

HOW TO MANAGE VOLUNTEERS

Local Government, particularly at parish and town council level, relies on the commitment, time and energy of unpaid volunteers to benefit of the local community. From the Elected Members to litter-pickers, playground inspectors, newsletter deliverers, heritage centre guides or civic and ceremonial positions many volunteers bring skills and experience to their community, so the absence of volunteers would make council life a poorer place and could render the activities and services impossible to run.

Why do people volunteer?

People have different motivations when offering their time for volunteering. Some see it as an act of citizenship – giving something back to their locality and driven by altruism. Others offer their services because they think that they can add skills, knowledge or experience that will enhance the organisation that currently exists. Some seek recognition whilst others are in search of friendship, fun or a sense of belonging. In challenging economic circumstances where the job market is tight some people find that volunteering and gaining experience in an unpaid position helps them enhance their CV and become a more attractive candidate for future employers.

Why do councils engage volunteers?

Volunteers can offer skills, ideas, flexibility and affordability to councils over and above their permanent workforce. They can also enhance the community engagement within a village or town.

What do councils need to consider when engaging volunteers?

The main consideration is that a volunteer is **not an employee** and therefore does not enjoy the rights under employment law (such as unfair dismissal, paid holiday leave, sick pay, redundancy, notice, grievance process) but neither does the volunteer have many of the obligations established by an employment contract (such as the need to give notice, timekeeping or attendance, the need to attend training etc.). The challenge for councils is to ensure that they treat their volunteers with respect and support to ensure that the loyal, enthusiastic and skilled volunteers are retained by the council. Many aspects of being a good employer can extend to effective management of volunteers. To that end the following draft Volunteer Policy may be of assistance:

VOLUNTEER POLICY

1. INTRODUCTION

The Parish Council exists to focus on being an outward-looking organisation, putting into practice our values and objectives through engaging with the residents of the community and key partners to improve the quality of life for our residents and the experience of those who work in and visit our town.

2. PRINCIPLES

The Volunteering Policy is underpinned by the following principles:

- The Parish Council will ensure that volunteers are properly integrated into the organisation;
- The Parish Council does not aim to introduce volunteers to replace paid staff;
- The Parish Council expects that staff at all levels will work positively with volunteers.

3. PRACTICAL GUIDELINES

The policy will deal with practical aspects of the involvement of volunteers.

3.1 RECRUITMENT

All prospective volunteers will be interviewed to assess their current skills and suitability for current/vacant volunteer roles, taking into consideration the work the volunteer would like to undertake and how best their potential might be realised.

3.2 VOLUNTEER WORK OUTLINES

After consultation, each volunteer will be given details of the specific role they will be undertaking and establish what the parish council undertakes to provide for them.

3.3 EXPENSES

All volunteers will have their travel and other out of pocket expenses reimbursed.

3.4 INDUCTION AND TRAINING

All volunteers will receive an induction into The Parish Council and the role they will undertake. Training will be provided as appropriate.

3.5 SUPPORT

All volunteers will have a named person as their main contact. They will be provided with regular supervision to feedback on progress, plan future development and discuss any problems in confidence

3.6 THE VOLUNTEER'S VOICE

Volunteers are encouraged to express their views about matters concerning the organisation and may be invited to staff meetings or in confidence as appropriate

3.7 INSURANCE

All volunteers are covered by The Parish Council's insurance policy whilst they are on the premises or engaged in work on The Parish Council's behalf.

3.8 HEALTH AND SAFETY

Volunteers are covered by The Parish Council's Health and Safety Policy, a copy of the policy is available on request. Risk assessments will be undertaken of any duties any volunteer is asked to undertake and where appropriate specialist equipment will be provided.

3.9 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

The Parish Council operates an equal opportunities policy in respect of both paid staff and volunteers. A copy of the policy is available on request.

3.10 SAFEGUARDING

The Parish Council operates a Safeguarding policy. Volunteers must agree to a DBS check if their role involved working with children or vulnerable adults. The council may reasonably decline volunteering offers if there are concerns about suitability raised by a DBS or other reference check. A copy of the policy is available on request.

3.11 PROBLEM SOLVING

We aim to identify and solve problems at the earliest possible stage and encourage volunteers to speak to their nominated contact about concerns if they arise.

3.12 CONFIDENTIALITY

Volunteers will be bound by the same requirements for confidentiality as paid staff.

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