

**TO: EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE
13 DECEMBER 2017**

**VOLUNTEERING POLICY
Director of Resources**

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To approve the new Volunteering Policy.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 **That the Volunteering Policy at Annex A be approved by Employment Committee.**
- 2.2 **That the payment of expenses be at the discretion of the relevant manager, having regard to the needs of the service**
- 2.3 **That the policy be reviewed in 12 months as the levels of volunteering increase across the Council.**

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The Volunteering Policy sets out the process for recruiting and managing volunteers so that there is a more consistent approach across all council services. As a number of Transformation programmes involve promotion of volunteering it is important and timely to establish a consistent approach across the Council.
- 3.2 The policy will be reviewed after 12 months to see if anything else needs to be added or anything changed, As levels of volunteering will be increasing significantly, the Council's experience in managing volunteers will develop and the policy will need to reflect this.

4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 The council could choose not to adopt a Volunteering Policy, however this would not be consistent with the new narrative set out in the Council Plan which promotes a culture of self-service and residents being able to help themselves to maximise their independence and encourages community involvement and the use of volunteers in the delivery of council services. By implementing its own policy, the council is clearly demonstrating to staff and residents it's commitment to volunteering as part of creating resilient and supportive communities.
- 4.2 The work involved in producing this document has highlighted the inconsistencies across the council in the way we manage our volunteers. This can be confusing and doesn't help promote best practice, for example, if someone volunteers for more than one department and can claim expenses with one of them, but not with the other. This reinforces the need for a council wide framework.

5 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Volunteer Policy

- 5.1 The Council Plan 2015 – 2019 sets out the new narrative and the strategic approach the council has to meet the challenges of the current financial situation. The new narrative is about delivering services that allow us to adapt, innovate, find new ways of working and, in some cases, reduce what we do. Key to this is working with our partners and communities to explore different options for delivering services, promoting self-reliance and empowering residents to take responsibility for their communities.
- 5.2 Volunteering is a key measure of success in two of the Strategic Themes in the Council Plan, namely,
- Value for money - Community involvement and the use of volunteers in the delivery of council services has increased
 - Strong, safe, supportive and self-reliant communities - Levels of volunteering and community action in the borough are increased
- 5.3 Volunteering and active citizenship already make a valuable contribution to services of the council. In a survey carried out in 2014, Volunteer Managers reported using volunteers to deliver their service, totalling around 1,700 volunteers over 12 months. Together, the volunteers gave a total of over 129,500 hours of time, which, costing at £12.20 per hour (the average hourly pay rate excluding overtime for part-time employee in Bracknell Forest in 2011 according to the [ONS website](#)) equates to a contribution of £1,579,900.
- 5.4 In the coming years this will need to grow, with volunteers playing an increasingly important role in helping to enhance and manage the rising demand on services. The Transformation Programme's service reviews are considering the most appropriate sourcing options for services including considering divesting services to communities and increased use of volunteers and community management. The library service is significantly increasing the numbers of volunteers supporting the service and the strategies for delivering other services may rely on greater use of volunteers in the future.
- 5.5 Over the years, each department has developed their own processes for recruiting and managing volunteers and paying expenses and these vary across each department. With the focus on developing a "One Council" culture and with more departments working with volunteers, it seemed timely to produce a policy to provide a consistent approach to ensure that the council is able to work effectively to involve residents in volunteering.
- 5.6 Alongside this policy, we have produced a draft document called 'Guidance for Managers working with Volunteers', which provides practical advice and guidance on how staff can effectively recruit and manage volunteers if it is appropriate to their service.

- 5.7 We have also produced a draft Volunteer Agreement and Volunteer Handbook. The former tells the volunteer what they can expect from the council and the council what they can expect from the volunteer. It is not a legally binding document and does not create an employment relationship in any way. The latter provides useful information to volunteers about volunteering at the council.

