



Cabinet (Resources) Panel

5 November 2013

Report Title	Employee Volunteering Scheme	
Internal decision designation	AMBER	
Cabinet Member with Lead Responsibility	Councillor Paul Sweet Performance and Governance	
Key Decision	No	
In Forward Plan	No	
Wards Affected	All	
Accountable Strategic Director	Simon Warren, Chief Executive	
Originating service	Office of the Chief Executive	
Accountable officer(s)	Charlotte Johns	Head of Policy
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Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

The Cabinet (Resources) Panel is recommended to:

1. The Cabinet (Resources) Panel is recommended to approve the incorporation of the employee volunteering scheme into the council's suite of human resources policies, and its subsequent implementation

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to present a proposal on an employee volunteering scheme that supports community activities, as part of the council's work on developing self-reliant communities.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 On 5 September 2012, the Empowering People and Communities Cluster group of the Wolverhampton Local Strategic Partnership received a report from the Self-Reliant Communities sub-group. The report, which was agreed at that meeting, outlined three priority areas moving forward:

- Culture shift and addressing bureaucracy
- Enabling and supporting community asset transfer
- Unlocking community potential

- 2.2 This report relates to the first of these priority areas, culture shift and addressing bureaucracy. This work stream focuses on the culture shift required across partners to enable communities to increase their self-reliance. In particular it advocates the development of an employee volunteering scheme, to provide a pool of individuals to support communities through specific projects where necessary.

- 2.3 In order to develop community leadership and show commitment to corporate social responsibility, a number of councils across the country have adopted schemes for employee volunteering. This includes Wiltshire, Sandwell, Kent, West Sussex, Surrey, Lambeth and Warwick District.

- 2.4 Employee volunteering is a way of developing the skills of the workforce whilst improving job satisfaction and morale. It also demonstrates in a practical way the council exercising its corporate social responsibility, providing a leadership example to other businesses.

- 2.5 Employee Volunteering schemes usually have the following factors in common:

- Employee development – linked to training plans for individual staff.
- Provision of a number of days per year as paid time to volunteer within the local authority area. This work should socially, economically or environmentally benefit the city.
- It is linked to corporate priorities. In Wolverhampton's case this would relate directly to the City Strategy plan for self-reliant communities and for increased volunteering as well as to corporate social responsibility.
- It demonstrates the council's commitment to working with communities and to being a model of best practice to businesses.

2.6 As part of the City Strategy action plan Wolverhampton has already stated its commitment to developing more self-reliant communities that are able to do things for themselves and to shape their future and that of their community. The council is also committed to promoting Corporate Social Responsibility to businesses in the City.

2.7 The introduction of an employee volunteering scheme would enhance both of these objectives through a visible demonstration of community leadership and a very tangible investment of resources into assisting communities to move towards greater self-reliance through a significant injection of volunteer time. Given that a large percentage of council employees also live within the city it is anticipated that a further outcome will be increased additional volunteering (outside of this scheme) by employees within their communities.

3.0 Progressing the employee volunteering scheme

3.1 It is proposed that Wolverhampton Employee Volunteering Scheme would comprise:

- An allowance of up to two days per year of paid time for all council employees to volunteer (pro-rata for part-time staff). (This amount of time is standard national best practice.)
- Volunteer activities to all be considered as a direct contribution to employee development.
- Volunteer activities to support the corporate priorities for communities to increase their self-reliance.
- Volunteers to provide feedback to the council on any obstacles/barriers to increased self-reliance that have emerged during their volunteering to assist the on-going culture change work underway by the self-reliant communities group.
- Linkages with the Volunteer Centre.

3.2 The proposed scheme has been discussed with the council's Human Resources team, which is supportive of the proposal and has agreed that it should be incorporated into the suite of HR policies.

3.3 A copy of the proposed scheme is at Appendix 1.

4.0 Financial implications

4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from the volunteering scheme. The policy stipulates that volunteering will only be allowed where it does not involve a visible financial cost to back-fill staff cover. Expenses arising from any volunteering undertaken will be met by the individual or the organisation for which they volunteer.

4.2 Each application for volunteering will be assessed on a case by case basis by the line manager to confirm that the leave for volunteering can be accommodated and that there are no financial implications.

