

TEWKESBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to:	Executive Committee
Date of Meeting:	25 November 2015
Subject:	Volunteering Policy for Employees of Tewkesbury Borough Council
Report of:	Graeme Simpson, Corporate Services Group Manager
Chief Officer:	Mike Dawson, Chief Executive
Lead Member:	Councillor Mrs E J MacTiernan, Lead Member for Organisational Development
Number of Appendices:	Two

Executive Summary:

Promoting and enabling healthy and active communities is a key priority for the Council given the need to reduce dependency on traditional state services and to build self-reliance. The Council's employees play an important role in supporting the Borough's many and varied communities as part of their day to day duties however staff can also play a greater direct role in assisting community projects through an active volunteering approach.

The Government has signalled its intent to introduce compulsory 'volunteering' for all staff across the private and public sector within this Parliament and the Council is preparing for this policy requirement by introducing a workforce policy to encourage volunteering by its staff. There are significant benefits for both the individual employee and the wider community and employee volunteering is well established within a number of national businesses as a significant managerial tool to increase efficiency and maximise workforce potential.

In order to manage the process, and to ensure staff time is effectively channelled into projects which directly assist the outcome of community projects within the Borough, the Council is recommending joining Involve Gloucestershire. Involve Gloucestershire is a local social enterprise which offers effective brokerage of volunteering opportunities between the employer and local groups and will actively support the Council in promoting employee volunteering to its workforce and to local businesses.

Recommendation:

That the Volunteering Policy for Employees at Tewkesbury Borough Council be APPROVED with effect from 1 December 2015.

Reasons for Recommendation:

Employee volunteering can benefit the community, by allowing employees to "give something back", whilst at the same time developing new skills and the opportunity to make a real worthwhile difference to the community, the Council and the individual.

Resource Implications:

It is proposed that up to ten members of staff are given the opportunity to take part in up to two challenge volunteer days in a year, sponsored by the Council. Individual activities will not be sponsored by the Council, and must be carried out in the employees own time This has no financial impact on the Council as employees would be expected to manage their workloads around volunteering.

£5,000 per year for 3 years (£15k in total) to sign up to Involve Gloucestershire has already been approved by this Committee in July and is held in earmarked reserves.

Legal Implications:

Volunteers are not employees and as such do not attract the same protection as employed staff. In view of this, there is a need to ensure that employment relationships are not created with volunteers which would give rise to employment risks, leaving the Council open to breaches of employment legislation. Understanding the role of a volunteer is essential to minimise the employment risks. An approved Volunteer policy is therefore a necessary requirement.

Risk Management Implications:

If the policy is approved and followed this helps to discharge the duty of the Council in relation to the health, safety and welfare and safe guarding of employees who volunteer. If a policy is not in place this could leave the Council open to legal challenge and associated reputational & financial risk.

Performance Management Follow-up:

It is intended that the policy is reviewed in two years' time.

Implications for Biodiversity:

None.

1.0 INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

1.1 The Government is actively encouraging voluntary activity across the public and private sector in order *"to create a society where voluntary activity flourishes and where all individuals and communities are enable to play a full part in civil society"* - Cabinet Office 2014

1.2 Many large corporations have had employee volunteering polices for many years in order to promote their commitment to 'corporate citizenship' and to demonstrate their wider corporate social responsibility. Zurich Insurance and ASDA (Walmart) are good examples of successful companies which actively encourage their staff to volunteer in community settings. Likewise, in the public sector, many organisations promote volunteering within their workforces; the Cabinet Office within Whitehall has a successful scheme for civil servants and GCHQ is another exemplar.

1.3 This policy introduces an active employee volunteering scheme for Tewkesbury Borough Council staff. In order to manage the process effectively it is limited to Team Challenge events, limited to two per year, where staff are encouraged to nominate themselves to participate. The Challenge Events will focus on specific community projects within the Borough selected by Involve Gloucestershire as the Council's active brokerage partner. Staff will be selected by the whole Management Team to ensure a collective decision making process and to help embed the positive benefits of such opportunities across our management tier.

1.4 The Council will work with Involve Gloucestershire to help employees volunteer. They will act as a brokerage of short term challenges or longer term relationships and help identify team activities that our volunteers can take part in. The activities will be designed to meet community needs; they will support team building, learning and development, as well as giving employees the chance to try something new. Our aim is to encourage employees to become actively involved in the community and to help tackle local issues.