Expenses

- 5.8 The policy on paying volunteers expenses is that it is left to the discretion of each manager as to whether volunteers' expenses are paid or not according to the needs of the service. Each service area may have their own policy for determining the circumstances in which expenses will be reimbursed and the procedure for paying them.
- 5.9 The Department for Work & Pensions guidance on expenses clarifies that, volunteers aren't paid for their time as a volunteer, but they may be paid for any out of pocket expenses. These are usually limited to food, drink, travel or any equipment they need to buy. Advice from Involve also emphasises that paying volunteer expenses, including travel, is established best practice.
- 5.10 Some service areas already offer to pay reasonable out of pocket expenses, e.g. Youth Offending and Libraries. However, other service areas, like Parks and Countryside, have adopted a policy of not paying any volunteer expenses, because they use a lot of volunteers and they don't have the budget to pay volunteer expenses and the time involved in administering expenses would negate the benefits of volunteers to the service.
- 5.11 Some service areas offer to pay for a volunteer's expenses to travel to and from their place of volunteering and others don't. Some concerns have been raised by HR about paying travel costs and ensuring that the council is not seen as treating volunteers as employees as a mileage payment could be interpreted, in combination with other factors, as detracting from volunteer status. However, it is not in itself a determining factor. It is not common, for example, for parents who volunteer in schools to be offered home to school mileage; but as already noted, practice currently varies across the organisation. Volunteers are not, of course, employees but it should also be noted that employees (and indeed Members) are not able to claim home to work mileage. However it is accepted that in some cases, making this mileage claimable might tip the balance to encourage some people to volunteer.

Staff volunteering

- 5.12 Until now, the Council has not had a policy on staff volunteering. In order to lead by example as we are encouraging businesses and partners to contribute to the community, it seemed an appropriate time to develop the Council's policy on this. This is also complementary to the council's new Organisational Development strategy and behaviours framework.
- 5.13 The Council's policy is that we will actively encourage and promote volunteering amongst our colleagues using behaviour change techniques. If colleagues are looking for a volunteering opportunity, we will encourage them to volunteer locally, if appropriate, and colleagues will be able to utilise flexi-time to balance volunteering and work commitments.

- 5.14 This approach will enable colleagues to volunteer, but at no cost to the Council, as they will be encouraged to volunteer in their own time. However, it encourages managers to allow some flexibility to colleagues on a day that they are volunteering, for example, being understanding when someone returns slightly late from their lunch break because they have been volunteering in a local school.
- 5.15 In addition to this, managers will be encouraged to think about any team building days they are organising and the opportunities that these provide to contribute to the local community; e.g. some teams have volunteered for a day at the Jealotts Hill Community Landshare project.

6 ADVICE RECEIVED FROM STATUTORY AND OTHER OFFICERS

Borough Solicitor

- 6.1 There is no legal duty to pay expenses it is purely discretionary. It is good practice that the position on expenses is made clear to all, before people commence volunteering. A reasonable person would expect the council to be consistent in its approach to all volunteers, so there is parity between volunteers, particularly given the new narrative of asking volunteers to assist with services previously delivered solely by the Council.

Borough Treasurer

- 6.2 Nothing to add to the report.

Equalities Impact Assessment

- 6.3 An equalities screening has been completed on the policy. (Annex B)

Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 6.4 There is a reputational risk if the Council has a formal policy of not paying expenses when our voluntary partner, Involve and the DWP recommend we should pay expenses.
- 6.5 There is a risk of putting off volunteers if the Council has a policy of not paying expenses, especially in those service areas where we already do so. However, if CMT sets a blanket policy of paying expenses, the Council runs the risk of some services being put off or discontinuing using volunteers if it creates costs they can't absorb. The review of the policy in one year will seek to understand how the approach adopted to paying expenses has impacted on volunteering.

Other Officers

- 6.6 Not applicable

7 CONSULTATION

Principal Groups Consulted

- 7.1 Project Team – Volunteering and Closer Partnership Working workstream of the CCC Review, this includes the General Manager of Involve.

A number of council colleagues involved in managing and working with volunteers including the library service, parks and countryside and youth offending teams.

HR colleagues

Citizen and Customer Contact Implementation Team, including departmental representatives.

Directors and DMTs.

Method of Consultation

- 7.2 Email, project meetings and workshop sessions.

Representations Received

- 7.3 Incorporated within paper

Background Papers

Volunteering Policy

Volunteering Policy initial equalities screening record form

Volunteering Toolkit:

Guidance for Managers working with Volunteers

Volunteer Agreement

Volunteer Handbook

Contact for further information

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Bracknell Forest Council Volunteering Policy

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Bracknell Forest Council Volunteering Policy

1. Introduction

Volunteers already make a valuable contribution to delivering services at the Council and through the transformation programme this is growing, with volunteers playing an increasingly central role in helping to sustain and manage the rising demand for services. The Council Plan and transformation programme aim to encourage community self-reliance and active citizenship.

Volunteering activity adds value to service provision, helping to provide services that might not otherwise be provided or sustained and it enhances core public services. Services also benefit from the skills and expertise that volunteers bring with them.

