution will require the following
  - Liaison with other relevant Veterans organisations;
  - Liaison with the Falkirk Council Veterans Champion;
  - Liaison with partner organisations to create Falkirk Armed Forces Community Covenant;
  - Liaise with Council services in relation to the Covenant;
  - Advising on the monitoring and evaluation of the Falkirk Armed Services Advice Project and the achievement of outcomes set out at paragraph 4.5;
  - Advising on Council web page information for Veterans; and
  - Assisting with future funding applications.
- 4.11 It is anticipated that this approach will provide an opportunity for a range of organisations to work together in this area while also ensuring mainstream service provision is appropriately focussed.

## **5. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that Members:

- 5.1 Note the content of this report and:**
- 5.2 Agree to adopt the role description as outlined at 2.6 for the Falkirk Council Veterans Champion;**
- 5.3 Agree to allocate funding of £20,000 to Citizen's Advice locally for a Falkirk ASAP project, as outlined at section 3; and**
- 5.4 Agree that an Armed Forces Covenant as outlined at section 4 should be developed for the Falkirk Council area and that this will be led by Veterans Scotland to which the Council will award £30,000.**

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**CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

Date: 4 June 2012

Ref: ABK0612CF – Veterans040612

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### **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**

1. Scottish Veterans Charter
2. [http://www.falkirk.gov.uk/about\\_council/elected\\_representatives/veterans\\_champions.aspx](http://www.falkirk.gov.uk/about_council/elected_representatives/veterans_champions.aspx)

Any person wishing to inspect the background papers listed above should telephone Falkirk 01324 506045 and ask for Caird Forsyth.