Volunteer Policy and Process

Woughton Community Council values the support and benefit that comes from volunteers within the community. This policy sets out the principles of volunteering within events and activities overseen by the council and explains the processes behind the recruitment, selection, management and support that the council will offer volunteers.

Volunteer policy

Woughton Community Council (WCC) understands the invaluable contribution that volunteers make across our community. This includes those who offer help independently, through an agreed volunteering role and includes ongoing and one off roles. People volunteer for a variety of reasons and a variety of timescales. WCC aims to provide support where appropriate to volunteers across the parish, but the contents of this document relate only to those working directly with events and activities overseen, organised or that are the responsibility of the council.

WCC is strongly committed to providing all delivery in line with the equality and diversity principles defined within our policies. As such, volunteers will be recruited based on the individuals compatibility with the role, regardless of race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origins, gender, marital status, sexual orientation or disability.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Ensure a consistent approach in the recruitment, development, support and management of volunteers and of those involved in the volunteer relationship
- Be clear about the nature of volunteering within the council, as a role where there is no obligation on either party to offer or accept work
- Outline our commitment and responsibilities toward volunteers
- Outline our expectations of volunteers

Definitions

A volunteer is someone who wishes to undertake a defined role at the direction of and on behalf of Woughton Community Council. The volunteer enters into the role within the understanding that there will be no monetary compensation or other compensations, other than those agreed and defined in the Volunteer Role description (this could include reimbursement of expenses, provision of suitable clothing or PPE, provision of meals whilst undertaking the role or similar elements).

Arrangements such as work placements or student work experience should not be defined as constituting a volunteer opportunity and should be discussed with the Operations Manager to clarify any arrangements for these roles.

The Volunteer status

A volunteer is not employed by the council and will not be paid a salary. There is no obligation from either party to provide opportunities or to accept a volunteer role.

Volunteers should be treated as valuable contributors to the overall aims of the council and as such, be treated with respect and integrity.

Volunteers who are also employees of the council should be managed as a volunteer whilst in that role and preferably by a manager who is not responsible for them in their employment. Prior to any arrangement such as this being agreed, advice should be sought from the Operations Manage to ensure any potential conflicts of interest are addressed and managed suitably.

Volunteers do not have the same legal status as employees but are expected to have the same protections where applicable. This includes suitable management of health and safety, knowledge of and access to grievance processes and the opportunity to approach senior managers around any aspect of the role, organisation or delivery of the project within which they work. Volunteers are expected to adhere to many of the organisations policies and procedures, which will be provided and explained as part of the induction process.

Volunteers will have a written agreement, outlining expectations of the role and clarifying the role. This agreement should include details of the role, timings, support offered and similar but should not imply a contract as such.

Identifying suitable volunteer roles

It is important that volunteering is seen as a valuable addition to our organisation, but volunteers must not be used to replace paid staff. Equally, whilst potential volunteers can be seen as people who want to help and therefore the organisation should find them something, it is essential that volunteer roles are developed and agreed prior to taking on any individuals.

All potential volunteer roles should:

- Be identified as part of a project planning process
- Be developed prior to the project commencing, with agreement and all relevant paperwork completed in advance (including role description, person specification, etc.)
- Bring added value to the project and not be focused on providing an opportunity to any specific individual
- Be agreed by the appropriate service manager and the Operations Manager (see process in appendix 1) and, where appropriate, the relevant Committee.
- Be advertised in line with agreed recruitment processes, ensuring engagement with the widest possible range of candidates

Failure to follow the agreed process may result in delays in appointing volunteers, leaving gaps in provision and failure to deliver against agreed targets.

Appointing volunteers

Service Managers are responsible for the creation of suitable role profiles, as detailed above. Once agreed and authorised, suitable adverts will be placed and potential candidates will apply using the same process as a staff appointment. This includes:

- Completion of an application form, monitoring form and other recruitment documentation (which may include provision of a CV, dependent on the role)

- A 'sifting' process to identify suitable candidates for interview
- A formal interview with a minimum of two interviewers, one of whom should be the identified line manager for the potential volunteer
- All necessary checks and references (including DBS check if role includes work with children or vulnerable adults)

This process will follow the same lines as the general recruitment process used across the council, but may be more informal, dependent on the type of role being recruited to.

Once agreed, the volunteer(s) to be appointed should be provided with an agreement, detailing the role and expectations and a date for undertaking an induction should be arranged.

NO VOLUNTEER SHOULD START IN POST BEFORE ALL THE STEPS ABOVE, INCLUDING THE INDUCTION, HAVE TAKEN PLACE.