This policy applies to anybody who wishes to volunteer for the council. A volunteer is defined as a person who freely gives their time, skills and experience without expectation of financial reward. A volunteer will not replace a paid employee, but the work they perform will complement and supplement the work of Council employees. The relationship between the Council and the volunteer is an entirely voluntary one and does not imply a contract of employment nor is it legally binding.

Support for Voluntary and Community Groups in Bracknell is provided by Involve, who are the volunteer centre for Bracknell Forest and who can provide help with the recruitment of volunteers and training for volunteers and their managers. Involve receive grant funding from the Council to carry out this work and are available for all council services to make use of.

2. Aim

The Volunteering Policy sets out the Council's approach to how it will work with and support those who wish to volunteer for Bracknell Forest Council.

3. Scope

Volunteers are currently fulfilling many different types of volunteering across the council, from volunteering for a couple of hours at a weekend to helping maintain a park, right through to people that volunteer on a regular weekly basis in one of our libraries. This policy sets out the process for engaging and managing volunteers who wish to volunteer for the Council, so that there is a consistent approach across all council services.

This process will ensure that everyone is able to make a recognised contribution that adds value to public services and that active citizenship is encouraged and developed.

4. We will work to ensure that:

- We provide equality of opportunity for all volunteers.
- We work in partnership with Involve to recruit volunteers and promote volunteering.
- We promote volunteering opportunities using a variety of methods, including social media, and have clear role descriptions.
- We will be flexible and offer a variety of roles, including short term and/or time limited ones.

- In promoting volunteering opportunities we will recognise there are many different reasons why people volunteer.
- We will support volunteers to ensure the best possible matching of skills and personal interests and goals.
- If a volunteer is not suitable for a particular role, they will be referred to Involve for other roles.
- The service area is responsible for providing support to their volunteers including appropriate induction, training and development.
- Volunteers are able to carry out their duties in safe, secure, healthy environments.
- Volunteers will be subject to the relevant Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks, where it is relevant to the role and required by law.
- We will ensure robust safeguarding and protection policies are in place.
- Volunteers will be reimbursed reasonable expenses when they are incurred.
- We recognise and celebrate our volunteers.

5. Managing volunteers

There is no council wide team in place for recruiting and supporting volunteers. It is the responsibility of the service area working with volunteers to manage them and carry out all other work associated with them.

There is a range of practical guidance available to help managers, including the Guidance for Managers working with volunteers.

6. Recruitment and selection

Bracknell Forest Council operates a fair and open recruitment policy for volunteers. This means that we will promote and offer volunteering opportunities widely, using a variety of methods, including social media and Involve, the volunteer centre for the borough.

Regular volunteers with the Council will be asked to sign a Volunteer Agreement. This is not a legally binding document and does not create an employment relationship in any way, but helps to clarify what the volunteer and the Council can expect from each other.

At the discretion of the staff member recruiting the volunteer, some volunteers will also be asked to:

- Give details of two referees
- If under-18 years of age, gain written consent of their parent or guardian
- Complete an Expression of Interest form or application form
- Attend an informal meeting where we will look to match them with an appropriate role
- Complete a DBS check by providing identification and other documents.

The Council will support volunteers to ensure the best possible matching of skills and personal interests and goals. If a volunteer is not suitable for a particular role, they will be referred for other roles via Involve.

7. Under 18's

Whilst there are no specific age limits to volunteering, no one under the age of 13 should be taken on. Specific rules apply to young people between the ages of 13-16 (see Appendix 4 in the Guidance for Managers working with Volunteers.). Extra care needs to be taken to protect young people from health and safety risks.

Good practice also recommends that parental/guardian consent is obtained for volunteers under 18 years of age.

8. Role of the volunteer

A clear role description will be provided along with clear instructions on what is required of the volunteer.

9. Expenses

Volunteers may be reimbursed for reasonable expenses incurred while carrying out their volunteering role for the Council. This could include travel costs, food, drink, or any equipment they need to buy. The Department for Work & Pensions guidance on expenses states that, volunteers may be paid for any out of pocket expenses.

Managers may use their discretion as to whether volunteers' expenses are paid having regard to the needs of the service. If paid, petrol costs will be reimbursed using the Approved Mileage Allowance Payment. At the time of writing this is £0.45 per mile.

10. Induction and training

All volunteers should have an induction appropriate to their role. The induction could include:

- The role of the volunteer
- An introduction to the place of work
- Discussion on all the relevant policies, including this Volunteer policy, and; Confidentiality, Health and Safety and Equality and Diversity policies.
- Essential procedures i.e. timekeeping, dress code etc.
- Induction training and details of ongoing training
- Expected behaviour
- Other information as appropriate.

