



Glasgow City Council

City Administration Committee

**Report by Councillor Greg Hepburn, Council Business Manager
and Convener for Open Government**

Item 3

29th September 2022

Contact: Martin Booth

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Council Armed Forces and Veterans Champion

Purpose of Report:

To seek approval from committee to appoint Councillor Alex Wilson as Armed Forces and Veterans Champion.

Recommendations:

Committee is asked to:

1. note the summary of current support for Veterans and Serving Personnel;
2. note the role of the Armed Forces and Veterans Champion and record the Council's appreciation of the work undertaken by former Councillor Phil Greene as the current champion and Bailie Malcolm Cunning as the inaugural champion; and
3. approve the appointment of Councillor Alex Wilson as Armed Forces and Veterans Champion for the 2022-2027 council term.

Ward No(s):

Citywide: ✓

Local member(s) advised: Yes No consulted: Yes No

1. Background

- 1.1 In November 2011 Glasgow City Council were the first Local Authority to sign the Armed Forces Community Covenant (AFCC) and pledge to provide local support to Service personnel and their families across the country. As part of this pledge and commitment to support veterans, all Local Authorities across the UK were asked by Government to appoint an Armed Forces and Veterans Champion. Bailie Malcolm Cunning was appointed for Glasgow City Council following his election in 2012, setting a high standard for how the role was carried out and shaping its invaluable contribution to the sector.
- 1.2 To mark our continued commitment, we signed a new strengthened armed forces covenant with our military at a civic reception at the City Chambers to mark Armed Forces Day on Saturday, 24th June 2017.
- 1.3 Glasgow City Council's most recent Armed Forces and Veterans Champion, former Councillor Phil Greene, took on the commitment in 2017 and the pledge contained in the Armed Forces Community Covenant continuing to excel in the role to help support and address specific issues affecting the Armed Forces community locally; from health and education, to housing and employment.
- 1.4 All 32 Scottish Local Authorities have now signed the Armed Forces Community Covenant and have appointed an Armed Forces and Veterans Champion.
- 1.5 This report to Committee seeks approval to appoint Councillor Alex Wilson as the new Armed Forces and Veterans Champion. The appointment will be for the 2022-2027 council term.

2 Role of the Armed Forces Champion

- 2.1 The role of the 'champion' was defined following the signing of the AFCC to ensure that we, as a local authority, deliver on our commitments to the armed forces community and resolve any blockages in delivery of services to our veterans and positive benefits have been delivered as a result.
- 2.2 The main roles and responsibilities undertaken by the Armed Forces and Veterans Champion within Glasgow City Council are as follows:-
 - Act as main point of contact for constituents, partners and other elected members issues linked to veterans and seek out where amendments can be made within local government to alleviate these issues such as Discretionary Housing Payment for serving military families.
 - Assist the Council Leader to agree the principals of the Armed Forces Community Covenant (AFCC) on behalf of the Council.

- Lead a working group (Firm Base) of partner veterans' organisations operating within the city to assist in delivering against the AFCC commitments. Chair regular (quarterly) meetings of the Firm Base Group.
- Provide support and political direction to projects emerging from the Firm Base Group.
- Holding to account member organisations to deliver against commitments.
- Challenge council departments & Arm's Length Organisations to identify opportunities to support veterans such as recruitment, provision of housing and other support as appropriate.
- Support the development, ongoing provision and promotion of the Glasgow's Helping Heroes Service.
- Contribute to annual performance reporting and strategic development for Glasgow's Helping Heroes' Service.
- Provide direction on and act as sponsor to any funding bids submitted by GCC to veterans organisations such as LIBOR fund.
- Promote GCCs approach to delivering against the AFCC to local authorities across the UK.
- Receive visiting dignitaries linked to the armed forces such as the Scottish Veterans Commissioner.
- Co-host ceremonies for veterans and Ministry of Defence such as City of Glasgow's Festival of Remembrance.
- Act as figurehead for council funded services to veterans such as Glasgow's Veterans Employment Programme.

2.3 The Armed Forces and Veterans Champion is supported with these responsibilities by officers from the Council's Financial Inclusion team based within Chief Executives..

3 Glasgow City Council Current Commitment and Support for Veterans

3.1 In 2009, GCC developed Glasgow's Helping Heroes (GHH) as a one stop shop for veterans and their families who live or are looking to relocate to Glasgow to secure Housing, Employment and Training advice, receive help with financial issues, benefits, debt, money advice and access to health, mental health and addiction services.

