

HUMAN RESOURCES & COUNCIL TAX COMMITTEE

23 FEBRUARY 2023

REPORT OF ASSISTANT DIRECTOR (PARTNERSHIPS)

A.3 VOLUNTEER POLICIES

PART 1 – KEY INFORMATION

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To introduce to the Human Resources & Council Tax Committee a suite of proposed policies to support the volunteering activities within the Council namely, a Volunteer Policy and an Employee Volunteering and Public Duties Policy which, if agreed, will be implemented by the Council.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of introducing a suite of Volunteer Policies is to outline the Council's commitment to encouraging members of the local community to undertake voluntary roles with the Council and to support existing employees who wish to undertake voluntary work within the local community or for charitable institutions.

The Council recognises that by encouraging and supporting volunteers, it is able to increase the services it offers, help build relationships with the local community, develop employees/volunteers and improve how the Council is perceived within the local community.

Employees who volunteer can share the skills that they have developed at work to help the community, and also learn new skills through volunteering. This may include, for example, leadership qualities; and improve their morale, physical health and work-life balance.

The Policies outline: -

- Our commitment to volunteering, volunteers and employees who volunteer in our local community;
- The recruitment, induction and management of volunteers;
- Conflict of interest considerations where existing staff request to volunteer for external bodies in the local community;
- Guidance on time off or changing working hours for existing staff who wish to volunteer; and
- Key policies and procedures that need to be considered when supporting volunteers.

These policies should be read in conjunction with the Work Placement Policy (October 2022), which was endorsed by the HR and Council Tax Committee at its meeting on the 11 October 2022.

Unison has been consulted on the full suite of Volunteer Policies and have offered agreement and support for their implementation.

Furthermore, consultation on the Volunteer Policy has taken place with Payroll (*for insurance purposes*), Public Realm as a significant host of volunteers and Health & Safety colleagues (*for Risk Assessment purposes*). All of whom have offered agreement and support of its implementation.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

It is recommended to the Human Resources & Council Tax Committee that the Volunteer Policy (January 2023) and the Employee Volunteer and Public Duties Policy (January 2023), as set out in Appendices A and B respectively, be adopted.

REASON(S) FOR THE RECOMMENDATION(S)

In order to comply with the requirements of Part 3 of the Council's Constitution, and the delegated powers within, the HR & Council Tax Committee are required to approve these policies as follows:

"Human Resources; The discharge of the following Part II – miscellaneous functions as set out in Schedule 1 to the Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000 (as amended), and as detailed in Appendix 1 to Part 3 of the Constitution: Agreement of key personnel policies."

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

There is no alternative option to consider, as these policies outline the Council's statutory obligations with regard to the engagement of volunteers, and employees who undertake voluntary public duties.

PART 2 – IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION

DELIVERING PRIORITIES

The adoption of the Volunteer Policies consolidates the Council's commitment to serving and engaging with the local community and service users. Both policies provide transparency for the residents of Tendring and employees on the authority's position when engaging individuals as volunteers. Therefore contributing to the Corporate Plan 2020/24 priority requirement of developing 'community leadership through partnerships, building sustainable communities for the future, and growing an inclusive economy'.

In addition, the Volunteer Policy aims to ensure the ability of the Council to recruit talented volunteers, thus contributing to the Corporate Plan 2020/24 priority of 'delivering high quality services'.

LEGAL REQUIREMENTS (including legislation & constitutional powers)

There is no statutory requirement on the Council to have a Volunteer Policy, however the Council has a number of statutory obligations when engaging the services of volunteers, as

follows:

Equality Act 2010
Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
Health and Safety (Training for Employment) Regulations 1990
Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
HSE Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013
Data Protection Act 2018
Employment Rights Act 1996
Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
Criminal Justice Act 1991
Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974

Furthermore, the Employee Volunteering and Public Duties Policy outlines our statutory requirements when allowing staff time off for public duties.

As this suite of policies is new, it is appropriate for the HR & Council Tax Committee to approve these in accordance with the delegated powers as set out in Part 3 of the Council's Constitution.

FINANCE AND OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

The Volunteer Policy provides for volunteers to receive out of pocket expenses and equipment, as necessary.

In addition, the Employee Volunteering and Public Duties Policy provides for paid time off for employee's undertaking certain public duties and unpaid time off or flexible working arrangements which might result in resource and financial implications for the Council. However, these should be minimal and managed within existing budgets.

USE OF RESOURCES AND VALUE FOR MONEY

It is envisaged that to implement these Volunteer Policies, minimal additional resources will be required. Where additional financial costs and resources are required, for example a manager's time to recruit, support and develop a volunteer, the benefit and contribution of the volunteer would outweigh any cost to the Council.

The following are submitted in respect of the indicated use of resources and value for money indicators:

A) Financial sustainability: how the body plans and manages its resources to ensure it can continue to deliver its services;	A volunteer is a person who freely gives their time, skills and experience without expectation of financial reward. The Council does not aim to introduce volunteers to replace paid staff but instead to complement their work and extend our services.
B) Governance: how the body ensures that it makes informed decisions and properly manages its risks, including; and	The Volunteer Policy will ensure that volunteers are properly integrated into the organisational structure and that mechanisms are in place for them to contribute to Council's work, whilst minimising risk.

