



**Prosperous Communities
Committee**

Tuesday, 7th March 2023

Subject: Armed Forces Covenant Duty

Report by:

Assistant Director Homes and Communities

Contact Officer:

Sarah Elvin
Homes, Health and Wellbeing Team Manager

sarah.elvin@west-lindsey.gov.uk

Purpose / Summary:

Summary of current position in terms of the Armed Forces Covenant Duty and adopt the action plan to ensure the duty is fully upheld.

RECOMMENDATION(S):

- 1. Prosperous Communities Committee recognise the current position with regards to the Armed Forces Covenant Duty.**
- 2. Prosperous Communities Committee adopt the action plan to ensure the covenant duty can be met by West Lindsey District Council.**
- 3. That the action plan is published to the Councils website and the areas of due regard updated when actions are completed.**

IMPLICATIONS

Legal:

The Armed Forces Act 2021 places a legal duty on specified public bodies to have due regard to the principles of the Armed Forces Covenant when exercising certain statutory functions in the fields of healthcare, education and housing. The Covenant Duty came into effect on 22 November 2022. Guidance on the duty can be found at appendix 1.

(N.B.) Where there are legal implications the report MUST be seen by the MO

Financial : FIN/155/23/SJB

None, all of the covenant duty will be covered by existing resources

(N.B.) All committee reports MUST have a Fin Ref

Staffing :

None, all of the covenant duty will be covered by existing resources

(N.B.) Where there are staffing implications the report MUST have a HR Ref

Equality and Diversity including Human Rights :

The duty required is set out within legislation and is in place to ensure equality for this potentially differently impacted group.

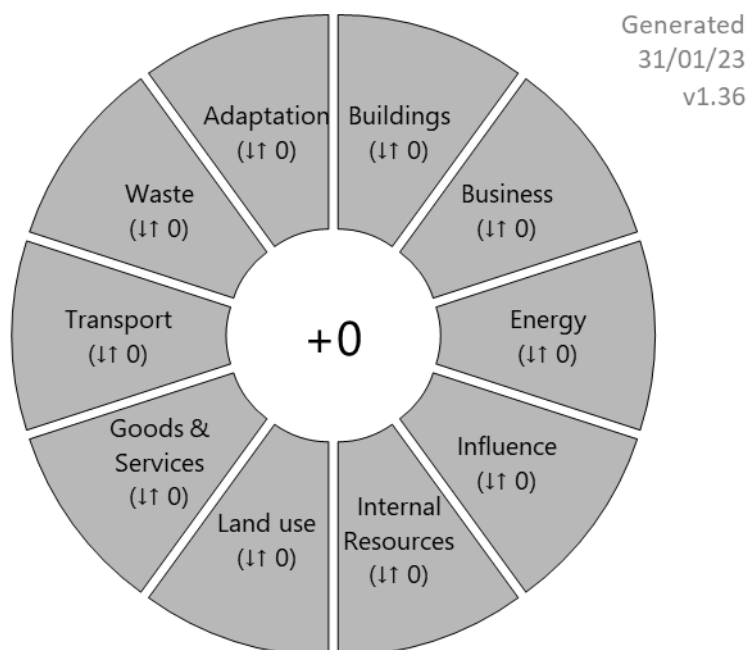
This duty sets out how through changing approaches to certain services, this cohort are not negatively impacted and makes recommendations to ensure that how services are delivered can be articulated specifically to his cohort.

As this is not a West Lindsey policy or strategy and clearly sets out through the duty how West Lindsey can ensure equality, an impact assessment is not required.

Data Protection Implications :

None, no additional data will be hared as a result of this

Climate Related Risks and Opportunities:



West Lindsey District Council will be net zero by 2050 (26 years and 11 months away).

A climate Environment & Sustainability Impact Assessment has been carried out which has determined this action plan and new duty has no impact in the environment.

Section 17 Crime and Disorder Considerations:

None

Health Implications:

The Duty places a responsibility on West Lindsey to ensure that all services are accessible by service personnel, ex service personnel and their families. This will remove barriers where housing services are needed to ensure that assistance can be provided, improving health and wellbeing as a result of accessing services.

Title and Location of any Background Papers used in the preparation of this report :

Wherever possible please provide a hyperlink to the background paper/s
If a document is confidential and not for public viewing it should not be listed.

