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| Subject: | Notice of Motion – Armed Forces Covenant |
| Date: | 24 th January 2025 |
| Reporting Officer: | Nora Largey, City Solicitor/Director of Legal and Civic Services |
| Contact Officer: | Jim Hanna, Democratic Services and Governance Manager |

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| Restricted Reports | |
| Is this report restricted? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| <p>Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.</p> <p>Insert number <input type="checkbox"/></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Information relating to any individual 2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual 3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information) 4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter 5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained 6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction 7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime | |
| If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted? | |
| After Committee Decision | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| After Council Decision | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Sometime in the future | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Never | <input type="checkbox"/> |

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| Call-in | |
| Is the decision eligible for Call-in? | Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> |

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| 1.0 | Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues |
| 1.1 | To consider the Notice of Motion in relation to the Armed Forces Covenant which was agreed by Council at its meeting on 9 th January 2025, subject to equality screening pursuant to Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. |

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| 2.0 | Recommendation |
| 2.1 | The Committee is asked to consider the contents of this report and determine whether it wishes to adopt the Notice of Motion to sign up to the Armed Forces Covenant. |
| 3.0 | Main Report |
| | <u>Key Issues</u> |
| 3.1 | <p>The Committee will recall that Alderman Lawlor, seconded by Alderman McCullough, proposed the following Notice of Motion at the Standards and Business Committee on 21st November 2024:</p> <p>“That this Council recognises the unique skills that are held by Armed Forces service leavers; recognises that many veterans can face disadvantages compared to the general population, arising from military life, when accessing services and as such, this Council commits to signing up to the Armed Forces Covenant immediately.”</p> |
| 3.2 | Pursuant to Standing Order 13 (n), the Standards and Business Committee referred the Notice of Motion directly to Strategic Policy & Resources Committee in order for officers to ascertain what is involved and to ascertain what, if any, the Council’s commitments may be in signing the Covenant. At its meeting on 13 th December 2024, the Committee rejected the notice of motion. |
| 3.3 | At Council on 8 th January 2025, this decision was overturned and Council agreed to adopt the notice of motion, subject to equality screening. In accordance with Standing Orders, this report sets out detail of the commitments in the Armed Forces Covenant, to include any financial implications, together with outcome of the draft equality screening exercise. |
| 3.4 | <p>The Armed Forces Covenant can be found at the following link:</p> <p>https://www.armedforcescovenant.gov.uk/</p> |
| 3.5 | The Covenant sets out two principles. The first is that those who serve in the Armed Forces, whether Regular or Reserve, those who have served in the past, and their families, should face no disadvantage compared to other citizens in the provision of public and commercial services. The second is that special consideration is appropriate in some cases, especially for those who have given most such as the injured and the bereaved. |
| 3.6 | The intention of the Covenant primarily relates to issues around housing, education or healthcare. The Armed Forces Act 2006 is a UK wide Act which imposes a statutory duty |

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| 3.7 | <p>upon specified bodies to have due regard to principles of the Covenant. Specified bodies are those authorities responsible for certain relevant housing, education or healthcare functions.</p> <p>The draft equality screening report concludes that the signing of the Covenant is likely to have a minor impact on the basis of religious belief and political opinion on both the promotion of equality of opportunity grounds and good relations grounds. This is on the basis that the legacy of the conflict is still very much evident in some areas throughout Belfast and the signing of the Armed Forces Covenant may be a divisive issue.</p> |
| 3.8 | <p>As such the decision has been screened out at this time. However any future decisions about resource allocation based on signing the Covenant would require an updated screening exercise to be undertaken.</p> |
| | <p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> |
| 3.9 | <p>None associated with this report as the Motion only commits to signing the Armed Forces Covenant.</p> |
| | <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications</u></p> |
| 3.10 | <p>These are set out above.</p> |
| 4.0 | <p>Appendices - Documents Attached</p> |
| | <p>None.</p> |