[CN/23102013/E]

5.0 Legal implications

- 5.1 Any potential legal implications of the scheme have been mitigated. Whilst Wolverhampton City Council will allow staff up to two days per year volunteering time, the staff member will be attending as an individual rather than as an employee of the council, therefore releasing the council from direct responsibility. Wherever possible, Wolverhampton Volunteer Centre will broker any volunteering arrangements.

(JH/221013/I.)

6.0 Equalities implications

- 6.1 The equalities analysis has not uncovered any adverse impacts. However, under equalities legislation the council is also under a duty to foster good relations between communities and to support participation in public life. The Employee Volunteering Scheme has the potential to contribute significantly to this agenda through, for instance, encouraging staff to volunteer within organisations and activities that foster good relations and by encouraging a diverse range of staff to participate in public life.
- 6.2 It is also recommended that any disabled staff are assisted to participate in the scheme through the provision of 'reasonable adjustments' by the council. This would not incur any additional costs. For instance, if a staff member had an adapted phone, they would be permitted to utilise it as part of their volunteering. This would be at the manager's discretion.
- 6.3 The council also proposes to monitor take up of the scheme across the equalities strands. This will include who applied for the scheme, who was unsuccessful and any differentials.

7.0 Environmental implications

- 7.1 The scheme could have environmental benefits if staff take up relevant opportunities to improve or enhance the environment.

8.0 Human resources implications

- 8.1 Under the scheme staff would be allocated up to two days paid time for volunteering. Any application would need to be approved by the line manager, having taken business needs into consideration, and the appropriate documentation would be sent to the human resources support desk.
- 8.2 Staff would book their volunteering time as they would special leave. Human Resources will establish a volunteering code, so that the scheme can be monitored in relation to overall take up and equalities.

8.3 The benefits of this scheme have the potential to outweigh the cost . These are laid out in full in the Employee Volunteering Scheme in Appendix A, but they include:

- Improving employee job satisfaction, morale, commitment and performance.
- Enhancing the council's reputation and profile.
- Helping the council to attract and retain high-performing employees.
- Encouraging individual and team development.
- Helping team building through group volunteering.
- Strengthening relationships with voluntary, community and faith sectors – creating a “one team” approach. Helping to demonstrate its commitment and support to employees by encouraging them to play a more active role in society

9.0 Schedule of background papers

9.1 Employee Volunteering Scheme 10 October 2013 Confident Capable Council Scrutiny Panel

Wolverhampton City Council



Human Resources Policy Framework

Wolverhampton Employee Volunteering Scheme

Approved by:	<i>Cabinet Resources Panel ()</i>
<i>Published:</i>	<i>01.10.13</i>
<i>Review date:</i>	<i>01.10.14</i>

CONSULTATION

The following officers and/or bodies have been consulted on this policy:

Officers and/or Bodies	From	To
CCCScrutiny Panel		
CDB/SEB		
MRG		
HR		

The following Trade Unions have been consulted on this policy:

	From	To
Unison		
GMB		
Unite		

REVIEW LOG

Date	Version	Comments/Review	Approved by
	0.1	Check & review	

EQUALITY ANALYSIS

An equality analysis is being carried out on this policy and procedure. Contact HR Strategy and Policy Team for a copy. Contact HR on 01902 552345 or by email on HR.supportdesk@wolverhampton.gov.uk for HR advice.

ADVICE

Contact HR on 01902 552345 or email HR.supportdesk@wolverhampton.gov.uk for HR advice.

COMMENTS AND AMENDMENTS

Contact HR on 01902 552345 or email HR.supportdesk@wolverhampton.gov.uk to make any comments or suggest any feedback on this policy.

DISTRIBUTION

This policy and procedure is placed on the HR intranet for managers and employees to view. Copies will be provided to recognised Trade Unions and managers electronically.

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Our Commitment to Volunteering

Statement from the Chief Executive of Wolverhampton City Council

I am delighted to support the Employee Volunteering Scheme, which is designed to support those already volunteering and to encourage new people to get involved in something really worthwhile. Speaking as a volunteer, I understand the real difference even the smallest contribution can make and hope the scheme will help you to find your ideal volunteering opportunity. As well as the chance to expand and share our skills and experience, it's a great way of playing a more active role in society. It can broaden our outlook and appreciation of diverse communities, creating a greater awareness of the needs of our community. Volunteering can enhance working relationships, create wider connections and enhance possibilities of future joint working practices. It can improve job satisfaction, morale and personal development, and simply be a means of giving, to create a more self-reliant and resilient society.