Training will be provided as appropriate and all volunteers working with children, young people and vulnerable adults will be given appropriate safeguarding training.

11. Support

All volunteers will have a named person as their supervisor and they will be the first point of contact for the volunteer.

The supervisor will arrange regular update sessions with people that volunteer on a regular basis to discuss how they are doing in their role and any issues relevant to the role. In some cases this update session may be a five minute catch up before an environmental clean up session and with other roles it may be appropriate to book a room and have a half hour meeting.

12. Dealing with problems

If a volunteer encounters any problems when volunteering for us, or has any queries about volunteering or associated matters, they should discuss these with their supervisor.

13. Equal Opportunities

Bracknell Forest Council is committed to providing equality of opportunity. The same applies to any volunteers. Our aim is to treat all volunteers with integrity, respect and consideration.

We will ensure that we positively encourage a diverse range of people to volunteer and that no volunteer receives less favourable treatment on the grounds of race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, sex, sexual orientation, religion or belief, age, marriage or civil partnership, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity or disability.

Some volunteers may have additional needs and we will make reasonable adjustments to enable them to volunteer with us.

14. Health & safety

Volunteers will not be placed in situations that may endanger their own or another's physical or mental well-being. In order to ensure that volunteers are aware of the risks in carrying out tasks, they will:

- Receive adequate training and supervision.
- Be given clear guidance on carrying out tasks.
- Be given clear guidance on what to do in an emergency or accident.
- Be provided with suitable equipment and/or protective clothing in order to keep them safe.

15. Insurance

Volunteers are covered by the council's Employers Liability and Public Liability insurances for accidents which occur while carrying out their volunteering.

If a volunteer is using their own personal motor vehicle in the course of their volunteering duties, they will need to ensure that they are covered for business use on their private motor insurance.

16. Confidentiality and information security

Volunteers will be bound by a need for confidentiality. This will be covered in detail in the initial induction session and the volunteer agreement.

17. Safeguarding

Volunteers will need to undertake safeguarding training if required for the role. This will be provided by the council at no cost to the volunteer. If volunteers have any safeguarding concerns they must be brought to the attention of their manager as soon as possible.

18. Volunteer Passport Scheme

All volunteers will be invited to join the Volunteer Passport Scheme, which has been set up to link volunteers and organisations in Bracknell Forest, skill up existing and new volunteers and establish a volunteering standard across the borough.

As a passport holder, volunteers will enjoy many benefits, including being able to carry any training they do as a volunteer from placement to placement and access training

opportunities provided by partner organisations in Bracknell Forest. They will have their own 'passport' id/skills portfolio to show they are part of the Scheme and are an active volunteer in the borough.

19. The Council will recognise and celebrate its volunteers

Volunteers will be asked for feedback and valued for their efforts. They will receive a thank you for their work, whether this is an informal "thanks" or more formal.

20. Changing or ceasing a volunteering opportunity

At any time, the Council may withdraw the offer of a volunteer placement and the volunteer may also withdraw from the volunteer agreement. Both parties are encouraged to let the other know well in advance where the agreement is to be brought to an end.

If a volunteer is not suitable for a particular role, they will be referred to Involve for consideration of other roles within the Council and/or Bracknell Forest.

The Council will provide the volunteer with a written reference, if requested.

Where possible, the volunteer will be given an opportunity to provide feedback about their volunteering experience.

21. Bracknell Forest Council staff volunteering

The Council's policy on staff volunteering is that we will encourage and promote volunteering amongst our colleagues.

If staff are looking for a volunteering opportunity, we will encourage them to volunteer locally if appropriate and colleagues will be able to utilise flexi-time to balance volunteering and work commitments.

Managers will be encouraged to think about any team building days they are organising and the opportunities that these provide to contribute to the local community; e.g. some teams have volunteered for a day at the Jealotts Hill Community Landshare.

