



North Tyneside Council

Reference: FOI0952

Request:

I would like to know:

1. Whether North Tyneside Borough Council has an elected Armed Forces Covenant Champion, and if so, how long they have been in the role.

Yes, North Tyneside Borough Council has an elected Armed Forces Covenant Champion, Councillor Gary Bell who has been in this role since June 2013.

2. Furthermore, in reference to the 2016 'Our Community – Our Covenant; Improving the delivery of local Covenant pledges' report, (<https://www.fim-trust.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Our-Community-Our-Covenant-Report-30.08.16.pdf>) which states:

“Around half of councils report that they have an action plan, but only 20 per cent say that the plan is active”

I would like to know whether North Tyneside Borough Council has an action plan.

If yes: I would like to know the details of the plan, whether it is active, and if it is monitored and reviewed.

The new North Tyneside Armed Forces Covenant was signed by members of the North Tyneside Armed Forces Forum in October 2018. At that time an action plan template was distributed to the members of the forum. Responses from members of the Forum are currently being collated and checked. The Forum will review and approve the action plan at future meetings. The agreed action plan will be published on the North Tyneside Council website once approved by the Forum.

A copy of the blank template is attached along with a copy of the North Tyneside Armed Forces Covenant.

3. Has North Tyneside Borough Council established an armed forces covenant forum (which includes military representatives, charities and council members)? Or is there a mechanism for co-operation at a regional level in Tyne and Wear?

North Tyneside Borough Council Armed Force Forum was established in 2012. North Tyneside Borough Council leads and maintains a large outward facing Armed Forces Forum with representation from the council, (Housing, Leisure, Adult Social Care and Public Health Depts), AF charities (SSAFA, RBL, Op Veteran, Forward Assist) and public sector (Northumbria Police & NHS NT CCG), private sector (Capita, Morrisons, and Tyne Met College) partners and the local military (RN, Army & RAF). Having signed the AF Community Covenant in 2012 the Council and our partners pledged their support once again with a new Armed Forces Covenant signing in October 2018 reinforcing our support to the AF Community.

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North Tyneside Borough Council is also an active member of the Regional Armed Forces Forum hosted by Northumberland County Council.

4. I would also like to know whether North Tyneside Borough Council has any schemes specifically aimed at the veteran community (e.g employment, healthcare & housing schemes).

* North Tyneside was the first Local Authority to implement a guaranteed interview scheme for those who have served in the Armed Forces; as long as the applicant meets the requirements of the job specification in line with the Authority's recruitment policy and meets the essential and desirable criteria.

* A Priority Housing Band 2 is awarded if someone who is either in the Armed Forces or has been a former member and their application is made within 5 years of discharge; or the applicant is a bereaved spouse or civil partner of a deceased member of the Armed Forces and they are having to leave the Services' Family Accommodation following the death of their spouse or partner; or the applicant is a serving or former member of the Reserve Forces and needs to move because of a serious injury, medical condition or disability sustained as a result of being in the forces. If the applicant is still in service, the Band 2 priority will be awarded 6 months prior to the date they are required to leave. This priority will also apply for those leaving of their own accord.

* The Council has funded their own Armed Forces Outreach worker to work alongside the AF Champion and Lead Officer within the Housing dept and who advocates for defence and now promotes the AFC and ERS to organisations she meets.

* Members of the armed forces, veterans and reservists living in North Tyneside can apply for priority ease EXTRA card which gives the card holder the biggest discounts available on all activities in our indoor sports facilities.