3.2 Since 2010 GHH have delivered the following outcomes for veterans and their families:-

- Provided support to more than 2,400 veterans;
- Assisted with housing for 1,628 veterans and launched a tenancy sustainment programme;
- Helped 1039 veterans gain employment or training opportunities;
- Supported over 773 veterans access Health and Addiction services;
- Delivered £2.7million in financial gains for veterans and their families.

- 3.3 A number of key initiatives for service personnel, veterans, their families and carers have been developed from the Firm Base Group, many of which have now been mainstreamed, these include:
- Greater Glasgow & Clyde NHS Directorate have agreed direct referral pathways from GHH to NHS mental health services without the need for prior assessment by NHS primary care or General Practitioner, accelerating and increasing access to mental health services.
 - Coming Home Centres have been developed in conjunction with Churches in Glasgow to help veterans overcome social isolation.
 - Housing Associations in Glasgow have agreed housing nomination rights for veterans in securing mainstream housing and homes with special adaptations such as wheelchair access.
- 3.4 During the pandemic, although the front line work carried out by Firmbase Members such as Glasgow's Helping Heroes and The Coming Home Centre increased in terms of demand the strategic group chaired by the Armed Forces Champion was placed on hold. Many of the Firmbase members have recently requested that the group reconvene therefore the appointment of a new Chair & Armed Forces Champion would be welcomed.

4 Ongoing Commitment

- 4.1 To mark the Council's support to veterans the Lord Provost, on behalf of the city, attended an event to celebrate the 10th Anniversary of Glasgow's Helping Heroes on Thursday, 23rd June 2022. In recognition of the sacrifice our Armed Forces make on our behalf the Lord Provost confirmed at the event that Glasgow City Council will continue to provide funding and work in partnership with SSAFA Armed Forces Charity to deliver the Glasgow's Helping Heroes Service in 2022.
- Remembrance Sunday, November
 - Armed Forces Day (George Square / City Chambers) June
 - Armed Forces Week – visits to AF organisations - June
 - Merchant Navy Day, September
- 4.2 The Lord Provost, also celebrated the success of a new report which has been published examining the Social Return on Investment (SROI) generated by Glasgow's Helping Heroes (GHH) partnership between SSAFA, the Armed Forces charity and Glasgow City Council.
- 4.3 The independent report: "Glasgow's Helping Heroes – a vital service enabling our Armed Forces community to thrive" was funded by the Forces in Mind Trust (FiMT) and carried out by Dr Steve Rolfe and a team of researchers from the University of Stirling and Glasgow Caledonian University.

- 4.4 The person-centred service, which supports vulnerable members of the Armed Forces Community across Glasgow, delivers £6.63 of Social Return on Investment (SROI) for every £1 invested in support services. The findings illustrated a range of SROI values from analysis of data from pre-Covid years indicated that the social value figure in 'normal' conditions would be approximately £11.68.5.

5. Proposed appointment of Armed Forces and Veterans Champion

- 5.1 It is proposed that Councillor Alex Wilson is appointed as Armed Forces and Veterans Champion for the 2022-2027 council term.

- 5.2 The following is a short biography of Councillor Alex Wilson:-

Alex has served as a councillor representing the Scottish National Party in the Cardonald (formerly Craigton) ward of the city since August 2015, serving on a variety of committees and as Convener of Licensing and Regulatory Committee since 2017.

He has worked in the Benefits and Welfare system for over 30 years and has vast experience in this area enabling him to use his in depth knowledge to assist his constituents and would bring this skill to support armed forces personnel and veterans as well as the charities that serve them.

Alex is a carer for his father in law who served in the Royal Navy and is an avid listener to his many recollections of his time on the Suez canal, the Middle East and training at the Portsmouth Naval base. His family has a real connection to the forces with many of them serving, including his grandfathers who both served during the second World War.

This experience influenced Alex to seek out and actively engage with veterans groups in and around his ward since becoming a councillor. Groups such as Glasgow's Helping Heroes, Community Veterans Support and Allen Clarke's Veterans' Craftsmen have enabled him to see first hand the excellent work being carried out and how the role of the Armed Forces and Veterans Champion can support them in their mission.

6. Conclusion

1. This proposal supports Glasgow City Council's commitment to deliver against the AFCC.

7. Policy and Resource implications

Resource Implications:

Financial: None

Legal: None

Personnel: Support provided within existing resources

Procurement: None

Council Strategic Plan: This proposal is consistent with the Council's strategic aim of: A City that looks after its vulnerable people

Equality Impacts:

EQIA carried out: No

Sustainability Impacts:

Environmental: None

Social: None

Economic: None

8. Recommendations

Committee is asked to:

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