Annex B

Initial Equalities Screening Record Form

Date of Screening: 17.10.17	Directorate: CXO		Section: Transformation & Engagement
1. Activity to be assessed	Volunteering Policy		
2. What is the activity?	X Policy/strategy <input type="checkbox"/> Function/procedure <input type="checkbox"/> Project <input type="checkbox"/> Review <input type="checkbox"/> Service <input type="checkbox"/> Organisational change		
3. Is it a new or existing activity?	x New <input type="checkbox"/> Existing		
4. Officer responsible for the screening	Lesley Doyle, Community Development Manager		
5. Who are the members of the screening team?	Lesley Doyle, Community Development Manager Genny Webb, Head of Performance & Partnerships Samantha Wood, Engagement & Equalities Officer		
6. What is the purpose of the activity?	The Volunteering Policy sets out the Council's approach to how it will work with and support those who wish to volunteer for Bracknell Forest Council so that there is a consistent approach across all council services. It includes the Council' policy for staff volunteering.		
7. Who is the activity designed to benefit/target?	Anyone who is interested in volunteering for the council and managers and staff working with or planning to work with volunteers as it provides a clear and consistent framework for volunteering. This policy is set in the wider context of the council plan narrative to support our residents to be ' Strong, safe, supportive and self-reliant communities ' and more opportunities for volunteering is one aspect to that overarching philosophy.		
Protected Characteristics	Please tick yes or no	Is there an impact? What kind of equality impact may there be? Is the impact positive or adverse or is there a potential for both? If the impact is neutral please give a reason.	What evidence do you have to support this? E.g equality monitoring data, consultation results, customer satisfaction information etc Please add a narrative to justify your claims around impacts and describe the analysis and interpretation of evidence to support your conclusion as this will inform members decision making, include consultation results/satisfaction information/equality monitoring data
8. Disability Equality – this can include physical, mental health, learning or sensory disabilities and includes conditions such as dementia as well as hearing or sight impairment.	Y	Positive	The Policy aims to ensure that <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We provide equality of opportunity for all volunteers We will be flexible and offer a variety of roles, including short term and/or time limited ones We will make reasonable adjustments to enable

				<p>people with disabilities to volunteer.</p> <p>During a volunteer's induction, they are given training on their responsibilities under the Equalities Act 2010 regarding equality and diversity.</p> <p>The intent of the policy is to have a positive impact on equalities, however, it is a new policy, so we will need to monitor the policy and practice as we go along and collect equality information in order to review whether it has a positive impact.</p>
9. Racial equality	Y		Positive	As above
10. Gender equality	Y		Positive	As above
11. Sexual orientation equality	Y		Positive	As above
12. Gender re-assignment	Y		Positive	As above
13. Age equality	Y		Positive	As above
14. Religion and belief equality	Y		Positive	As above
15. Pregnancy and maternity equality	Y		Positive	As above
16. Marriage and civil partnership equality	Y		Positive	As above
17. Please give details of any other potential impacts on any other group (e.g. those on lower incomes/carers/ex-offenders, armed forces communities) and on promoting good community relations.	<p>There will be a positive impact on promoting good relations if more people in the community are volunteering with the council and we are encouraging more staff to volunteer.</p> <p>Staff may have concerns that volunteers could be used to replace staff in their paid roles. The communications plan and messages will need to address this and provide reassurance.</p>			

18. If an adverse/negative impact has been identified can it be justified on grounds of promoting equality of opportunity for one group or for any other reason?	N/A		
19. If there is any difference in the impact of the activity when considered for each of the equality groups listed in 8 – 14 above; how significant is the difference in terms of its nature and the number of people likely to be affected?	N/A		
20. Could the impact constitute unlawful discrimination in relation to any of the Equality Duties?	Y	N	Please explain for each equality group
21. What further information or data is required to better understand the impact? Where and how can that information be obtained?	The volunteer survey carried out with council volunteers in 2014 describes some of the benefits of volunteering.		
22. On the basis of sections 7 – 17 above is a full impact assessment required?	Y	N	The policy states that the council will provide equality of opportunity for all volunteers
23. If a full impact assessment is not required; what actions will you take to reduce or remove any potential differential/adverse impact, to further promote equality of opportunity through this activity or to obtain further information or data? Please complete the action plan in full, adding more rows as needed.			
Action	Timescale	Person Responsible	Milestone/Success Criteria
Produce communication plan for the Volunteering Policy	Feb 2018	Head of Transformation and Engagement	Communications Plan
Start to collect equality monitoring information to provide information on the profile of volunteers,	Jan 2019	Head of Transformation and Engagement	Information for all volunteers recorded on the iTrent system
To monitor any equality issues raised in the implementation of the policy and review the policy in a year's time.	Jan 2019	Head of Transformation and Engagement	Review of policy
24. Which service, business or work plan will these actions be included in?	CXO Transformation and Engagement team business plan,		

25. Please list the current actions undertaken to advance equality or examples of good practice identified as part of the screening?	Development of a volunteer handbook, guidance for managers and a volunteer agreement which have equality and diversity issues incorporated in them,
26. Chief Officers signature.	Signature: A Thomas Date: 08/11/17