Risk Assessment :

--

Call in and Urgency:

Is the decision one which Rule 14.7 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules apply?

i.e. is the report exempt from being called in due to urgency (in consultation with C&I chairman)

Yes

No

x

Key Decision:

A matter which affects two or more wards, or has significant financial implications

Yes

No

x

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Armed Forces Covenant is a promise by the nation that the Armed Forces Community should be treated fairly and face no disadvantage when accessing public and commercial services, with special provision made in appropriate cases for those who have sacrificed the most.
- 1.2 The Armed Forces Act 2021 places a legal duty on specified public bodies to have due regard to the principles of the Armed Forces Covenant when exercising certain statutory functions in the fields of healthcare, education and housing. The Covenant Duty came into effect on 22 November 2022. Guidance on the duty can be found at appendix 1.
- 1.3 The Duty is about informed decision-making, and means that West Lindsey should think about and place an appropriate amount of weight on the principles of the Armed Forces Covenant when considering all the factors relevant to how they carry out relevant functions.
- 1.4 The functions undertaken by West Lindsey that are referred to within the covenant duty are:
 - Allocations policy for social housing
 - Tenancy strategies (England only)
 - Homelessness
 - Disabled Facilities Grants

2. Armed Forces Community

- 2.1 The Duty applies to the following members of the Armed Forces Community:
 - Members of the regular forces and the reserve forces
 - Members of British overseas territory forces who are subject to Service law
 - Former members of any of Her Majesty's forces who are ordinarily resident in the UK
 - Relevant family members of those in above 3 categories

3. Housing

- 3.1 Only a small minority of the Armed Forces Community will need to access the housing services provided by West Lindsey. When members of the Armed Forces Community do need to access housing services, there are disadvantages they can experience, arising from the unique obligations and sacrifices of Service life.
- 3.2 When these disadvantages are experienced, they are most likely to be experienced by veterans, Service personnel that are about to leave Service and become veterans, and Service families.
- 3.3 These disadvantages are as follows:
 - 3.3.1 A lack of knowledge about the social housing services available in their local area, or how to access them. This might make them less likely to seek the housing services to which they are entitled.

- 3.3.2 Not building up sufficient 'local connection' in accordance with a local authority's allocation scheme, reducing their access to social housing in the area where they live.
- 3.3.3 Not being prioritised to receive suitable social housing, or experience a lack of available social housing, that meets particular housing needs caused by physical or mental injury sustained in Service.
- 3.3.4 Finding it more difficult to communicate with a housing body, while on a posting overseas, compared to the housing body's non-Service clients, who are in the UK.
- 3.3.5 A lack of knowledge about how to navigate the civilian housing sector, welfare system and budgeting, leading to difficulty gaining or maintaining a social housing tenancy or increasing their likelihood of becoming homeless.
- 3.3.6 A reluctance to seek early help to avoid homelessness, for reasons such as stigma, shame, or a belief that civilian bodies will not understand their experience, which could also increase their likelihood of becoming homeless.
- 3.3.7 Requiring adaptations to be made to their home when they move to a new area, or lacking knowledge of what grants are available, how to make applications for them, and what information is required to support their application. This could result in them spending more time in a home that does not meet their needs.

4. West Lindsey position

- 4.1 A position and actions document has been devised which can be found at appendix 3.
- 4.2 This document sets out the functions that West Lindsey currently carry out that are covered by the Armed Forces Covenant Duty, the policies and strategies which cover those functions, how those functions already have due regard to the covenant duty and then goes on to suggest future actions that can either cover off the requirements of the duty or improve the already in place requirements.
- 4.3 This document will be a working document, published on the West Lindsey website alongside a separate area dedicated to the Armed Forces Duty Covenant.
- 4.4 It is important that this document remains a live document so that once actions are completed they can be moved into the areas of due regard already given. But also, that should any of the policies and strategies detailed be amended, how those policies give due regard to the covenant duty can be updated.

5. Recommendations

- 1. Prosperous Communities Committee recognise the current position with regards to the Armed Forces Covenant Duty.**
- 2. Prosperous Communities Committee adopt the action plan to ensure the covenant duty can be met by West Lindsey District Council.**
- 3. That the action plan is published to the Councils website and the areas of due regard updated when actions are completed.**