

## **Community Covenant and UK Armed Forces within Midlothian**

### **Report by John Blair, Director, Resources**

#### **1 Purpose of Report**

The council has received a letter from Mrs Heather Millar, Scottish Government Defence Policy Unit regarding the needs of the Armed Forces.

The letter requested that as a signatory to the Community Covenant, Midlothian Council should reflect and act upon meeting the needs of the Armed Forces community across its area. This demonstrates a measure of the level of respect and admiration in which the Armed Forces are held and help ensure their integration into the communities across Scotland.

This report sets out a proposal relating to access to sports facilities.

#### **2 Background**

Some local authorities across the UK Armed Forces personnel and their immediate families enjoy reduced admission prices to Council owned or contracted sports facilities.

It has been suggested that this particular policy could be adopted on a Scotland wide basis to ensure that there is no change in admission pricing arrangements as and when service personnel and their families move from base to base. The Defence Policy Unit invited Midlothian Council to consider whether Midlothian might offer such a privilege to the Armed Forces community within its area as a tangible demonstration of the benefit arising from the Community Covenant.

Through discussions with colleagues from Scottish Leisure Networking Group (SLING) regarding discounted rates for Armed Forces it became clear that some of the group members are now offering their corporate rates to the Armed Forces while other members are still considering their position. There are 22 local authorities and trusts representatives within the networking group. There was an understanding that it would be useful if members adopted a co-ordinated approach to any discounts offered to the armed forces. It was agreed that a harmonisation of prices across all local authorities would be a worthwhile exercise but highly complex therefore a corporate rate offered to the Armed Forces for those who wished to be involved might be the best way forward.

A copy of the letter is enclosed as an Appendix to this report.

### 3 Report Implications

#### 3.1 Resource

There are no resource implications other than the existing Tone Zone memberships available to Armed Forces personnel would be discounted to corporate rates.

#### 3.2 Risk

There are no perceived risks with introducing this discounted rate based on the Council's corporate rate.

#### 3.3 Single Midlothian Plan and Business Transformation

Themes addressed in this report:

- ☐ Community safety
- ☐ Adult health, care and housing
- ☐ Getting it right for every Midlothian child
- ☒ Improving opportunities in Midlothian
- ☐ Sustainable growth
- ☐ Business transformation and Best Value
- ☐ None of the above

#### 3.4 Impact on Performance and Outcomes

It is proposed to allow Sport and Leisure to offer corporate rates to members of the Armed Forces when they sign up to Midlothian Council's, Fitness and Leisure Centres.

Using the Platinum membership level as an example the Armed forces personnel will not be charged the normal £27.05 joining fee and will pay a reduced charge of £34.10 per month to use any of Sport and Leisure's leisure centre's gym, swimming pool, spa facilities or any of the 250 classes held every week across the county.

At the moment other users are paying £42.20 a month for the all inclusive membership fee.

A summary of membership options is shown in the table below:-

<b>Charges</b>	<b>Platinum</b>	<b>Gold</b>	<b>Silver</b>	<b>Bronze</b>	<b>Joining Fee</b>
Standard Individual Rate	£42.20	£36.25	£28.15	£25.40	£27.05
Armed Forces Corporate Rate (no joining fee)	£34.10	£28.15	£22.70	£20.60	Nil

To encourage Armed Forces personnel to use Council leisure facilities, it is proposed to offer a two, three or four month membership as serving personnel tend to only be back at base for several months before moving on to military operations elsewhere.

### **3.5 Ensuring Equalities**

Expressing support for this extension of the Council's Corporate Tone Zone scheme is consistent with Midlothian Council's aim to support the Community Covenant. This also provides an example of Council services being able to adapt and offer a beneficial deal to members of our extended community.

### **3.6 IT Issues**

There will be no IT issues arising from this report.

## **4 Recommendations**

Council is invited to note that Sport and Leisure intends to:-

- (a) Offer corporate rates to members of the Armed Forces and their families who will be eligible for a discounted membership when they sign up to Midlothian Council's Fitness and Leisure Centres.
- (b) Offer two, three and four month only memberships to service personnel to recognise the nature of Armed Forces deployments.

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**Background Papers:**

### **Declaration Box**

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**Title of Report:** *Report on Cost for Provision of Eight Allotments at the former Hopefield Primary School*

**Meeting Presented to:** *Council*

**Author of Report:**

*I confirm that I have undertaken the following actions before submitting this report to the Council Secretariat (Check boxes to confirm):-*

- ☐ *All resource implications have been addressed. Any financial and HR implications have been approved by the Head of Finance and Human Resources.*
- ☐ *All risk implications have been addressed.*
- ☐ *All other report implications have been addressed.*
- ☐ *My Director has endorsed the report for submission to the Council Secretariat.*

*For Cabinet reports, please advise the Council Secretariat if the report has an education interest. This will allow the report to be located on the Cabinet agenda among the items in which the Religious Representatives are entitled to participate.*

*Likewise, please advise the Council Secretariat if any report for Midlothian Council has an education interest. The Religious Representatives are currently entitled to attend meetings of the Council in a non-voting observer capacity, but with the right to speak (but not vote) on any education matter under consideration, subject always to observing the authority of the Chair.*