Supporting volunteers

Once a volunteer is appointed, an induction process should take place. This should include, as a minimum;

- Introduction to Woughton Community Council
- Introductions to relevant officers / members
- Induction into the main place of work, covering facilities, access issues, etc..
- Explanation of the project / service that they will be working within, alongside discussion of the role they will be undertaking
- Health and Safety issues, boundaries, safeguarding and any other relevant policy and procedure relating to the role
- Line management processes, oversight, reporting (including grievance and 'whistle blowing' procedures)

It is important that volunteers are correctly inducted, are aware of the limitations and expectations of the role / project /organisation and are ready when the role commences.

The role and the volunteer should receive a review after three months, reflecting on the early delivery, addressing any concerns and ensuring the both the role and the volunteer are suitable.

Once in post and performing the volunteer role, support should continue. This includes regular contact with the line manager, more formal 1:1 support sessions at agreed intervals (the frequency will be dependent on the hours worked, demands of the role, frequency of volunteering), with a minimum expectation of half yearly.

Volunteer should be treated fairly and inline with WCC policy throughout their time with us. This includes being subject to the same management of performance as other people. Whilst the role is different (being a volunteer is, by its very nature, something given without expectation of recompense), it is important to understand that volunteers should be expected to maintain high standards, as are employees.

Having a volunteer that is not suitable causes considerable difficulties; it impacts upon other volunteers and staff, often increasing rather that decreasing the workload, it impacts on service delivery and through this, often also impacts local residents. These impacts can, in turn, cause a loss of faith in services, loss of confidence in the council and loss of engagement from residents.

With this in mind, it is important that whilst being treated fairly, volunteers are not seen as 'untouchable' or 'unmanageable' – they should be subject to the same expectations as others within the organisation. Where appropriate, a volunteer placement should be brought to and end, in consultation with the Operations Manager, Council Manager or Service Lead.

Benefits of volunteering with WCC

NCVO define volunteering as *'any activity that involves spending time, unpaid, doing something that aims to benefit the environment or someone (individuals or groups) other than, or in addition to, close relatives. Central to this definition is the fact that volunteering must be a choice freely made by each individual.'*

Whilst WCC shares this definition, it aims to ensure that people are not disadvantaged by volunteering. We are also committed to ongoing development of our workforce as a whole (both paid and voluntary, which include councillors) and to this end, we agree that we will;

- Cover all reasonable out of pocket expenses relating to the volunteering role (for example, travel costs whilst undertaking the role, drinks / snacks if appropriate)
- Ensure provision of clothing and equipment relevant to the role, including PPE where necessary
- Provide opportunities for training and development, including regular volunteer events throughout the year
- Advertise paid roles within the volunteering team, to ensure there are opportunities to develop into a paid employee *where this is wanted*. There is no expectation that people do this, but opportunities to for those that do.

This policy will be reviewed in line with the policy review cycle and not less than every three years.

Last review date:	February 2019
Next review date:	February 2022 (or with legislative changes)
Lead:	Council Manager
Overseeing Committee:	Operations
Approved:	
Review cycle:	2 yearly and/or as per legislation

Appendix One – Volunteer Recruitment Flowchart

Volunteer Opportunity Identified	As part of a project planning process, use of volunteers identified as a potential benefit.
Role Description / Person Spec created	Use agreed format, consulting with Ops Manager if necessary.
Role authorised by Operations Manager	MUST be agreed by Ops Manager prior to any further steps. If any queries or concerns, should also be discussed and agreed at Operations Committee, but this is an exception when potentially controversial.
If appropriate, Role authorised by Operations Committee	
Volunteer opportunity advert created and approved by Ops Manager	In line with agreed templates.
Advertised for a minimum of three weeks, to allow applications	Website, social media and on Doit.org. May also share with partners / email newsletter, etc.
Applications 'sifted' for suitability, identifying maximum of six candidates	If multiple applications, target those that are best suited – applicants should have evidenced how they can bring value to the role and not simply applied expecting to be taken on. Interviews should include at least two officers.
Suitable candidates invited to informal interview	
Best candidate(s) agreed and offered role, Checks undertaken	Once interviews have taken place, agree those suitable and offer role. Commence take up of references, DBS forms (if applicable) and any other checks commensurate with the post.
Upon receipt of references, DBS (if necessary), start date agreed and induction process created.	Induction to be arranged as soon as is wanted – can start prior to DBS, etc. but must not start any work until all in place.
Induction completed, role commences, date booked for review (3 months)	Review to happen and agreement from both parties to continue the role at three month point.