



People volunteer for a variety of reasons:

- To socialise,
- To put something back into the community,
- To regain or learn new employment skills,
- To occupy their time.

In public services, volunteers bring a range of expertise to particular tasks or projects. Their expertise should complement the skills of staff. Often, volunteers can develop a range of support that cannot be provided solely by paid staff. The Town Council welcomes volunteers.

Principles and Values

This policy will:

- Let volunteers know how we will ensure fairness and consistency,
- Enable volunteers to know where they stand,
- Offer security in terms of knowing how they will be treated,
- Help staff and volunteers understand each other's roles.

Who is a Volunteer?

Volunteering is:

An activity that involves spending time, unpaid, doing something that aims to benefit the environment or someone (individuals or groups) other than, or in addition to, close relatives.

[see central government's volunteering code of good practice, "Compact"]

A volunteer from the community is therefore a member of the public who undertakes tasks, which complement the work of paid staff in achieving our aims, on a long term basis. Anyone who assists staff on a casual or "one-off" basis, for example, laying tables, washing dishes, etc. is not a volunteer in terms of this policy, but is a helper. Where the participation of local people is actively sought, such as for a consultation, those involved are regarded as involved persons or consultees, not volunteers within the terms of this policy.

Recruitment and Retention

Anyone offering their services to the Town Council as a volunteer should be asked to complete an application form. If suitable, they should be interviewed, and if the volunteer will be working with vulnerable service users, (for instance, on or near the playgrounds) both references and a Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check will be needed. Only relevant information will be requested from applicants during the volunteer recruitment process. Applicants and volunteers will be told why any requested information is needed.

If the Town Council decides that a person is not suitable for the volunteering role they have applied for, or if they become unsuitable for a volunteer role, they should be told why. They should also be advised of other opportunities, as appropriate.

Persons in receipt of benefits are entitled to be a volunteer, but should tell the benefits agency of their voluntary work.

Conflict of Interest

Anyone with a conflict of interest with the Town Council should not be accepted as a volunteer. Where the prospective volunteer has a professional or personal relationship with a member of staff, they should be placed in another department, where possible.

Volunteer Record and Tasks

A volunteer record should be kept. This outlines the tasks allocated (and training given) and undertaken by the volunteer. The tasks should be described clearly in order to set boundaries. However there should also be a degree of flexibility to allow volunteers to develop or re-negotiate their role. Volunteers should not be used to replace departing staff members, nor asked to work in unsafe or unhealthy conditions. Any special clothing or equipment needed will be provided by the Town Council.

Volunteers will not be asked to undertake activities which they do not want to do, or given only repetitive tasks. If a volunteer would like changes to be made to their tasks they are encouraged to discuss this with their supervisor. Volunteer activities (both by individuals and by volunteers as a whole) will be reviewed on a regular basis and changes discussed with all staff and volunteers involved, so that changes can be made where necessary.

Volunteers will be fully supervised and supported, and will be entitled to time off whenever they want it. The Council's health and safety policy applies to volunteers as well as to paid staff.

Induction

Volunteers should have an induction that includes:

- An introduction to their supervisor, other staff and volunteers they will be working with,
- An explanation of the relevant procedures,
- Being shown where the various facilities are,
- Training for their duties, where necessary.

Insurance

Should anything happen to volunteers whilst carrying out their duties, they are covered by the local authority's public liability and employer's liability insurance. Volunteers should not be expected to use their own vehicle for undertaking voluntary duties, such as transporting goods, unless they are appropriately insured and the documentation has been checked.

Equal Opportunities and Diversity

Our commitment to anti-discriminatory practice extends to volunteers. A diverse group of volunteers helps to make the council more welcoming and representative of the community.

Complaints

Volunteers have a right to use the Town Council's complaints procedure, if something causes them concern. Similarly, should a volunteer may act in an inappropriate manner, a complaint may be made about them. Any complaint should be fully investigated, in accordance with this procedure.

Confidentiality

Volunteers are bound by the same confidentiality requirements as paid staff and the application form includes a confidentiality agreement.

Record Keeping

Each volunteer's application form and record will be retained by the Town Council and kept confidential unless there are exceptional circumstances, in which case the volunteer will be advised (where it is lawful to do so). Volunteers have the right to see any personal information held on our files, and to challenge the accuracy of that information.