We will give the scheme time to become established and will be in touch to see how it's going, to continue to build improvements into it.

I hope that this will be the start of a new ethos of volunteering at Wolverhampton City Council

Simon Warren
Chief Executive
Wolverhampton City Council

1. Principles

- 1.1 The Employee Volunteering Scheme aims to provide volunteering opportunities for employees at Wolverhampton City Council and enable Wolverhampton City Council staff to contribute something to the city.
- 1.2 Employees can get involved in activities that benefit individuals, clubs, charities, faith groups and the environment.
- 1.3 The scheme applies to all Council employees with the exception of those working in schools and those employed centrally on teachers' terms and conditions of service.
- 1.4 The volunteering scheme allows employees to take up to two days' per annum or equivalent (pro-rotta) paid time off to volunteer within Wolverhampton.
- 1.5 The council will support volunteering by:
 - Releasing employees from normal duties for two days (14.40 hours) per year (pro-rotta) to continue current volunteering or undertake new volunteering activities
 - Encouraging employees to volunteer in their own time too
 - Encouraging volunteering to be used for staff development via the appraisal processes
 - Identifying possible opportunities for volunteering linked to the Corporate commitment to developing more active self-reliant communities
 - Communicating effectively
 - Reviewing and revising the scheme where appropriate or necessary.

2. Why volunteer?

For volunteers, it can:

- Bring a great sense of personal achievement and self-worth by contributing to the community
- Give a broader outlook and appreciation of diverse communities
- Give others the benefit of experience and skills
- Help to develop new skills and experiences
- Improve employability – providing valuable experience and demonstrating a “can do” attitude
- Be fun, social and enhance health and wellbeing
- Help adjustment from work to retirement.

For communities, it can:

- Help voluntary organisations to deliver services and improve communities
- Build a more robust and resilient society
- Improve relationships between council staff and residents.

For the council, it can:

- Improve employee job satisfaction, morale, commitment and performance
- Enhance its reputation and profile
- Help it to attract and retain high-performing employees
- Encourage individual and team development
- Help team building through group volunteering
- Strengthen relationships with voluntary, community and faith sectors – creating a “one team” approach
- Help to demonstrate its commitment and support to employees by encouraging them to play a more active role in society.

3. Volunteering allowance

3.1 Time allowance and eligibility criteria

All employees are allowed **two days pro-rotta per year** paid time off to volunteer, provided that:

- You have agreed it with your manager at least two weeks in advance of the volunteering activity taking place so that cover arrangements can be made if necessary. As with annual leave, the needs of the service must be taken into account and you must obtain agreement to volunteering leave before making any commitments to a voluntary organisation
- It does not involve a visible financial cost to “back-full” staff cover, e.g. employees based in schools. Time taken to volunteer will not disrupt or adversely affect individual or team activity
- There are no conflicts of interest, e.g. political campaigning
- Activities benefit the environment, individuals or groups other than close relatives, within Wolverhampton
- Activities undertaken are with organisations which are “not for profit”
- Any development activities undertaken benefit the role and service (see “additional paid time” below)
- Activities are not used to replace council jobs

This covers employees who already volunteer and those just starting out. You can use your volunteering time flexibly, one day at a time, two together or broken down into hours to fit the needs of the activity and voluntary organisation or group. You will need to discuss this with your manager to make sure that this fits both your and the team’s needs.

You can also “top-up” volunteering allowances with annual leave or unpaid leave if necessary. e.g. You could use three days annual leave and two day volunteering allowance for a week off to work at a children’s camp.

3.2 Allowance for those working part-time

The 2 days volunteering hours are calculated pro-rotta to working hours, in the same way as annual leave e.g. if you work for half of every week, you would be able to volunteer for 7.24 hours.

3.3 Carrying over volunteering days

Volunteering days cannot be carried over from one year to the next.

3.4 Criminal Records Bureau checks

Certain activities that involve working with young people or other vulnerable groups may require you to have a check by the Disclosure and Barring Service (formally CRB). The organisation will indicate if this is necessary and will be required to meet all associated costs.

