

Board/Committee:	POLICY & ORGANISATION BOARD
Date of Meeting:	2 FEBRUARY 2021
Title:	CORPORATE VOLUNTEER POLICY
Author:	JULIE PETTY, HEAD OF CORPORATE POLICY & COMMUNITY SAFETY
Status:	FOR DECISION

Purpose

The approval of a Volunteer Policy which provides a corporate framework of understanding, accountability and good practice for volunteers in Council Services.

Recommendation

- i) That the Board approve this Corporate Volunteer Policy which draws together a consistent approach on all aspects of volunteer engagement within the remit of Council services and projects.
- ii) That the Board acknowledge that this policy will be underpinned by guidance and templates, currently under development, for service areas considering whether to involve volunteers for the first time and for those with existing volunteer roles to ensure consistent good practice in all aspects of dealing with volunteers.

1.0 Background

- 1.1 Volunteering is an opportunity for local residents to learn about and to get involved with the work of the Council and for the Council to tap into a valuable community resource of local knowledge and skills.
- 1.2 Research on the benefits of volunteering has shown it can improve both mental and physical well-being and has the potential to tackle inactivity. Volunteer activity provides a network of social relationships that connects people in new ways and offers new opportunities for increased involvement and diversity within the Council.
- 1.3 Volunteers have been a valuable resource in some areas of the Council for many years and at least one service area has volunteers who have contributed their time and talents for almost 20 years.
- 1.4 This Volunteer Policy will facilitate the central sharing and establishment of good practice standards that support and protect

not only volunteers, but also the staff who supervise them and the Council.

2 Report

- 2.1 This policy has been developed through extensive research of other local authority volunteer programmes and good practice guidance from national centres of expertise such as the National Centre for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) and National Centre for Voluntary and Community Action (NAVCA) and with advice from the Borough's volunteer hub, the Go Volunteer service at Gosport Voluntary Action.
- 2.2 The views and experiences of Council staff from services already incorporating volunteers have also contributed to the development of this policy and its supporting guidance and procedures.. The introduction of a corporate policy and guidance on volunteers has been welcomed by these services.
- 2.3 One of the many negative impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic has been the cessation of volunteering opportunities within the Council's services and projects since March in order to help safeguard the health and safety of volunteers, members of staff and the public we serve and comply with Government restrictions.
- 2.4 This enforced break from volunteer involvement has shown how much volunteers are valued and missed in the delivery of enhanced services and special projects. It provides an ideal opportunity for wider community engagement with volunteers by the Council through a clear policy framework and guidance that will support services to engage with or re-engage with volunteers once it is safe to do so.

3 Risk Assessment

- 3.1 This policy covers the key areas of the relationship between a volunteer and the Council and the supporting guidance documents will detail the steps to be taken to ensure the fair and safe placement and supervision of volunteers.
- 3.2 This includes the necessary compliance with other Council policies and procedures, including risk assessments for all volunteer roles, the adherence to existing policies and practices and the documentation required for insurance cover for volunteers

- 3.3 To not adopt a corporate volunteer policy exposes the Council to increased risk of public and financial liability and reputational damage.
- 3.4 This policy and guidance will be reviewed regularly with feedback from service areas engaging with volunteers and from volunteers, where possible, to assess its effectiveness and need for any amendments.

4.0 Conclusion

This policy will provide clarity and consistency in the Council's engagement with volunteers, providing a corporate framework for service areas to explore new opportunities for involving volunteers in future as well as providing a framework for supporting current opportunities.

Financial Services comments:	none
Legal Services comments:	
Climate Change:	none
Crime and Disorder:	none
Equality and Diversity:	EIA screening form attached
Corporate Plan:	Supports the strategic priorities of Empower our Residents and Deliver Effective Services
Risk Assessment:	See Section 3 of report
Background papers:	none
Appendices/Enclosures:	
Appendix A	Corporate Volunteer Policy
Appendix B	Corporate Volunteer Policy EIA
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