



**REPORT TO: EDUCATION, CHILDREN'S AND LEISURE SERVICES
COMMITTEE ON 19 APRIL 2023**

SUBJECT: MORAY'S DANDELION PROJECT

**BY: DEPUTE CHIEF EXECUTIVE (EDUCATION, COMMUNITIES AND
ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT)**

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 To inform the Committee of funding that has been secured following a bid to the Armed Forces Covenant Trust Fund.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to the Committee in terms of the Council's Scheme of Administrative section (III) (D) (1) relating to functions of the Council as Education Authority within the terms of relevant legislation with regard to nursery, primary, secondary, and further education; community learning and development and to determine the Council's policies in regard thereto.

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 It is recommended that Committee:

- (i) **note funding of £370K has been received from the Armed Forces Covenant Trust Fund for the Dandelion project which aims to ensure that all forces children have the right conditions and environment in their school setting to thrive whatever challenges their serving parent's military commitments may generate and agrees to implement the project arrangements of the funding bid as set out in this report.**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 In March 2020 funding of £370,000 was confirmed to support forces children in Moray. This charitable funding was allocated in order that a bespoke support network for Forces' children in school within the authority could be established. The was termed the Dandelion Project and its aim was to ensure that all forces children had the right conditions and environment in their school setting to thrive whatever challenges their serving parent's military commitments would perhaps generate.

- 3.2 The project, which was to be financed for 3 years by the Armed Forces Covenant Trust, was originally intended to enable a dedicated team of staff to be employed to provide in school support as well as provide an opportunity for bespoke training for school staff to ensure a better understanding of the complex nuances of service life.
- 3.3 The backdrop for such a programme was the significant military footprint in the local area in 2020 with around 2,500 personnel based at RAF Lossiemouth and 670 at Kinloss Barracks. From school census information at that time it was identified that overall 2200 families accompany these personnel and 48 out of the 53 schools in the local authority area have children from military families in attendance.
- 3.4 The impact of Covid-19 from March 2020 onwards in our local authority area was as significant as it was around the United Kingdom and further afield, and a delay to the project was inevitable as resources were redirected to operational requirements at the time to ensure alternative service provision was in place throughout the council service areas.
- 3.5 The situation for military families in schools within Moray has not changed significantly during the intervening period from March 2020 – October 2022. Both RAF Lossiemouth and Kinloss Barracks continue to see both growth and movement in terms of service structure and personnel as well as capability transfer including the introduction of the Wedgetail to the Lossiemouth base.
- 3.6 The timing is therefore now considered to be appropriate in terms of re-introducing the Dandelion Project to the staff and pupils within Moray but adapted and re-engineered to support the current climate and the re-evaluated school requirements. Partners involved in the initial proposal have been part of the discussion process at this time and recognise that some elements of the initial proposal have now moved on as a result of Covid -19 and with the new technology that has been put in place for all service users but particularly in schools in terms of IT capability.
- 3.7 The wider implications of supporting families has also become more complex as we see an increase in the number of children transitioning to Moray with additional support needs. This requires significant input at all levels to ensure that any child moving school as part of a military posting has access to the appropriate resources and infrastructure to succeed.
- 3.8 Given these challenges, the proposal was updated and resubmitted in October 2022 to reflect this and an award was made as outlined below with funding for a period of up to 3 years starting as and when the new Education Support Officer is in post:
- Education Support Officer (Forces Families) who would work directly from Moray Council HQ , line managed by the Business Support Team Manager and supporting the wider Education team.
 - This role would be a highly visible and publicised single Point of Contact for all Armed Forces Families - both those due to arrive and those already in situ – providing bespoke support and assistance to remove any barriers encountered.

- Employed directly by Moray Council, there would be a close working relationship with the welfare teams at both RAF Lossiemouth and 39 Engineers Kinloss with referrals coming direct from Armed Forces Families, via respective welfare teams or via schools at point of delivery.
- The grade of post reflects the experience and seniority required to assess unique family circumstances, to credibly interface with key stakeholders including the school placing request allocation team, the Additional Support.
- Needs assessment team, 3rd sector support agencies and directly into individual school establishments.
- The Education Support Officer post holder would be instrumental in raising the standards of understanding and support offered by schools to the Armed Forces Family, by delivering training to all staff on the needs of the Armed Forces Family. This training will be available online across Moray Schools and will lead to Forces Family Friendly accreditation and the enduring changes that the original proposal envisioned.

3.9 The establishment of a single post will reduce the challenges of interacting with numerous departments and the potential for conflicting advice or information. By being embedded within the wider Education / Business Support Team, the new post holder will have a broader understanding of education across Moray and be able to direct families towards other non-educational sources of support or interest also.

3.10 All funding for the Education Support Officer post will be allocated to the council and will sit within the Education Resources and Communities service and will be managed by the Business Support Team Manager. Administration duties will be supported from within the Business Support Team on a match funded basis.

4. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a) Corporate Plan and 10 Year Plan (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP))

Reflective of priorities within the Corporate Plan with particular regard to (3) provide a sustainable education service aiming for excellence and (4) day to day service delivery in line with council values of ambitious, improving and responsive. With regards to the 10 Year Plan (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan LOIP), (2) building a better future for our children and young people in Moray through equity of learning experience offered across our schools.

(b) Policy and Legal

As an employer who fully supports the Armed Forces Covenant, Moray Council acknowledge and understand that those who serve or who have served in the armed forces, and their families, should be treated with fairness and respect in the communities, economy and society they serve.

(c) Financial implications

The total cost of the project for the period of three years has been supported as a grant (£370,000) from the Armed Forces Covenant Trust and therefore there are no financial implications for the authority. The grant funding will sit within Education and be managed by the Business Support team Manager.

(d) Risk Implications

There is no risk as a result of the project being implemented. The greater risk would be ensuring appropriate support was in place for forces families moving in to the area if no appointment was able to be made. Administrative support was included as a match funding element of the original bid and will be provided from within existing resources for the period of the project as per the allocated grant. As noted below this can be accommodated given the wider pressures the new role will support. The successful applicant would be appointed by Moray Council and so all employment risks sit with the council, with the contract confirming the parameters of employment to this temporary funded post.

(e) Staffing Implications

This would be offered on a secondment basis for a period of 23 months initially. By supporting forces families moving in to the area, this new post will alleviate some of the workload pressures currently experienced by the Business Support Team Manager who currently supports these often extended conversations alongside her normal remit.

(f) Property

This is a full time position that would require access to officers within education as well as the Business Support Team. Therefore a desk space within the current Business Support Team room allocation would have to be secured. Given that this is an additional post, IT equipment would also be required for the successful candidate but this is fully funded through the original bid funding.

(g) Equalities/Socio Economic Impact

There is no requirement for an equality impact or socio economic impact assessment to be carried out.

(h) Climate Change and Biodiversity Impacts

There are no climate change issues arising as a result of this report.

(i) Consultations

The Head of Education (Chief Education Officer), the Head of Education Resources and Communities, the Chief Financial Officer, the Equal Opportunities Officer, and Committee Services Officer have been consulted and are in agreement with the contents of this report as regards their respective areas of responsibilities.

5. CONCLUSION

- 5.1 Committee is asked to note funding of £370K has been received from the Armed Forces Covenant Trust Fund for the Dandelion project which aims to ensure that all forces children have the right conditions and environment in their school setting to thrive whatever challenges their serving parent's military commitments may generate and agrees to implement the project arrangements of the funding bid as set out in this report.**

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Background Papers:
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