

Decision maker:	Director economy, communities and corporate
Decision date:	Thursday, 30 November 2017
Title of report:	Policy on involving volunteers in the delivery of council services
Report by:	Localities and engagement officer

Classification

Open

Decision type

Non-key

Wards affected

(All Wards);

Purpose and summary

To approve and implement the volunteer policy, providing consistent and clear parameters for the involvement of volunteers in Herefordshire Council services, in line with best practice. To resource the recruitment and support of volunteers and recognise the value that volunteers bring to council services.

Recommendation

That:

- (a) the policy on involving volunteers in the delivery of council services (appendix 1) be approved.**

Alternative options

1. Not to adopt this corporate volunteer policy for the involvement of volunteers in supporting Herefordshire Council services and each service area to manage involvement of volunteers to their own parameters. This is not advised as the volunteer policy will set an overall corporate approach, providing some assurance and standardisation across the

organisation, without affecting the flexibility for service areas to customise their involvement of volunteers, according to their service needs.

Key considerations

2. There is presently no corporate volunteer policy for the involvement of volunteers in supporting Herefordshire Council services. Several service areas involve volunteers currently and other services are looking to recruit volunteers in the future. This corporate volunteer policy will provide parameters for the way volunteers are recruited and supervised, giving some consistency for volunteers, whichever service they volunteer in and for the staff that work alongside them. The volunteer policy is included as appendix 1.
3. The Volunteer policy has been developed in conjunction with managers of service areas that involve volunteers, or are looking to involve volunteers. Relevant officers have contributed to checks in relation to insurance provision, health and safety and employment law.
4. A volunteer agreement supports the volunteer policy, setting out the council's commitment to providing quality volunteer placements and what we ask in return from our volunteers. This will be shared with volunteers, who will be asked to sign it alongside the volunteer supervisor. The volunteer agreement is included as appendix 2.
5. Volunteering has a role in supporting all four Corporate Plan priorities for 2016-20. Having a corporate policy for how we involve volunteers in delivering our services, is a significant contribution to the 2017/18 delivery plan action of supporting volunteering, recognising its role in the local economy and in strengthening communities. Volunteering is cross cutting as it helps build supportive relationships within communities, acts as a catalyst for communities to become stronger and more resilient, as well as often having a key role to play in the devolvement of services and assets and the council's own service delivery.
6. Volunteering supports the local economy, both in terms of improved employability through increased skills and confidence gained through volunteering and the monetary value of volunteering to the county (estimated at £75 million per annum to Herefordshire's economy in 2012, the equivalent of 3,054 full time workers). Herefordshire has a long tradition of voluntary effort, with the most recent statistics for the county, (Herefordshire's Household Survey 2012) indicating regular formal volunteering at 34% of adults compared to 29% nationally, which is has a monetary value of £11.1 million
7. The volunteer policy recognises the valuable contribution that volunteers make within council services whilst supporting them to develop their potential and personal fulfilment through volunteering and their opportunity to directly support a service in their community.
8. The volunteer policy supports safe practices in the recruitment and supervision of volunteers, without cutting across employment law. The policy defines volunteering and who the policy applies to. The policy describes considerations in respect of expenses, insurance, health and safety, confidentiality, data protection, recognition, dealing with problems, safeguarding, equality and diversity and review and evaluation.
9. Adequate facilities, equipment and resources will be provided to enable volunteers to fulfil their role. Volunteers will receive training to help them follow the council's health and safety policies and procedures and have a duty to take care of themselves and others who might be affected by their actions.

10. The volunteer policy will be promoted to all staff and made available on the council website, along with volunteering opportunities.

Community impact

11. Volunteers can make a real difference to the lives of people living in the county, by providing or extending services which otherwise would not exist. For instance, the community libraries, rely on volunteers, with central support from the library team.
12. Volunteers support us practically and bring new perspectives and enthusiasm to the delivery of many council services and enable involvement of local people in shaping services.
13. Volunteering can improve employability through increased skills, experience and confidence, providing a positive and practical contribution to the local economy.
14. Volunteering opportunities will be actively promoted, as appropriate, with looked after children and care leavers, helping improve their life chances and personal development opportunities.

Equality duty

15. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the 'general duty' on public authorities is set out as follows:

A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to -

- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
 - (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
16. The public sector equality duty (specific duty) requires us to consider how we can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations, and demonstrate that we are paying 'due regard' in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services. As this is a decision on back office functions, we do not believe that it will have an impact on our equality duty.
 17. The payment of expenses and provision for adaptations and support workers, where required, should help to provide improved equality of opportunity to volunteer and enable the protected characteristics of those who volunteer to better reflect that of the local population.

Resource implications

18. There is a revenue resource implication for the involvement of volunteers, including staff time to recruit, train and supervise volunteers. It is best practice, especially in ensuring equality of opportunity that agreed expenses incurred, as a result of volunteering, are reimbursed. For the purposes of this policy, reimbursement will be in line with employee expenses policy. This resource requirement should be offset against the significant

resource, skills and enthusiasm that volunteers bring to council services. Volunteer expenses and any adaptive or protective equipment will need to be covered by existing service revenue budgets. Volunteers rarely require IT access, keeping this cost to a minimum. Most training will be provided by staff, backed up by a Volunteer handbook and copies of guidance, relevant to their volunteer role.

Legal implications

19. This policy has been reviewed by Herefordshire Council legal service team to ensure compliance with our statutory duties.

Risk management

20. There are no risks identified with the implementation of a corporate volunteer policy, which should help minimise risks through a more consistent corporate approach to volunteer recruitment and on-going support.

Consultees

21. Alongside development with officers, this policy has been developed in conjunction with Herefordshire Voluntary Organisations Support Service (Hvoss) 'Good practice guide – Information for organisations working with volunteers'.

Appendices

appendix 1 - Volunteer policy
appendix 2 - Volunteer agreement

Background papers

None identified.