3.5 Public duties

Duties associated with school governance, duties as a magistrate, election candidacy, support at polling stations, trade union activities and employee advocacy are not covered by this policy.

3.6 Subsistence and travel expenses

Volunteering activities should be claimed through the organisation with which you are volunteering

3.7 Monitoring

The level of detail required to agree and monitor an employee’s volunteering activity is at the manager’s discretion. The employee should complete a simple application form (appended to this document) setting out how the volunteering activity fits in the scheme; the purpose of the activity; what they will do; and how they will do it.

3.8 Recording volunteering time

Once you have agreed your volunteering activity with your manager, you will need to record it as working time in the time recording system. Any approved volunteering activity should be recorded as special leave.

4. Before volunteering

4.1 Discussion with manager

Before you volunteer, you must discuss with your manager the type of volunteering you wish to do. If you know which organisation you would like to volunteer for, you should contact the organisation to find out what opportunities are available, then speak to your manager.

You must provide your manager with the following information at least one month in advance, using the employee volunteering application form:

- The type of volunteering activity
- The name of the voluntary organisation
- Where the activity will be carried out
- The benefits of the activity, both to the employee and the voluntary organisation
- Duration, frequency and commitment required
- Any risks, e.g. conflicts of interest, contravention of political restrictions or political campaigning

The information you provide to your manager will enable them to discuss and explore any implications or risks. The manager will need to understand enough about the proposed volunteering activity to be able to approve it.

Where at all possible, managers are expected to support volunteering activities, demonstrating flexibility for cover arrangement e.g. swapping shifts, covering each other's work, working flexibly and/or remotely, use of flexi-time, time off in lieu and unpaid leave. You and your manager should agree what is reasonable.

Managers will need to consider:

- The possible impact of volunteering time on service activity, e.g. operational and shift cover

4.2 Review of refusal

If your manager does not approve your proposed volunteering activity, you have the right to a review of the refusal through your manager's manager. Your manager will need to evidence the reason for their decision.

4.3 Liability

It is the manager's responsibility to be satisfied that there are no conflicts of interest and that you have considered and accepted any risks. The council will not be liable for damages or injuries that occur while you are volunteering for other organisations.

5. Volunteering activities

5.1 Types of volunteering

Volunteering can be anything from helping out in a neighbourhood to being a trustee for a charity. It can be a short one-off activity or a regular on-going commitment.

For example:

- Engaging with a Local Neighbourhood Partnership
- Mentoring Looked After Children and vulnerable people
- Developing or mentoring a project for Make:Shift
- Supporting vulnerable adults and disabled people
- Reading and listening activities at school
- Outdoor activities e.g. environmental clean ups, recycling initiatives
- Sponsoring charities e.g. through fund-raising
- Club leader, treasurer or secretary, e.g. at youth clubs, Scouts, Guides or similar groups
- Organising sports activities or events
- Police Specials
- Trustee for a charity
- PTA officer/member

You could discuss with your manager:

- Taking up a volunteering opportunity, as an individual, that you have a particular interest in and might wish to continue doing
- Giving a one-off contribution to a voluntary organisation, whether individually or as part of a team activity or project
- Exploring activities that have the potential for longer-term volunteering.
- For example, spending time with a charity or job-shadowing another volunteer to gain experience and knowledge that benefits your work
- Undertaking specific training linked to a new or current volunteering activity, such as charity law training for trustees or treasurers.

The pages on the council's public website include details of the Volunteer Centre and sets out lots of volunteering opportunities and sources of advice.

5.2 Scope of volunteering

You can volunteer to do almost any activity and it need not be connected in any way with your work for the council. Many people use volunteering as a way of trying something completely new.

5.3 Geographical volunteering boundaries

The volunteering activity must be within Wolverhampton. You can volunteer to work with any charity in Wolverhampton, provided there is no conflict of interest with our volunteering principles (see section 7 below).

5.4 Training requirements (including health and safety) to perform volunteering activities

The organisation for which you volunteer is responsible for providing any induction or other training to allow you to perform your volunteering role and remain safe. Where this training benefits your role at the council or your career progression and cannot be met by Will, you will need to negotiate an extra paid day with your manager.

