

These minutes are draft, subject to confirmation at the next meeting of the sub-committee

Housing Sub-Committee

23 September 2019

Present: Councillor A Newman (Chair)
Councillors L Bell, L Darke, John Hunter, E
Leonard Parker, P McIntyre, A Percy, M
Reynolds, M Thirlaway and M Wilson

HO7/09/19 Apologies

There were no apologies for absence received.

HO8/09/19 Substitute Members

There were no substitute members appointed.

HO9/09/19 Declarations of Interest

Councillor A Newman declared a non-registerable personal interest in Item 5, Armed Forces Officer, as he was a veteran.

Councillor E Parker Leonard declared a registerable personal interest in Item 5, Armed Forces Officer, as her partner worked for Shelter.

HO10/09/19 Minutes

It was **agreed** that the minutes of the meeting held on 22 July 2019 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

HO11/09/19 Armed Forces Officer

The sub-committee received a report which provided an overview of the support that was being provided to the Armed Forces Community in North Tyneside. It was noted that in October 2018 North Tyneside Council employed a permanent, full time Armed Forces Officer to strengthen delivery of the Armed Forces Covenant across North Tyneside for the serving and veteran armed forces community. A major aspect of the role was to enable the direct provision of support to those who serve or had served in the armed forces, and their families.

It was noted that the definition of a veteran was anyone who had served in the military for one day. This definition was set out by the Armed Forces Covenant which North Tyneside Council signed in 2012. Previously, the council had been affiliated to the Armed Forces Outreach Scheme which relied on grants from the Armed Forces Covenant on a regular basis. North Tyneside Council recognised the need to support their Armed Forces Community and the importance of having continuity with this support, and decided to fund their own Armed Forces Officer.

The Armed Forces officer worked with services across the authority and with partners to ensure that members of the Armed Forces Community were treated fairly and that North Tyneside Council continued to honour the commitment set out in the Armed Forces Covenant. The Armed Forces Officer acted as a single point of contact for all armed forces

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related enquiries into the Council and coordinated services in accordance with the objectives of the Armed Forces Covenant.

A number of activities were undertaken to help achieve the objectives of the Armed Forces Covenant. Case work was referred from the Armed Forces Charity and support would be provided to existing and potential council residents with the clearing rent and/or council tax arrears. Support was also provided to those at risk of eviction from a private tenancy and help with brown and white goods. It was explained that individual assessments would be carried out to determine if people were eligible for support and any arrears paid would be done so from funds from military charities.

In relation to homelessness, it was explained that, since October 2018, 18 veterans had presented to the authority as homeless or at risk of being homeless. Of those 18, 2 had gone into supported accommodation, 2 secured a private tenancy and 5 a council tenancy. The other applicants had moved out of the area, dropped out of the service or reconciled with their partner. It was noted that those leaving the army, and for the following 5 years, would be allocated band 2 (high housing need) on the housing register.

The sub-committee asked if the role of the Armed Forces Officer was as a coordinator or to be directly involved in the provision of support services. It was explained that the role covered both aspects, where sometimes signposting of other services was required and other times there would be direct involvement in case work. It was noted that the officer in the role had developed good working relationships with armed forces charities. Since the role was developed in October 2018, there had been 106 referrals to the Armed Forces Officer.

Members were informed that North Council Tyneside led and maintained a large outward facing armed forces forum with representation from armed forces charities, public sector organisations including Northumbria Police, private sector companies including Morrisons and the local military. Having signed the Armed Forces Community Covenant in 2012 the Forum pledged their support once again with a new Armed Forces Covenant in October 2018 reinforcing support to the armed forces community.

The Chair thanked the Armed Forces Officer for the information presented to the sub-committee.

It was **agreed** to note the report.

HO12/09/19 Tenancy Agreement Sub-group

The sub-committee received a report which detailed arrangements for the establishment of a sub-group to undertake a piece of work in relation to tenancy agreements. The sub-committee was recommended to agree the establishment of a sub-group, appoint the membership, including a lead member and agree a draft scope for the study.

At its meeting on 22 July 2019, Housing Sub-committee considered a report related to the establishment of a work programme for 2019/20. Members were asked to put forward topics for inclusion in the work programme, including any suggestions that could be the subject of an in-depth investigation. It was suggested that it would be useful to look at tenancy agreements, to see if they were delivering the best outcomes for the Council and tenants.

It was suggested that the sub-group be established with a maximum of 5/6 members. This membership could be drawn from the membership of the sub-committee or be extended out to all non-executive members. It was anticipated that the first meeting would take place

in late October/early November, with the purpose of meeting with lead officers to agree a final scope, work place and timescales for completion.

A draft scope for the study was appended to the report. Members highlighted that they felt the focus of the study should be on the wording of the agreement and the options available to the council when the agreement is broken. Cllrs M Thirlaway, M Reynolds, J Hunter and E Parker Leonard volunteered to serve on the sub-group.

It was **agreed** to 1) appoint Cllr M Thirlaway as lead member of the sub-group and 2) approve the draft scope as appended to the report.

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Councillor A Newman, Chair of Housing Sub-committee