2.0 VOLUNTEERING POLICY

2.1 The volunteering policy sets out the Council's commitment to employees who wish to volunteer, the procedure and processes that need to be followed and the nature of the volunteering relationship. The policy is designed to help support volunteers and provide a framework of good practice. All volunteering activities must be undertaken within, or in support of, the Tewkesbury Borough community. This policy applies to all employees of the Council, irrespective of their status or position. Involve Gloucestershire will provide advice on delivering our volunteering policy. Whilst individual activities will not be supported, employees will be given information on how they can find out about volunteering opportunities from Involve Gloucestershire.

3.0 EMPLOYEE VOLUNTEERING AND TIME ALLOWED

3.1 It is proposed the Council allows up to ten members of staff to take part in up to two challenge volunteering days in a year. This will involve a team activity for a "one-off" practical task completed by a group of employees often in one day. The activity will be designed to offer great team building opportunities, and give employees a day away from their usual working environment where they can develop new skills and go home with a real sense of achievement. Teams could take part in a half or full day volunteering activity; working on projects such as painting buildings, undertaking a community garden project or taking on other exciting opportunities. The activities will be designed to meet community needs; they will support team building and learning and development, as well as giving individuals the chance to try something new.

4.0 BENEFITS TO TEWKESBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL AND THE COMMUNITY

4.1 The Volunteering Policy will help organisations and people to deliver services and improve communities. It will help to build a robust and resilient society by enabling individuals to get involved in activities that benefit the community, the environment and the relationships with communities and the Council.

5.0 BENEFITS TO THE INDIVIDUAL

- 5.1** There are a number of benefits to the individual. It is hoped that they will have a sense of personal achievement and self-worth through giving back to the community. It will broaden a person's outlook of the community, enabling them to transfer their skills and experience, or help them to develop new skills and create a "can-do" attitude. It will benefit employees approaching retirement and help them adjust for the future.

6.0 INVOLVE GLOUCESTERSHIRE

- 6.1** Involve Gloucestershire is a social enterprise formed in 2015 in order to safeguard the Country's historic 'volunteering bureau' services but move them onto a more financially sustainable model.
- 6.2** Utilising experience from other areas, and particularly from Swindon, Involve Gloucestershire aims to sign up businesses across both the public and private sectors to act as a paid broker for staff volunteering. The research they have conducted has shown that many large and medium businesses currently struggle to find effective volunteering opportunities for their staff despite their commitment to encourage corporate social responsibility and would be keen to pay for this essential service.
- 6.3** Both Zurich Insurance and GCHQ have already signed up and are contributing to start-up costs to enable Involve Gloucestershire to become operational within the County and to offer services. It is envisaged that, as the approach gains momentum, enough businesses will subscribe to reduce the annual fee and to allow the organisation to be completely self-sufficient and not dependent on any grant funding. Involve Swindon has already demonstrated how this is possible and is financially self-sufficient in this way.
- 6.4** Tewkesbury Borough Council is being asked to agree to sign up to Involve Gloucestershire for 3 years in order to broker volunteering opportunities, arrange the challenge events for staff, train and develop employee understanding around volunteering and to promote the approach to local businesses.

7.0 LOCAL BUSINESS PROMOTION

- 7.1** The development of a volunteering policy for the Council will support the promotion of volunteering and corporate social responsibility activities to the business community across the Borough.
- 7.2** It will help encourage local companies to get involved, by showing first-hand, how volunteering produces real results for the local community, whilst also providing positive development opportunities for employees.
- 7.3** Working with Involve Gloucestershire, the Council's Economic Development Team will develop successful case studies from the Challenge Days. These will be used to promote the benefits to the local community and local businesses, demonstrating how easy it is to get involved.
- 7.4** This information will be widely communicated through the business e-newsletter, social media, business events, Borough News and local business networks.

8.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

8.1 None.

9.0 CONSULTATION

9.1 The Trade Unions, management and Involve Gloucestershire have been consulted.

10.0 RELEVANT COUNCIL POLICIES/STRATEGIES

10.1 The keep safe stay healthy strategies for employee wellbeing and the art of being brilliant ethos along with the Wellbeing and Stress Management Policy.

11.0 RELEVANT GOVERNMENT POLICIES

11.1 Equality Act, Data Protection Act 1998, Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, Police Act 1997 (Criminal Records) Regulations 2002.

12.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (Human/Property)

12.1 Implicit within the policy.

13.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS (Social/Community Safety/Cultural/Economic/ Environment)

13.1 This policy will support our social responsibility towards the community and show an active awareness of issues within the Borough.

14.0 IMPACT UPON (Value For Money/Equalities/E-Government/Human Rights/Health And Safety)

14.1 None.

15.0 RELATED DECISIONS AND ANY OTHER RELEVANT FACTS

15.1 None.

Background Papers: None.

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Appendices: 1 – Volunteering Policy for Employees of Tewkesbury Borough Council.
2 – Equality Impact Assessment.