If you are involved in community transport volunteering using your own car, you will need to check that your own motor policy is suitable.

5.5 Clothing and equipment

If the volunteering activity requires specialist clothing or equipment, this will need to be provided by the organisation or by the volunteer. The organisation will provide details of what is required.

5.6 Expenses

The council will not be liable for any expenses incurred by staff as part of the Employee Volunteering Scheme.

5.7 Reasonable Adjustments

The council will consider making reasonable adjustments for disabled staff to enable them to participate in a volunteering activity e.g. allowing staff to use specialist equipment such as a council provided adapted phone at the volunteer placement.

6. Volunteering principles

When volunteering, you agree to:

- Respect the privacy, property and confidentiality of others
- Report any problems you experience to your manager and Volunteer Centre (where it has acted as a broker)
- Aim to fulfil the commitment you have made and inform your named contact in the voluntary organisation if you are unable to attend
- Act in a professional way, recognising that you are representing the council while carrying out the volunteering activities.

The code of conduct continues to apply to employees when volunteering. The code contains provisions that encourage the highest standards of integrity and personal conduct on the part of all employees.

The council strongly recommends that the organisation for which you volunteer is registered with Wolverhampton Volunteers, the City's Volunteer Centre, for quality assurance purposes. If the organisation that you wish to volunteer with is not registered, you can suggest that it registers with Wolverhampton Volunteers for free. Wolverhampton Volunteers can be contacted on wwalker@wolverhamptonvsc.org.uk or 01902 328980.

If the organisation is unlikely to register with the Volunteer centre, you and your manager should satisfy yourselves that the organisation's quality assurance and health and safety policies are adequate.

7. After volunteering

You should discuss your volunteering activity with your manager and share the experience with colleagues.

If you experience any blockages or challenges to communities being more active as part of your volunteering these should be forward to the self-reliant communities' task group via lnp@wolverhampton.gov.uk

8. Six easy steps to help you start volunteering

1. Discuss and agree the volunteering activity with your manager.
2. Complete the Volunteering Registration form and return it to Human Resources support desk.
3. Record paid time in your time recording system.
4. Get volunteering and tell your colleagues about your experience!

5. After you've volunteered, discuss the experience with your manager at your next one-to-one and appraisal and plan your next volunteering activity.
6. Let the self-reliant task group know about any blockages that feel communities face in terms of being more active. Contact us by emailing lnp@wolverhampton.gov.uk.

9. More information and useful links

10. Roles and Responsibilities

Roles and Responsibilities of Employees

Employees volunteering under this policy must observe the standards and principles set out in it, ensure they have management support for their volunteering activity and advise their line manager if there are any changes to the volunteering arrangements.

Roles and Responsibilities of Managers

Managers have a responsibility to support the Council's volunteering policy and ensure that this policy is applied appropriately within their own area. Any queries on the application or interpretation of this policy should be discussed with HR prior.

Managers should ensure any employees engaged in volunteering fully understand the provisions of the scheme.

Roles and Responsibilities of HR

HR will provide operational support to the organisation to enable the effective implementation of the volunteering policy.

HR has a responsibility to:

- Provide support and guidance to managers and employees
- Ensure the communication, maintenance, regular review and updating of this policy
- Monitor and review the delivery and impact of this policy.

Role of the Chief HR Officer

In consultation with the recognised Trade Unions, the Chief HR Officer will exercise delegated authority for and be responsible for the on-going review and updating of this policy to ensure compliance with changes in statutory requirements and operational delivery, including responsibility for identifying the appropriate process for the regular evaluation of the effectiveness of this policy. Any fundamental changes to this policy will be brought before Cabinet (Resources) Panel for approval.

Role of Trade Unions

Any review and revisions of this policy will be in consultation with the Council's recognised trade unions.

11. Monitoring and Review

The external secondment policy and procedure will reviewed and updated annually and be available to managers and employees via the HR intranet.

12. Equalities

An Equality Analysis has been carried out on this scheme.

The Council has a duty to monitor the application of this scheme in relation to protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010. This is reported annually in the Council's Equality Monitoring Report.

If any aspect of this scheme causes you difficulty because of any disability you have, or if you need assistance because English is not your first language, you should raise this issue with HR.