	A Volunteer Agreement which outlines the Council's responsibilities to the volunteer and their responsibilities to the Council will be signed by all parties.
C) Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness: how the body uses information about its costs and performance to improve the way it manages and delivers its services.	Volunteering provides the following benefits for the individual: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - An introduction to a public sector organisation; - Opportunities to develop interests and skills through experience and training; - Opportunities to learn new skills and to put them into practice with support from the team; - The chance to gain experience within a supportive environment (<i>this can be valuable looking for paid work and a reference</i>).
MILESTONES AND DELIVERY	
(a) Agreement of Work Placement Procedure on 11 October 2022 (b) Human Resources & Council Tax Committee 23 February 2023 (c) Officer Decision 28 February 2023 (d) Publication to TDC Website 1 March 2023	
ASSOCIATED RISKS AND MITIGATION	
<p>By not adopting the Volunteer Policy there are minimal risks to the Council, however there could be reputational damage where individuals wishing to volunteer within the Council are not treated fairly and consistently. Furthermore, the policy provides a framework to outline the Council's responsibilities to the volunteer and their responsibilities to the Council.</p> <p>The Employee Volunteering and Public Duty Policy outlines certain statutory obligations for the Council. Failure to follow these statutory obligations could result in legal action being taken by an employee against the Council.</p>	
OUTCOME OF CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT	
Full consultation has taken place with the local Unison Branch Executive and they are supportive of the full suite of Volunteer Policies.	
EQUALITIES	
<p>The Equality Act 2010 legally protects people from discrimination in the workplace and in wider society.</p> <p>In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, public bodies such as the Council must, in the exercise of their functions, give due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.</p>	

The Council is committed to being an inclusive employer in all of its people policies and practices, which it extends to volunteers.

In determining the Volunteer Policies, the Council will comply with all relevant employment legislation and identified best practice.

As a Disability Confident Leader, the Council will proactively identify and facilitate ways to recruit and involve individuals who have a disability. The Council will take an active leadership role in encouraging and working with local communities and employers to involve individuals with disabilities in voluntary activities, and to support employees who wish to volunteer for local charities.

Having undertaken an Equality Impact Assessment, the conclusion is that the proposal does not impact on the protected characteristics.

SOCIAL VALUE CONSIDERATIONS

The Volunteer Policy will promote growth and development opportunities for all within the local community and ensure that they have access to opportunities to develop new skills and gain meaningful employment.

Whilst the Employee Volunteering and Public Duty Policy encourages employees who volunteer to share the skills that they have developed at work to help the local community.

The Council aims to lead by example as a major local employer. This includes following recognised best practice and keeping up to date with legislation.

Examples of this include being a Disability Confident Leader and an Employer Recognition Scheme Gold Award holder; both of these commit the authority to being an advocate in these areas.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S AIM TO BE NET ZERO BY 2030

This report has no direct implication on the Council's aspiration to be net zero by 2030.

OTHER RELEVANT IMPLICATIONS

Consideration has been given to the implications of the proposed decision in respect of the following and any significant issues are set out below.

Crime and Disorder	Not applicable
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Health Inequalities	Not applicable
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Area or Ward affected	Not applicable
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ANY OTHER RELEVANT INFORMATION

The Council's Reservist Policy outlines in further detail our commitments to those serving as a Reservist.

The Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (Acas) provide further advice and guidance on engaging volunteers and time off work for public duties.

PART 3 – SUPPORTING INFORMATION

BACKGROUND

The Council recognises that the involvement and contribution of volunteers within the Council can:

- Help reflect and build a bridge between us and the community we serve;
- Help us engage with hard to reach service users;
- Service users may engage differently with volunteers (peers) than with staff; and
- Volunteers may bring diversity which enriches the Council.

The adoption of these Volunteer Policies will provide clear guidance to managers, employees, prospective and current volunteers to encourage the involvement of volunteers and voluntary activities.

They demonstrate the Council's overall commitment to, and recognises the value of volunteering and voluntary activities.

The implementation of the policies will be supported by the training, coaching and mentoring of managers to enable them to be effective Volunteer Supervisors, which will maximise the benefits of engaging volunteers within the Council.

PREVIOUS RELEVANT DECISIONS TAKEN BY COUNCIL/CABINET/COMMITTEE ETC.

The Work Placement Policy - October 2022 which was endorsed by the HR and Council Tax Committee at its meeting on the 11 October 2022.

BACKGROUND PAPERS AND PUBLISHED REFERENCE MATERIAL

There are no background papers or published reference material associated with this report.

APPENDICES

Appendix A – Volunteer Policy January 2023

Appendix B – Employee Volunteering and Public Body Policy January 2023

REPORT CONTACT OFFICER(S)

Include here the Name, Job Title and Email/Telephone details of the person(s) who wrote the report and who can answer questions on the content.

Name	Jo Williams-Lota
Job Title	Senior HR Advisor
Email/Telephone	jwilliams-lota@tendingdc.gov.uk 01255 686318